

# Clarion

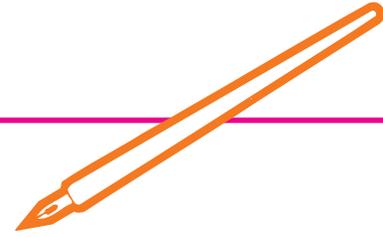
THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE  
VOLUME 47, NO. 3 FEBRUARY 6, 1998



*Jerusalem in the  
Scriptures*



By R. Aasman



## The Walls of Jericho

Scattered throughout Israel are curious earthen mounds rising from the plain or located at a strategic mountain pass which cause excitement in the heart of archaeologists. These mounds are called *tells* which is a Semitic term indicating that within these mounds lie the ruins of ancient cities in Israel. In fact, a *tell* could contain the remains of several ruined cities, the one built on the remains of a previously destroyed city. Through very careful and scientific archaeological digging, much can be learned about life in a particular place and time. Often it can also be determined how or why a particular city was destroyed.

Last spring, two archaeologists from the University of Rome, Lorenzo Nigro and Nicolo Marchetti, spent a month digging at Tell es-Sultan which is a *tell* containing the remains of the long-ruined city of Jericho. These archaeologists claim to have found the Bronze Age ramparts intact and they found no rubble to indicate that the walls of Jericho came tumbling down. *The Globe and Mail* drew conclusions for them: if their findings were correct then the Biblical account concerning the destruction of Jericho must be false. In other words, the Bible is false. Such conclusions are not new. Archaeologists and Biblical historians have long debated whether the Israelites conquered Jericho. In fact, many have concluded that there is little or no archaeological evidence to support an invasion by Israel into Canaan during the late part of the 15th century B.C., which is the approximate conquest date as we gather from the Bible.

It should be clear to us that regardless of archaeological findings, we believe what the Scriptures tell us about the Israelite invasion into Canaan. The inspired Word of God tells us the facts as they happened. (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21) The Scriptures show that in the latter part of the 15th century B.C., the Lord led His people victoriously into the Promised Land. Does it make sense then to make use of archaeological findings in Bible study? The answer is yes. Archaeological discovery is not to be used to prove the truth or facts of the Scriptures, but it does provide information which helps us to understand the Bible in its true historical and cultural perspective. Archaeology, history and geography are used by Bible students and ministers to help modern man better understand what is related to us in the Scriptures. The one caveat to keep in mind is that archaeology is a tool which remains subservient to the authority of the Scriptures. In other words, if archaeology differs with the Scriptures, then the Scriptures are right. It is also good to keep in mind that in the history of archaeology, many conclusions were drawn which later had to be retracted.

In regards to the conquest of Canaan, archaeologists have widely concluded that there is really no evidence to support a military invasion of Canaan by Israel in the time period between 1405-1398 B.C., which is the time period indicated by

the Bible. They base their conclusion on the fact that in *tells* of Canaanite cities there is no evidence found of massive destruction in the late 15th century. One must understand that there is a basic presupposition at work here: a nation which invades and takes over a land will leave a trail of destroyed cities which naturally put up resistance to such a hostile take-over. Archaeologists have sought in vain to find such traces of destruction in the late 15th century. Actually, such findings only clarify what the Bible itself tells us. When we read passages such as Num. 33:50-56; Deut 6:10-11; 19:1-2; and Joshua 11:12-15, it is clear that Israel was directed by the Lord to destroy the pagan nations and their shrines, but the cities were not to be destroyed except in the cases of Jericho, Ai and Hazor. This was a rich blessing of the Lord God to His covenant people: they were to receive a rich land with fields, cities and houses for which they themselves did not have to work. They did not receive a land devastated by war, which is what archaeologists are looking for, but by the grace of God they received a land which was truly a rich heritage. Thus the archaeological evidence which can find no massive destruction in the late 15th century B.C. only serves to enhance our understanding of how good God was to His people, and how utterly unique was the conquest of Canaan.

This leaves us with the matter of Jericho, which we know was utterly destroyed. Ever since the British archaeologist, Kathleen Kenyon, excavated Tell es-Sultan in the 1950s, most archaeologists, historians and Bible scholars emphatically deny a destruction of Jericho as described in Joshua 6. Kenyon claimed that there was evidence to suggest that there was a massive destruction of Jericho around 1550 B.C., but by the late 15th century there was no walled or fortified city of Jericho for Joshua and his armed men to conquer. Although the findings of Kathleen Kenyon have been very popular, hers is not the only archaeological evidence that we have. John Garstang, also a British archaeologist, excavated Tell es-Sultan in the 1930s and found evidence of a massive destruction of Jericho during the time that Israel entered Canaan. His findings agreed with the Biblical facts. More recently, Bryant G. Wood wrote in *Biblical Archaeology Review* of March/April 1990 that Kenyon's methodology was flawed. He demonstrated how Kenyon's method of dating was flawed and that a re-examination of her findings would conclude that the massive destruction which she dated at 1550 B.C. should actually be put at about 1400 B.C. Once this is understood, then Kenyon's findings can be used to demonstrate how Jericho fell and was destroyed before the army of Israel.

Kenyon herself determined that Jericho had an impressive fortification system. First there was a 15 foot high stone revetment wall (revet means to face an embankment with stone to give strength and support) with a mud-brick parapet wall of at least 8 feet high on top of it. This wall went all

around the city. This stone wall was held in place from the inside by a massive packed- earth embankment or rampart, on top of which there was yet another wall. To this very day, the lower stone revetment wall and most of the embankment or rampart still survives – which is what the two Italian archaeologists found. Now comes the amazing discovery. Outside all of this – outside the high stone revetment wall – Kenyon found red mud-bricks resting in a heap against the revetment wall. Kenyon concluded that these bricks fell from a wall on top of the revetment wall and that they had to have been knocked down due to a violent force which shook the city. If one looks at Kenyon’s personal diagrams of her findings, then it is evident that the bricks which tumbled down from Jericho’s wall formed a slope which covered up the lower revetment wall and its embankment or rampart so that anyone outside the city could just walk into the city. The way into the city had become a gentle upward sloping mound. For all intents and purposes, it lay wide open. Thus the discovery of the rampart by the Italians really does not deny the complete collapse of Jericho and its being laid wide open. Archaeologists suppose that something like a terrible earthquake must have knocked down Jericho’s massive wall system. Unfortunately even Wood speculates that an earthquake may have laid Jericho open so that Israel could simply march in.

There are other interesting archaeological finds at Jericho which are worthy to note. On the lower slopes of the rampart, near the top of the stone revetment wall, there is evidence of domestic structures. It appears that the houses furthest to the outside could have been incorporated into the parapet wall overlooking the stone revetment below. Rahab, who let the two Israelite spies through her window, down the city wall, could have lived in such a house (Joshua 2:15). Also discovered by archaeologists was a large quantity of grain stored in lower regions of the city’s homes amidst charred debris. It is clear that grain had been left for destruction. This is most exceptional. Grain was very precious in those days. It was either to be eaten by the invaders or used as a valuable medium of exchange later on. It is most unusual

## What’s inside?

A careful reading of this issue will teach you something about the geography of ancient Palestine. One of our new editors, the Rev. R. Aasman of Edmonton, takes us 300 metres below sea level to the archaeological digs of Jericho. Dr. C. Van Dam, professor of Old Testament at our Theological College, takes us to an elevation of 900 metres above sea level to the heights of Jerusalem. Piqued your interest? Read on!

Parenting is one of the great challenges of life. One does not get much training for this very important task. Looking back, reflective parents will often wonder if they did well – if they were too strict or too lax. Scores of books can be bought at Christian and secular bookstores meant to help you raise your children. Which book is good? Which will help you? How do you wade through the many books available? Rev. Kampen reviews two such books and recommends one of them.

Additionally, you will find some reviews, letters, and a Ray of Sunshine. May you be edified by what we have put together.

GvP



Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd., Winnipeg, MB

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World Wide Web address: <http://clarion.home.ml.org/>

### SUBSCRIPTION RATES FOR 1998

	Regular Mail	Air Mail
Canada*	\$34.00*	\$59.00*
U.S.A. U.S. Funds	\$39.00	\$52.00
International	\$58.00	\$85.00

\* Including 7% GST – No. 890967359RT

Advertisements: \$11.25 per column inch

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Publications Mail Registration No. 1025

ISSN 0383-0438

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to discover that whoever destroyed Jericho left such a valuable commodity for destruction.

Archaeology's findings, though often misinterpreted as we have seen and therefore used against the Bible, when used rightly can give us valuable insights into the Biblical record. We know from Joshua 6 that the city of Jericho was shut up tight when threatened by Israel. In keeping with the Lord's command, Israel marched around Jericho once per day for six days and then seven times on the seventh day. Then on the seventh day the trumpet was sounded, the people shouted, and the walls of Jericho fell down so that the army of Israel could march right in. Once the people were inside they were required to destroy everything and take nothing except for a few precious materials for the Lord God. The findings of Kenyon and others, of a city utterly collapsed and accessible from the outside, where everything was destroyed and no obvious plundering was done, gives a mute but powerful testimony to this very day that Jericho was completely destroyed as the Lord had instructed Joshua.

This does not conclude our evaluation of archaeological discoveries regarding Jericho. Archaeology, geography and history also help us to understand the theological significance of Jericho's fall. We also learn that Jericho was one of the world's oldest cities with enviable climactic and geographical conditions. It was also a strategically placed entrance to the heartland of Canaan. Any military force attempting to penetrate Canaan from the east would first have to attack and capture Jericho. This helps us to understand why the Lord selected Jericho to be the first city that was to fall after Israel crossed the Jordan River, and why it had to fall the way it did. The overwhelming collapse and destruction of Jericho gave all the nations of Canaan a new reason to tremble and to know without a doubt that the God of Israel was the

Almighty and that the God of Israel would take this land to be His dwelling place with His people.

The way in which the mightily fortified city of Jericho fell – not by the hand of man but by the miraculous power of God – was a strong reminder for Israel as they entered and settled into this rich land that this was God's gracious gift to them. Man has nothing to boast of in himself but relies utterly on the steadfast love of God. In connection with this, the Lord's demand that Jericho and everything in it was to be utterly destroyed, and that no one was ever to rebuild Jericho (Joshua 6:26), was to be a lasting reminder to Israel that from the moment they entered the gateway to the Promised Land, the Lord made clear that the land was His and that His people could enjoy it only when they used their lives and their possessions to the praise and glory of their God. We are reminded here of the warnings and encouragements of Deuteronomy 8.

From our viewpoint today, we see God's glorious deeds of salvation as He brought His people into the Promised Land fulfilled in the gift of His own Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ gained the decisive and complete victory over Satan, sin and death, and now moves victoriously over the face of the earth by His Spirit and Word to gather His church from every tribe, tongue and nation. Though Satan and his supporters conspire against Christ and His church, nothing can prevent the fulfillment of Christ's victory which will be signaled by the cry of command and the trumpet call. Then before the descending Christ, all walls of opposition will fall away and Christ will gather His church into the rich and everlasting welcome of His eternal kingdom.

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## TREASURES, NEW AND OLD

MATTHEW 13:52

By C. Bosch

# Blessed Beggars

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:3*

The Lord our God is full of surprises. He is full of wondrous, life-giving blessings designed for destitute beggar-believers. For the Lord, we confess, is Ruler of all creation, King of His church for whom He died. When Christ came into the world there were other kingdoms, including the empire of Rome. There was also the "kingdom" of the Pharisees and Scribes. It too was a desperate kingdom of much unrighteousness, its citizens groaning in the poverty of sin and death.

Yet, Christ had been born in Bethlehem. He had begun His ministry in Galilee, "preaching the good news of

the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people" (Matt. 4:23). One day our Lord went to a mountain, somewhere in Galilee. His disciples had followed Him and so had the crowds. There our Lord sat down to preach the Gospel. We know His sermon as the "Sermon on the Mount." The first "point" in that sermon is the Beatitudes. These are nine sayings of blessings, and they are beautiful jewels.

The very first one is Christ's surprising declaration, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Just who are these "poor in spirit?" Some believe them to be the

material paupers of this world. They think of the economically disadvantaged, who spend their time on the rubbish heaps and in the soup kitchens of the world. This cannot be, however. For poverty itself does not make one more eligible for Christ's blessing than being materially rich. We may think of Abraham and Job and King Solomon.

Christ was speaking of "beggars in spirit." They are the people who come to the Lord with empty hands. They know themselves to be destitute without Christ. They have no proud and self-righteous pretensions. Like the tax collector in

Luke 18:13 they cry, "God have mercy on me, a sinner."

Beggars in spirit: they find their treasure in the Lord. They have heard that the Lord will "... defend the afflicted among the people and save the children of the needy" (Ps. 72: 3,4). How did they become "poor in spirit?" Did they volunteer for it? Did they, "make the choice" or "see the light." No! God came to them! He brought them to their knees. He "guides the humble in what is right and teaches them His way" (Ps. 25: 9).

God's Word gives us glimpses of "beggars in spirit." A widow in Zarephath. With her last flour and oil she making lunch for the prophet of Israel. At his word! Naaman, a Syrian warlord, at the prophet's command, washing himself seven times in the muddy Jordan. Four teenagers in Babylon, rejecting food sacrificed to idols.

To become poor in spirit we first need to be emptied of all our pretensions, vanity and pride. Like the prodigal son at the pigs' trough we need to be brought low. We need to be brought low, that we might look on high. Only Christ can do that! That is why he went to the mountain to preach to the multitudes. He saw their captivity (Isa. 61:1). He was on the way to the cross to set prisoners free! He would not despise the lowly. "A bruised reed He will not break, and a smoldering wick He will not snuff out" (Is. 42:3). He would put

a humble confession on their lips: "That I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own" (Phil 3:9).

Christ, who "made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant" (Phil. 2:7) would do so. By His death on the cross. He who was filled with the Spirit would become "poor in spirit." He "made Himself nothing" (Phil. 2: 7) that we might gain everything! He can do marvelous things. He can lift up the poor from the ash heap and make them sit with princes. He can change mourning into dancing. He can and will bless! He will grant the poor in spirit an everlasting kingdom, of life and light.

"Blessed," said the Lord. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." That word "blessed" has its roots in blood. Years ago a thing was considered "blessed" if it was set apart by a blood ritual. In time it came to mean bliss or happiness, praise and congratulations! To be blessed is to be declared most favored. Our Lord proclaimed the "poor in spirit" blessed. He didn't say it was their right. God's good gifts don't arise in us. "Every good gift is from above. Coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights" (James 1:17).

The "poor in spirit" would possess "the kingdom of heaven." It would not be an earthly kingdom, nor would its citizens have a guaranteed annual wage. Yet it would be a blessed king-

dom. For that kingdom is Christ's lasting spiritual rule. Its citizens are promised thrones!

The kingdom had arrived with our Lord himself. He was the King and He brought His kingdom with Him. Through His preaching He established His kingdom's reality in the hearts of His own. He would confirm it with His blessing! For He was on the way to the cross, to lay Satan's domain to waste. Victorious, He would have the supreme right to bestow wondrous blessings (Col. 1). At the beginning of His ministry He was handing out heavenly rewards to "beggars in spirit."

Will we inherit that kingdom which will one day see the earth flooded with righteousness and joy? We first need to be emptied of our old self-righteousness and self-sufficiency. We need to become "beggars in spirit." Only then can we go on, to mourn, and to hunger and thirst for righteousness. Then, In Christ, we can begin to live by those norms of God's kingdom, so richly proclaimed in the Sermon on the Mount. May God bring us to our knees. Then paupers will be princes! Thanks to God for His wonderful gift in Jesus Christ!

*Rev. C. Bosch is the pastor of the Canadian Reformed Church in Burlington South.*



*Shepherds' fields outside Bethlehem*

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# Zion, the City of the Living God (Part 1)

By C. Van Dam

Tonight! is a night of celebration and rejoicing!! We have ample reason to do so! The living God of heaven and earth has had mercy on us. When the church of our forefathers, the Roman Church under the direction of the Pope, was becoming increasingly dark because the light of God's grace was being smothered, God intervened and led His people out of the bondage of darkness into the freedom of the light of the gospel! Also in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Lord our God intervened in the history of Reformed churches both in the Netherlands and on this continent. The Lord has worked reformation and led His people back to the Scriptures!

## Images of the grace of God

As we tonight commemorate the 480th anniversary of what is commonly taken as the start of the Reformation, we do well to remember that one of the great gifts of God to the church in the sixteenth century was the rediscovery of the meaning of grace. God allowed Luther and Calvin and many others to see again something of the profound height and depth of the grace of God, the forgiveness of sins and life with God in Jesus Christ. Let us tonight celebrate by reflecting on the grace of God and so appreciate again how rich God has made us in Jesus Christ.

God taught His people the tremendous truth of His grace in many and various ways, including images. Tonight let us direct our thoughts to a particular image of God's grace, the city of God as a picture of the church. This is, for example, the city of which Psalm 87 extols the glories. Indeed, according to the teaching of this Psalm, this Zion of God is the very city of which we as Christians may also be citizens of, for we too may know ourselves by God's grace registered with His people! And so joining with the Philistines, Tyrians and Cushites of old are the Canadians and the Dutch, the Americans and many others of the twentieth century. "The LORD will write in the register of the peoples: 'This one was born in Zion' " (Ps. 87:6).

## Jerusalem in Canaan

To understand the connotations and meaning of this image of Zion properly, let us first go back into time to stand as it were in the sandals of the ancient Israelites and consider some aspects of the city of Jerusalem or Zion from their vantage point.

Jerusalem is, as you know, in the promised land, Canaan. Now that choice of Canaan is already significant and indicative of God's grace. Why did God choose Canaan as the land for His people to dwell in? One must remember that God the Lord is maker and ruler of all the earth. He could, for example, have given His people the rich fertile river lands of Mesopotamia or the rich Nile Valley in Egypt. But God gave His people Canaan, a largely mountainous and difficult land to farm when compared to Mesopotamia and Egypt.

Why this land? Although the Bible does not answer that question directly, it is consistent with what we know from Scripture to answer this question by saying: Because God loved His people! Now Canaan was a land flowing with milk and honey (Exod. 3:8, 17), but if there was a place where this abundance could not be taken for granted, it was surely Canaan! By giving Israel land which was so obviously dependent on His blessing, God wanted to keep His people close to Him in the full realization of their dependency on the one true God who alone could make the crops grow! In Canaan, unlike Egypt and Mesopotamia, the people had to rely completely on the rain for their crops. In Canaan it was obvious that they needed God's gifts of moisture and growth if they were to survive! They were dependent on God's grace.

In Egypt and Mesopotamia, there was, humanly speaking, a more or less guaranteed water supply from the rivers. But, if God had brought His people to inherit the rich farmlands in their countries, the temptation would undoubtedly have been very great to regard the blessings of abundant harvest as coming from the land or the nearby river rather than from God. That is why, in accordance

with His covenant law (e.g. Deut. 11:13-17) the Lord God used drought periodically to punish Israel for the worship of the false gods to bring them back to the living God. So the land was a gift of God's grace in a special way. Only by being obedient to God and walking in His ways would this be a land flowing with milk and honey (Deut. 28:1-14).

Now a similar observation can be made concerning Jerusalem as God's city in this world. Someone who did not understand the dynamics of God's grace could say: Well, of all places, why did God go out of His way to choose Jerusalem!? Indeed, it was a very conscious choice on God's part. Think for example of Psalm 132:13 "For the Lord has chosen Zion, he has desired it as His dwelling!" But, why Jerusalem? Mind you, the city is defensible, there high in the hill country of Judah. That part is all right. But it was hardly a model city as far the grand cities of its day goes. It lacked something which virtually every other important city in antiquity had. It lacked a plentiful water supply. Great cities like Damascus (2 Kgs. 5:12), Ur, Susa, Nineveh (Nahum 2:6, 8), Babylon (Ps. 137:1) and the metropolises of Egypt (e.g. Thebes, Nahum 3:8) were all located on grand rivers, ensuring an abundant water supply in case of siege. Even if access to the river was blocked by an enemy, wells could usually be dug. There was always water. Jerusalem was a different story. She was high and dry in the hill country with a comparatively meager water supply. Her water source was the small Gihon spring located outside the city. So valuable was this spring that Hezekiah even had a tunnel cut through bed rock to secure it in case of siege (2 Kgs. 20:20).

With such a vulnerable and relatively small water supply, why did the LORD choose Jerusalem? The Lord who never makes a mistake picked this city to teach Israel that they had to rely, not on the physical water, but on the LORD for He and not the water would sustain the city! They would have to depend not on what they could do to secure water, but on the grace of God.

## The river of Zion

Believing Israel understood. When the sons of Korah thought of the Jerusalem water supply, they did not lament the smallness and sluggishness of the Gihon spring, but they sang in the words of Ps. 46: "There is a *river* whose streams make glad the city of God!" (Ps. 46:4). In faith, they praised God for His bountiful provision! How angry God was when His people in Isaiah's time despised the humble spring of His provision (Isa. 8:6; cf. Jer. 2:13-18). Then God had said in his judgment that He would give them the mighty waters of the Euphrates and the Assyrians would flow over Jerusalem like a flood (Isa. 8:7-8). God wanted His people to know that it is not by their effort that Jerusalem will be secure and safe, but only by the salvation of the Lord, the living God, who comes to the aid of His people and city.

The blessings of God as indicated by the spring of water and later extolled by the sons of Korah as a "river whose streams make glad the city of God," these blessings all point to the great blessing given to Zion. And what was that? It was that God decided to make this city His dwelling place. Israel may not have a great river running by her front door, but she has the living God in her midst! The God of life who will give life to His people. He nourishes and provides for His people! As Psalm 36:8, 9, praises God by saying

they feast on the abundance of your house;  
you give them drink from your river of delights.  
For with you is the fountain of life!

This point of the abundance of life with the living God is dramatically made in the vision Ezekiel saw of the new temple. Coming from under the threshold of the temple was water – water that eventually became a vast river of life which brought vitality even to the Dead Sea – a river on whose banks were fruit trees of all kinds and whose leaves were for healing (Ezek. 47:1-12; cf. Zec. 14:8). Jerusalem, the city of the living God. Here He has His dwelling place, His temple. Here is the centre of reconciliation, the forgiveness of sins and life . . . with God! – what a gift of grace! Here man can be right with God. On this basis the Lord is pleased to give all His good gifts.

Obviously this is a city that people must go to! Indeed, God enjoined His people to go to this city. As the Psalmist articulates it:

I rejoiced when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the LORD.'  
Our feet are standing in your gates O Jerusalem . . .

That is where the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD,  
to praise the name of the LORD according to the statute given to Israel." (Ps 122:1, 4).

## The roads to Zion

The fact that the tribes had to go to Jerusalem, raises another geographical feature of Jerusalem's location. Before coming permanently into the hands of Israel, Jerusalem was in a relatively inaccessible and desolate part of the country. After David conquered Zion (2 Sam. 5:6-8) and made it his capital and the site of the ark, this isolation disappeared. But, of itself, the place of Zion was originally not that well connected. Its growing importance was primarily due to God's choosing it as His dwelling place. This choice put Jerusalem on the map so to speak and made it the centre of attention of all those who worshipped and loved God. The throngs went to Jerusalem in obedience to the law (cf. Deut 16). This meant that more roads and highways were built to get to this city than to any other city in Israel. Zion became the centre piece of God's kingdom. Here was the temple, the official focal point for the distribution of His gifts of grace and love.

And therefore the nations were also enjoined to go to Zion, the city of the living God. The idols are dead and nothing. Go to the Lord and worship Him in holiness and reverence! He and His city is the focal point of world history! The prophets are full of prophecies of the nations coming to Jerusalem (Isa 2:2-3; Micah 4:1-3; Zec. 14:16). As Psalm 87 makes clear, even the former enemies, Philistines and Babylonians will come there. Jerusalem will be the centre of the earth (cf. Ezek. 38:12).

It is interesting in this regard to note how Judaism at about the time of Christ and also early Christian thinking, pictured Jerusalem as being physically in the very centre of the world. Ancient maps have survived which also reflect this understanding. Zion the city of God – the centre point of creation! This is of course very true in a theological sense. But also in a geographical sense it should be noted that in a real way, the LORD had chosen His dwelling place in the middle of the world which was known to His chosen nation. Canaan and Jerusalem was at the crossroads for travel and trade between the major civilizations of Egypt, Asia Minor and

Mesopotamia. At that strategic place God chose to dwell, for Israel had to have significance for the entire world (cf., e.g., Ps. 9:12, 67, 96). The LORD, He is God of all creation!

## From Old to New Testament

Let us pause for a moment and take stock of the picture of Zion we have from the Old Testament before we go to the New Testament. Zion, the city of the living God! The gods and idols of the nations were as nothing before Him. He alone is God and He came to dwell with His people. The land He chose for His dwelling place was Canaan, with all its shortcomings from a human point of view, but a land well-suited in God's wisdom and grace for His purposes and for the spiritual well-being of His people. This was the land where He gathered the people together into His kingdom. It was a land which also lay at the crossroads of the world, most fitting ultimately for God's plan for the salvation of nations!

The city God chose was Zion. Again, it was His choice with a view to dispensing His grace. To Zion His people came regularly for worship. Zion the city of God. How imposing the city looked in its glory. O Israel could boast of the towers and fortresses of the city. What a grand city it was! Just imagine it! It was once an isolated location. But, now with many roads and highways going to her, that city set on a hill in the Judean uplands was quite a sight! Her towers and crenelles rise up. Her ramparts and fortresses are strong! What a beautiful city! Israel rejoiced. But believing Israel knew that the importance and strength of Zion lay solely in God, of grace alone. As Psalm 48 (vv. 3, 8, 12-14) jubilates:

God is in her citadels; He has shown himself to be her fortress. . . .

As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD almighty, in the city of our God: God makes her secure forever! . . .

Walk about Zion, go around her, count her towers, consider well her ramparts, view her citadels, that you may tell of them to the next generation. For this God is our God forever and ever; He will be our guide even to the end!

This city of Zion, with all the beautiful connotations it had for God's people, is used in Scripture as a picture of the church (e.g., Ps. 87; Isa. 65:19). And it is a very apt picture. This image stresses the decisive role of the electing love and grace of God who has made God's people what they are. Not what we are

or what we have done is decisive, but what God has done. And He has moved into our lives! After all, the church is the Zion and temple of the living God (cf. 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19). And because this is the case, we also know in faith that the church is the focal point of all God's concerns about this world. Yes, in faith we know that world history gravitates around the church, the temple of the living God!!

While extreme modesty is befitting us who live only by the grace of God, yet it is clear that the people of God should also not to think too small of the church which is indeed the work of the Almighty and has ultimately world wide repercussions! The Lord our God wants

us to know, also today, about the glory of His Zion.

It is striking that in the New Testament, whenever Jerusalem or Zion is specifically spelled out as an image of the church, then such an image functions very positively as a picture of something in heaven or as a representation for the future. What could be the reason for that? In a general sort of way, one could say that for us frail human beings such a use of the image of Zion gives perspective! After all, we are so easily short sighted and can readily be discouraged by the sin and limitations of our present situation. But, when we think of the glorious city that will come down, we are encouraged! As Abra-

ham was inspired by seeing from afar in faith the city of God (Heb. 11:10), so we can be likewise strengthened! Our lives need the larger framework of knowing that one day, the new Zion and Jerusalem will come down from above (cf. Rev. 21).

There are especially three areas of the Zion in the future which can be noted here and which tie in with what we saw from the Old Testament.

*(To be continued and concluded in the next issue.)*

<sup>1</sup>Speech delivered at the Reformation Rally in Langley, BC, on October 31, 1997. Scholarly footnotes have been omitted. 

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## Pointers for Parents

By E. Kampen

It is understandable that parents look for pointers, especially when things are not turning out with their children as they hoped. A common course of action is to pick up a self-help book. One such book which seems to be becoming familiar and popular in our circles is *Parenting Adolescents* by Kevin Huggins (NavPress). The dust jacket of the book tells us that the author is "the founder and director of a two-year training program for parents of adolescents at The Chapel in Akron, Ohio." He received his degrees from Grace Theological Seminary. It is not stated with which church he is affiliated. A "Foreword" and "Afterword" by Larry Crabb warmly hug the writings of Mr. Huggins with a wholehearted endorsement.

Upon reading the book, however, one cannot help becoming very disturbed by the author's use of Scripture. He reads Scripture as a parenting manual. He makes big leaps from texts to apply them to parenting. This is not the exception, but the rule, throughout his book. For your benefit, what follows are some examples to illustrate this.

a. In the introduction the author refers to the letters of Paul to Timothy and Titus as an example of parenting style and how parents might be able to cultivate personal faith in Christ in their children. He writes "Paul intended to pass down to the churches his relationship with Timothy as a prototype of the kind of relationship necessary for transmitting personal faith from one genera-

tion to the next" (p. 18). For one thing, Paul was not the father of Timothy; for another, this is putting intentions into Paul's mind that cannot be substantiated. Paul wrote as apostle to a young minister who needed encouragement and direction in his task. It was not Paul who had great plans for this letter but the Holy Spirit, who preserved it in the Canon of Scripture to guide the church of all ages. It should be obvious that Paul's focus was not on parenting children, but on pastoring the flock. Only in an indirect way can we derive principles for parenting from this letter.

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***Deducing principles of parenting should be done with great sensitivity, taking into account the context and the message of Scripture in the chapters under discussion.***

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b. In chapter one the author writes: "From the earliest scriptural records, the parents of young adults experienced an array of very strong emotions over their children's behaviour." The following references are given: Judges 14:1-3, 1 Samuel 2:22-25, 2 Samuel 13:21-22, Job 1:5 (p. 26). He also concludes that Cain was a teenager when he killed

Abel (p. 33). These passages are irrelevant when it comes to adolescents. Scripture does not tell us how old the children were. If anything, the context suggests that these were all grown up children who should be called adults.

c. Also in chapter one (p. 32), the author refers to Proverbs 19:22: "What a man desires is unfailing love" (NIV). He takes the word "desire" as the basis for every person desiring a "relationship." Commentators agree that the Hebrew of this verse is difficult. The RSV translates, "What is desired in a man is loyalty, and a poor man is better than a liar." The NKJV translates, "What is desired in a man is kindness, and a poor man is better than a liar." It is not necessary to choose the best translation. The point should be clear that the author wanted to work with the concept of "desires for relationship," and the NIV at Prov. 19:22 sounded as if it would fit the purpose.

d. Chapter three works extensively with James 4:1-3. However, the author uses it to describe tension in the parent-child relationship rather than keeping in mind that James is addressing tension in the congregation. Undoubtedly certain deductions might apply to parenting, but it is wrong to read it as a "parenting text."

e. In chapter four the author does an extensive analysis of David. He severely judges David as parent in his dealings with Amnon and Absalom. We should, however, remember that the primary purpose of this part of Scripture is not to teach us parenting skills. Deducing prin-

ciples of parenting should be done with great sensitivity, taking into account the context and the message of Scripture in the chapters under discussion.

f. The author openly admits that chapter five is an application of Larry Crabb's ideas. He sprinkles some texts around but one must strain one's imagination to understand their relevance.

g. In chapter six, Mr. Huggins quotes from Gal. 5:15 (RSV), "But if you bite and devour one another take heed that you are not consumed by one another" (p. 146). He uses this as a proof text against a "consumer approach" in parenting. He then writes that, "When a parent approaches his teen as a consumer, his goal is to get his teen to satisfy (or help satisfy) his deepest desires." The author uses the translation that suits his purpose. If he had used the NIV, he would not have found the right sounding word. There it is translated, "If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other." Again, the context is not parenting but congregational life.

h. In the same chapter, Mr. Huggins promotes a "servant model" in parenting based on 1 Pet. 3:1, "Likewise you wives be submissive to your husbands" (p. 155). He connects the "likewise" with the preceding passages which point to Christ's readiness to suffer. Though the idea of servant parenthood has merit, it is strained to base it on 1 Pet. 3:1. Furthermore, in 1 Pet. 3:1, the "likewise" does not refer to Christ's suffering but is the continuation of Peter's exhortation to various categories of people to live as Christians in this world (1 Pet. 2:13: be subject to the governing authorities; 1 Pet. 2:18: slaves be submissive to your masters).

i. In chapter seven, Mr. Huggins uses Nehemiah and his relationship with the people of Jerusalem as a model for parenting. Nehemiah is described as a "parent" to the people. Again, matters are stretched to the limit of one's imagination. Nehemiah is not a book about parenting but about the LORD at work restoring His people through the leadership of Nehemiah.

j. The last few chapters continue by quoting proverbs merely because it sounds as if there are connections.

It is this strained use of Scripture that alerts us, that though the book claims to give Scriptural advice, what we get is advice based on the author's years of experience in his field (see page 11). The things the author writes flow more naturally out of Larry Crabb, who is referred to repeatedly, than out of Scripture. One cannot help getting the impression that the book is baptized pop-psychology. There is no reference to God's covenan-



tal dealing and how that affects Christian parenting. It appears that parenting wisdom began with Larry Crabb and Kevin Huggins and their renewed understanding of Scripture.

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**... Parenting is not a new invention. You are not the first to have children.**

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Another book dealing with raising children is *Standing on the Promises: A Handbook of Biblical Child-rearing* by Douglas Wilson (Canon Press). Mr. Wilson is the minister of Community Evangelical Fellowship in Moscow, Idaho. This is an independent congregation based especially on the Westminster Standards. Mr. Wilson has also co-authored *Back to Basics: Rediscovering the Richness of the Reformed Faith* (Presbyterian and Reformed).

*Standing on the Promises* is also a disturbing book; it is disturbing in a completely opposite way to *Parenting Adolescents*. Mr. Huggins' weakness is Mr. Wilson's strength. Mr. Wilson speaks scripturally, covenantally. When Mr. Wilson quotes Scripture, you do not have to strain your imagination to see any connections. You may strain your imagination to try to negate what he writes. He lays portions of Scripture before us that we prefer to ignore because they do not function in our life as they should. For example, he stresses the need for strict discipline, including physical discipline in the early years. Texts from Proverbs are brought to the fore. In these matters we may show more influence of the "no-contact" philosophy of our age than we care to admit.

Mr. Wilson takes great effort to show how the sovereign God is pleased to work through the generations. He is the God who uses means. God also promises to bless the faithful use of the means. Hence it should be normal, Mr. Wilson points out, that children of believing parents also grow up as believers. This is simply honouring God's

ways, living by His promise! It is that promise which gives parents courage to set about their task.

It is noteworthy that Mr. Wilson spends very little time on the period of adolescence. He challenges the idea that in adolescence there are necessarily more problems and difficulties. True, there will be problems unique to that age. Though it sounds almost too simple, he does give the key to parenting adolescence by his reference to Deut. 6:7 ff. There the continual, daily conversation of parents with their children about the ways of the LORD is clearly commanded. Parents should not cease to talk to their children just because the children feel they do not need it. By naturally talking about the ways of the LORD (not in a preachy way) to their children at every fitting opportunity (while walking, driving, etc.) parents are to prepare the teenagers to leave the parental oversight and be ready to act independently.

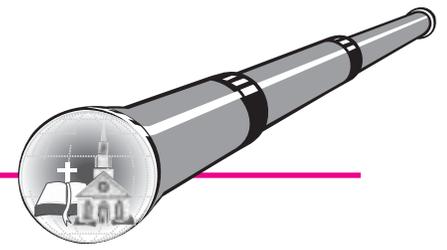
When it comes to the important task of parenting, *Standing on the Promises* is a book that can be read with much benefit. Young couples would do well to read this booklet before marriage, or, before expecting their first child. Parents with adolescent children will also benefit from its Scriptural principles. As the Scriptures are explained, parents may be startled by the serious consequences of present ways of parenting or be encouraged by the rich promises upon humble, faithful parenting.

I recommend this book, but at the same time I would like to make another recommendation for parents who desire to be good parents: talk to your own parents and grandparents! Sure, they may have brought you up with many weaknesses, and they will probably readily admit that. But, parenting is not a new invention. You are not the first to have children. We should not fall for the idea that parenting skills can only be learned from books written by those who have no regard for God's covenantal way of working. Parents can teach parents (cf. Titus 2:3,4). When we seek pointers for parenting outside of our immediate circle, let's make sure that the advice has a familiar covenantal ring to it.

*Rev. Eric Kampen is the minister of the Willoughby Heights Canadian Reformed Church in Langley BC. He and his wife have five daughters.*

The two books the author refers to are: *Parenting Adolescents* by Kevin Huggins. Hardcover, 258 pages. \$10.95US Navpress.

*Standing on the Promises: A Handbook of Biblical Child-rearing* by Douglas Wilson. Softcover, 168 pages. \$9.50 US Canon Press, Moscow Idaho. 



# Observation Deck

By J. VanRietschoten

Ever since the Sunday in December when, in the churches, the plight of persecuted Christians was brought before the Lord in congregational prayer, I am more alert to this matter. From my observation deck news items of this nature come into view. Most of this is gleaned from the *Christian Observer* and references are also taken from the *New York Times*.

## PRESBYTERIANS BRUTALLY KILLED IN MEXICO

Three Presbyterian teenagers and a middle aged Presbyterian woman were killed and their bodies chopped into pieces in Aurora Chica, Chenalho, Chiapas, on Nov. 18, according to reports originating in Mexico City. Some reports accused members of the so-called Zapatista Liberation Army of committing the murders. Others claimed it was the work of the majority political party.

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Townpeople in Aurora Chica fled to the mountains when the attack occurred. "The 200 armed men who assassinated the evangelical Presbyterians" planned the assault in Chanonal community, according to state authorities quoted in *NOVEDADES* newspaper (Nov. 23, 1997). They were reported to have carried high-powered weapons. After shooting their four victims in the back, "the aggressors finished them off with machete blows, causing the separation of their arms and legs," according to official declarations by local authorities quoted in the same account.

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Relatives of the four murdered Christians urged punishment for those responsible, but said they would not attempt to seek their own justice, "because their faith does not permit it." The dead were Rosa Perez Lopez, 45, Elena and Mario Hernandez Perez, 16 and 14 respectively, and Antonio Santiz Gomez, 13.

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Some political leaders in Chenalho blame a French Roman Catholic priest, Miguel Chantenau,

for the wave of violence sweeping the region. Many families in the area have been evacuated, and reports speak of "hooded men" who are producing a climate of fear and panic.

Originally from: Elliott@xc.org  
(*Christian Observer*)  
PRESBYTERIANS-WEEK 2 JANUARY 1998  
Christian Observer Foundation  
Elisabeth Isais, *Compass Direct*

## According to the next item things are different in Uganda.

### GOVERNMENT BACKS GOSPEL IN UGANDA

Uganda's Back to God Ministries, a media-oriented evangelistic outreach, associated with the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Uganda, receives free air time for its television broadcasts under a new agreement with the government's Ministry of Information. The RPC in Uganda formed in 1990. Reformed Presbyterian Church in Uganda, Office in the United States, PO Box 12268, Pensacola, Florida 32581

## In Sudan the situation remains grim.

### WAR SETS RECORDS IN SUDAN

As the unseasonable rains come to an end and the much delayed dry season begins, so too the fighting is increasing in the world's longest war of the century – between the Muslim Arab North and the Christian Black (Presbyterian and Episcopalian) South in Sudan.

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The National Islamic Front (NIF) government of Sudan is desperately struggling to maintain their strategic lines of supply and communication. Under threat from the Sudanese, Peoples Liberation Army (SPLAY) military advances. The NIF regime's armed forces are spread thinly over a vast area. And this is at a time when its economy is particularly weak. The domestic political support for the NIF has also been further undermined by the mass conscrip-

tion of school and university students into the armed forces. A record number of desertions from the government forces is being reported. Most international food aid goes to areas under government control leaving Christians in the liberated areas to starve.

Presbyterian Week 26 DECEMBER 1997  
Christian Observer Foundation  
Front line Fellowship – chas-boyle@global.co.zap

## In the New York Times of Dec. 21, 1997, Jeffrey Goldberg writes an extensive article under the heading WASHINGTON DISCOVERS CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION.

Should civil government put foreign trade first or persecuted Christians first? This mainly is the area which Goldberg addresses. One of his main references is to Nina Shea "religion expert at the human rights group Freedom House."

"Shea belongs to a new and potent political coalition that includes Reaganite conservatives, veterans of the Soviet Jewry movement, and, most important, evangelical Christians."

Shea's coalition is supporting proposed legislation introduced by two Republicans called the Wolf-Specter bill. The official name of this bill is the Freedom From Religious Persecution Act,

". . . which would create an office to monitor religious persecution and sanction countries that systematically persecute any religious group."

Another reference of Goldberg reads, "Paul Marshall, author of "Their Blood Cries Out" and a senior fellow at the Institute of Christian Studies in Toronto, estimates that 700,000 Christians have died in the eight years since Muslim fundamentalists seized power in Sudan."

However, Shea's coalition is opposed by another coalition.

"Besides the leaders of China and several Muslim countries, this coalition includes the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the liberal National Council of Churches and several Christian leaders who believe that

martyrdom, like the everlasting presence of the poor, is Biblically preordained."

Further opposition to Shea's coalition comes as a surprise.

"The Rev. Billy Graham's son, Nelson, who controls a ministry in Asia, publicly cast scorn on the movement: 'As evangelical Christians, we should be about God's work',

he wrote to his supporters, 'sharing the gospel of God's love in a lost world, being His ambassadors and helping the world see that Christians are spiritual salt and light, not destructive political tools.'

Taking into account the track record of the Graham crusades in countries where Christians are oppressed Nelson's statement should not come as a surprise.

While crusading in countries that oppressed Christians Graham never seems to have publicly pleaded for freedom of religion. It is surprising, however, that Graham and others do not see that the task of civil government is to protect Christians against persecution. What the church cannot do the civil government must do as servant of God (Rom. 13; 1 Tim. 2:1-4). 

## PRESS REVIEW

By J. De Jong



# Keeping Promises

In the light of the huge rally held on The Mall (in Washington D. C.) last October, *Time* news magazine published in the same week a cover story on the Promise Keepers organization. In six years this organization has mushroomed to a membership of 1.1 million men, with revenues of \$87 million in 1996. Rallies have been held all over the US, and in major centres in Canada as well.

*Time* is not sure what to do with this movement. First there is an attempt to highlight its strong political impact, indicating there may be a hidden agenda:

Promise Keepers declares it has no political agenda. Nevertheless, it makes no attempt to hide its allies on the religious right. As early as 1992, when the group was without a constituency or a mailing list, it received \$10,000 in critical assistance from James Dobson, a psychologist and Christian activist who produces the most widely heard Christian daily radio program and is closely allied with the influential religious right Family Research Council lobby in Washington. Since then, Dobson has given Promise Keepers strategic publicity on his radio show, has spoken at a 1993 Promise Keepers rally in Boulder, Colorado, and has written a chapter in the group's guidebook. Dobson's organization has published Promise Keepers' books and materials. Similarly, Pat Robertson, the former presidential candidate and Christian Coalition head, has long been a Promise Keepers supporter, spreading the word about "Stand in the Gap" on his TV show. Promise Keepers' president Randy Phillips says, "Neither Dobson nor Robertson has any impact on Promise Keepers'

planning, strategy or message development."

Then the attention shifts to the charismatic and inspiring leader of the movement, Bill McCartney:

Promise Keepers founder McCartney, 57, is without doubt deeply conservative. As head football coach for the University of Colorado, McCartney had mandatory pre-game prayer, for which he was attacked by the American Civil Liberties Union. In 1989 he caused an uproar at the university when he addressed a pro-life rally. The college was infuriated again in 1992 when McCartney announced support for Amendment 2, which barred certain gay-rights laws in Colorado. He has also said, "The only way God can be worshipped is through Jesus Christ. There is no other way."

His group does not take an official position on abortion, but McCartney personally attacks the issue with fervour. "Abortion is a violation of the heart of God," he says. "That's a human life. It's precious to God, created in His image, and potentially that life will carry the very Spirit of God." The view has shown up in the official Promise Keeper News. Its July issue describes the current era as a time of "crisis" for the nation: "The legal undermining of the sanctity of human life, from the preborn to the old and infirm, represents a rejection of America's two-century old tenet that mankind is made in God's image and is a repudiation of morality as a factor in court decisions."

Besides abortion, sexual purity appears to be one of the big issues Mr. McCart-

ney is concerned about, and it figures strongly at the PK rallies:

Promise Keepers believe a man's spiritual makeup differs from a woman's. Men need something McCartney calls a "masculine context that allows them to come clean;" and the group describes itself as a "Christ-centered ministry dedicated to uniting men through vital relationships to become godly influences in their world." The organization seeks to lead men to Christ by creating a climate in which men are more likely to view themselves and their lives more honestly, forums for mea culpas to be performed without female assistance. Indeed, women are seen as an impediment to a man's immediate soul-searching and are not invited into Promise Keepers rallies, prayer groups or other religious activities.

The group makes a strong case for single-sex worship. While generic evangelical appeals open Promise Keepers rallies the sermons can quickly get down to the nitty-gritty. At a recent gathering at the Pontiac Silverdome, in a Detroit suburb, the second speaker spent half an hour hitting hard at details of sexual sins, not just inner lust and the use of pornography but adultery and abuse as well. Why? Promise Keepers' surveys show that 62% of stadium goers struggle with sexual sin in their lives. No other issue comes close. At the end of his sermon, the speaker at the Silverdome asked men who had committed any sexual impurities to come to the front and confess them before God. At first nothing happened. Then a few guys trickled forward. Suddenly, thousands jammed the front, falling to their knees,

weeping and accepting Christ as their Saviour. "When a man sees a stadium full of other men crying, he figures it's all right to cry too," says Donald Burwell, a Promise Keepers organizer in Detroit. "With women there, he might not get that honest."

The article also lists the seven principles and commitments by which the organization operates. They are:

1. . . . honouring Jesus Christ through worship, prayer and obedience to God's word in the power of the Holy Spirit.
2. . . . pursuing vital relationships with a few other men, understanding that he needs brothers to help him keep his promises.
3. practicing spiritual, moral, ethical and sexual purity.
4. building strong marriages and families through love, protection and Biblical values.
5. . . . supporting his church by honouring and praying for his pastor, and by giving him time and resources.
6. reaching beyond any racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of Biblical unity.
7. influencing this world, being obedient to the great commandment (see Mark 12: 30-31) and the great commission (see Matthew 28:19-20).

How would I characterize such a movement in contemporary America? This is another expression of popular religion so typical of the American religious landscape, another example of the repentance movements of the previous centuries. America thrives on huge gatherings and big shows! Yet this movement has some distinctive features of its own.

1. It places primary stress on the phenomenon of male bonding. Notice that in the seven pillars of commitment bonding with other males gets top priority, even before church and family. A primary feature of the conversion strategy is males working with other males. The reason? Mr. McCartney was a born coach, and he has transferred the model of coaching football to the realm of religion. Hence the need to fill the stadium, to work with a large crowd, and to hear the cheers. The atmosphere of the sports world is idolized and exploited for religious purposes. The style of the apostolate? Hardly!

2. The movement is ostensibly non-political, but there is a hidden political agenda. Why would Mr. McCartney choose The Mall to rally his men? Then there is the strong anti-abortion current in

Mr. McCartney's preaching. And the logo phrase of the rally, "Standing in the Gap," taken from Ezekiel 22:30 (NIV), was meant to exude the tone of a vital, critical intercession for the country. That was apparently the purpose of the rally. That's apparently also the reason for changing the wording of the statement of principles. According to a report in *Christian Renewal* (October 20, 1997), the statement on "justification by faith alone" was removed to appease Roman Catholic criticism of the organization, and so allow it to recruit members from the Roman Catholic Church. After all, there is a strong anti-abortion sentiment among Roman Catholics as well.

3. The primary focus is the collective experience of inner cleansing of the soul through mutual confession and interpersonal sharing. The image of males touching, crying and hugging is one that highlights the specific emotional focus of Promise Keepers: it is not doctrines that unite, but a collective sense of the need to purge guilt and sins, especially sexual ones.

*Time's* judgment is rather mild and congenial. In its evaluation it says:

For now, Promise Keepers seems intent on framing the issues of gender and race in the most Biblical of contexts. And while the sonorities of Scripture can work miracles in individual souls, they can also alienate non-Christians and create confusion and paranoia in an already heavily secularized America. Even so, liberal watchdogs are probably overstating their case when they argue that Promise Keepers is part of a Trojan-horse strategy of the religious right. The men involved at the grass roots see only their own souls at stake. Indeed, America can benefit to a degree from the Promise Keepers' brand of healing.

The year has been a time of turmoil and anxiety at the organization's Denver headquarters. Attendance at stadium events has fallen, and the dip in revenues has led to a paring down of the staff. Leaders are coming up with new issues to tackle – for example, counselling men on ways to get out of debt, to broaden and deepen the promises that must be kept. The days leading up to the rally, however, have been exuberant. The distant future does not faze McCartney. His trust is in the same God who inspired him seven years ago to start the movement. Promise Keepers, he says, is "gonna impact this country every conceivable way, for the good." He sees a chain reaction of conversions and personal transformations sweep-

ing the country-starting with the revival rally on Saturday. "When you start doing things out of a heart that pleases the Lord, watch out. He's gonna show up, big time."

We do not need to come with scathing attacks, either. In contemporary America, it is good to see a spirit of reaction setting in against the hedonistic and utterly secularised pro-abortion leadership. A deep sense of inner revulsion against the flagrant pro-abortion position cannot but continue to rise among people of various religious backgrounds, since it concerns the taking of human life. Abortion is a life and death issue, and no amount of cover up is going to make it go away.

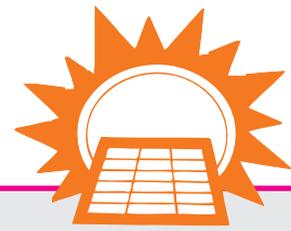
Yet there is no room, in my view, for an enthusiastic endorsement and defence of this movement from the side of the Reformed people. Let's be realistic, and judge new movements carefully. This movement is non-denominational, even to the point of including Roman Catholics. It is based on principles of male bonding which, although in themselves functional realities in civil and social spheres, are here exploited and idolized to an extreme far beyond anything acceptable in the light of normal Reformed and Christian family life.

Should men bond with men over and above their bonding with their soul mates, their wives and children? Every man can have his friends. David too knew of a friendship surpassing the love of women, a bonding that gave a particular form of trust and support beyond that shared in the marriage relationship (2 Sam 1:26). But to make this an obligatory rule in today's culture is pushing matters to an extreme. No wonder that many women perceive Promise Keepers to be an anti-woman organization, even though that is not its basic intention.

We all need daily repentance. At times we need confession and also mutual help and support among the brothers. But we should be seeking that in the proper channels, among the family of God, and through the avenue of the officers he has appointed. And that's more than just the pastor (see principle number 5 above). It's support for the whole consistory, and support for the church and its causes in the midst of a time of growing confusion and radicalizing movements.

Those who keep their feet within Zion's walls will stand securely (Ps 26:12), in church, in the home and family, and in all the tasks and causes of the world wide kingdom of God. Reformed men do not need the adrenaline kick of a Promise Keeper's rally. They are too busy keeping their promises in their own congregations and families!





By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

*“And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. John 14: 3*

## Dear Brothers and Sisters,

If your birthday appears in this column, you will receive many cards in the mail around that date. It is exciting to come home from work and check what the mailman brought for you. To receive letters and/or cards with best wishes especially for you, makes you feel special. Some people you learn to know through the letters that they send you every year. Many years ago most of the older people among us emigrated from Holland to Canada. When they left their old country they left many of their family members behind, and they did not know if they would ever see them again. The only way to keep in touch with their loved ones was to write letters. They thrived on receiving letters from Holland, and they would read them over and over again to find out how everybody was doing, and how everything was in the old country.

Through the ages many letters have been written, and have been saved. Important information for history has been gathered from saved letters. Not only in regards to history but also to matters of faith, much wisdom has been found in old letters. When people write letters, they often also express their deeper feelings, and their personal struggles. The man who wrote our Belgic confession, Guido de Brès, wrote such letters to his wife while he was imprisoned. He was sure that he would never see his wife again, and that he would be killed because of his faith. He expressed his struggles, his doubts, and finally also his comfort and his hope in the Lord His Saviour. Today those letters are still used to assure us all of the certainty of the work that Jesus Christ accomplished for us.

When Jesus Christ after His resurrection ascended into Heaven, He left us all waiting for His promises to come true. But He gave us also something that we could read every day. He ensured that we were equipped with His Word. He sent His Holy Spirit, Who inspired some men to write the Holy Bible. It is His letter to us. That letter is full of news about the Lord, about His Son, about our future. Whatever our situation is, we can always find a line of comfort, hope, or trust in that letter. Whenever we study it, we can always find some new hope, and directions on the way we have to go. The Lord wrote in it about our sin, and all the misery that rules our lives as a result of that sin. But the Lord also wrote about repentance, and forgiveness through His work on the cross. If we serve Him with all our hearts, and keep His commandments, and fight our sinful inclinations and do not give in to the attacks of Satan, then we belong to Him out of grace. And He is right with us to support us, so that we can pray to Him for help at all times. This is all written in the Letter that He sent to us. The best part of all is what we read in the text above this page: He is preparing a place for us. One day we will be with Him, then we will be forever freed from the difficulties that we experience here. Maybe we have to wait for a while yet. Maybe the waiting seems very long at times. But the day that we *will* meet Him will come. The Lord Himself will help us while we are waiting. In the meantime we can read His letter, and pray that we may be ready to meet Him, when our place has been prepared for us.

To God's children the day when we have to depart from this earth is nothing to worry about. It is only something to

long for. For then the Lord will take us to Himself, so that where He is we may be also, for ever and ever.

*Our Saviour, when He told His own  
That He ere long would leave,  
These blessed words of comfort spoke  
Lest they-and we-should grieve:*

*“I to My Father’s house now go,  
Where many dwellings are.  
As I have told you, there I will  
A place for you prepare.*

*For one day I shall come again  
To take you unto Me;  
Where I, your Lord and Saviour, am,  
There you shall also be. Hymn 30:1,3,4*

## Birthdays in March:

- 3: Trevor Hofsink,**  
4249 Academy Street, Box 772,  
Beamsville, ON L0R 1B0
- 12: Gerry Eelhart,**  
9713-151 Street, Edmonton, AB T5P 1S6
- 15: Jim VanderHeiden**  
7162 Canboro Road, RR#1,  
Dunnville, ON N1A 2W1
- 18: Rosalyn Kuik**  
68 Lynn Lake Drive, Winnipeg, MB R2C 4N7
- 26: Courtney Popken**  
9445 Windsor Street, Chilliwack, BC V2P 6C5  
Trevor hopes to be 20, Gerry, 36, Jim 39, and Rosalyn 24.

The name of Courtney has not been in this column before. I will quote a part of the letter I received for her:

*“Courtney is 4, she will be 5 on March 26th, D.V. The doctors don't have a name for her disease. The muscles in her body are over active, which causes her body to be stiff. She has been on a respirator since she was 4 months old. She can't walk or talk due to this rare disease. She uses sign language and a talking computer to communicate with others. She gets around in a wheelchair.”*

I am sure Courtney and her family would be happy with some special attention and comfort from us all. Not only by sending our cards, but especially by remembering them in our prayers.

Happy Birthday to Trevor, Gerry, Jim, Rosalyn, and Courtney!

I want to thank Wilma and Mrs. van Drongelen for your card and letters, out of which I was asked to quote the following note:

*Thank you,  
I would like to thank everyone for the cards (90) and visits during my 40th Birthday Open House. Your friendship and best wishes made the day very special.*

*Thank you, Wilma van Drongelen*

Until next month,

Mrs. R. Ravensbergen,  
7462 Hwy 20, RR 1, Smithville, ON L0R 2A0

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**Dear Editor,**

I hereby would like to bring to your attention a mistake made regarding the articles, "The 'appropriation of Salvation' in the Creeds – An Overview," by the Rev. A. Baars.

The author of these articles is Drs. A. Baars who is Professor at the Theological University at Apeldoorn, The Netherlands. He used to be minister of the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk at Middelharnis, South Holland, in the Netherlands.

Yours in the Lord,  
*John C. van Doodewaard*  
*Winnipeg, Manitoba*

**Dear Editor,**

In the *Clarion* of Oct.31,1997 (vol 46,no 22) you published a "Gebed van een 65-plusser" with a translation by Ralph Winkel. In the last 20 years the following has appeared more than once in Ann Landers' column.

Lord thou knowest better than I would know myself,  
That I am growing older and that some day I will be old.  
Keep me from the fatal habit of thinking I must say something of every subject and at every occasion.  
Release me from craving to straighten out every body's affairs. Make me thoughtful but not moody. Helpful but not bossy. With my vast store of wisdom, it seems a pity not to use all, But thou knowest Lord that I want a few friends in the end.  
Keep my mind free from recital of endless details.  
Give me ways to get to the point. Seal my lips on my aches and pains. They are increasing and love of rehearsing them  
Is becoming sweeter as the years go by.  
I do not ask for the grace to enjoy the tales of other's pains,  
But help me to endure with patience.  
I do not ask for improved memory, but for growing humility  
And lessening of cocksureness, when my memory seems to clash with the memory of others.  
Teach me the glorious lesson, that occasionally I may be mistaken  
Keep me reasonably sweet, (I do not want to be a saint),

But a sour old person is the crowning work of the devil.  
Give me the ability to see good things in unexpected places  
And talents in unexpected people  
And give me, o Lord, the grace to tell them so.

Where did this prayer originate? In North America, then translated into Dutch and now translated back again into English?

Or is it the other way around?

*Maureen Kampen,*  
*Vernon, BC.*

**Dear Editor,**

I would like to comment on a few items from the November 28 issue of *Clarion*. These ideas that have been brought forward, though very well argued, are far too narrow minded for me to pass up commenting.

First, I would like to ask how anyone could contemplate publishing a letter with the ideas that Rev. Bill DeJong has put forward? The idea that a non-church member be left out in the cold or "uncomfortable" is totally ludicrous! What kind of evangelism is this? How are we to show our Christian background toward such people if all of our hospitalities are superficial? We must remember the first six letters in Christian are CHRIST; and we are His disciples. We are not told to go into the world and gather all those that attend church every week, but to gather those that know not who their Saviour is. I find it utterly appalling that he suggests that the salutation and benediction are for only church-goers. Does he not think that the Holy Spirit is working in the unchurched visitor, which is why he is there in the first place? Should the blessing "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" not apply to him/her? When I read or hear these words, they assist in strengthening my faith. Imagine the effect on an unchurched visitor! A blessing directly from God! What more could a person ask for?

Secondly, I would like to comment on the editorial in the same issue. I am not going to argue legalities, but I will say that many of the school boards were in support of the teachers. But that is all I am going to say about that. What I would like to comment on is the phrase "Christian School Teacher." Where is the accent on this? Christian school

teacher, or Christian school teacher? Is there a difference here? Should we not examine this before we go tearing into the whole political issue?

My brother-in-law is a Christian school teacher, and he had no choice but to go on strike. Now, before people start quoting Scripture text about being persecuted for the name of Christ, I will say that the decision to strike was not an easy one for him. I will also say that I SUPPORTED him, because he believed what he was doing was right, and he is a very strong Christian man.

I hope that the editorial committee takes heart to these comments, for I am not the only one who has said them; just the only one with enough backbone to write them. Hey, even Martin Luther was considered a radical.

Yours in Christ,  
*John P. Van Amerongen.*  
*jabva@istar.ca*

**Rev. DeJong responds:**

*Let me begin by thanking the editors for kindly providing me the opportunity to respond to Mr. Van Amerongen and to continue an important dialogue. If I understand Mr. Van Amerongen correctly, he takes issue with my suggested distinction that unchurched visitors at the worship service should feel "welcome, but not comfortable." This does not imply, as Van Amerongen suggests, a "superficial hospitality." Let me be clear: we must welcome unchurched visitors with open arms, give them a bulletin, show them a seat, explain the liturgy, etc. In general, we must be as courteous, sincere and hospitable as is humanly possible. But if the worship service itself makes an unrepentant, unchurched visitor comfortable, then something has gone amiss.*

*The reading of the law should bring him to his knees in the shocking realization that he desperately needs a Saviour – that's not a "comfortable" feeling (see Rom.3:19). The preaching of the Word should evoke the uneasy conviction that he is without Christ, without salvation, without hope and headed for perdition – that's not a "comfortable" feeling. Worship services (contra Bill Hybels) should not be seeker-sensitive – sensitive to what seekers want (1 Cor. 2:14), but sinner-sensitive – sensitive to what sinners need and God-sensitive – sensitive to what God prescribes.*

*As for the benediction and salutation, they are, in the words of the apostle Paul, for "the saints" (Eph. 1:1), "the*

faithful in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 1:2), "the church" (1 Cor. 1:2) "the sanctified" (1 Cor. 1:2), etc. They are not for unrepentant, unchurched visitors. God extends no such blessing to the wicked (Ps.1).

I realize I've probably overstepped my privileges with the editors, but let me conclude on a personal note. Tonight I will be teaching a membership class in our church to a couple who visited our

church for the first time a few months ago, felt welcome, and were "uncomfortably" driven to their knees through God's Word and Spirit. In the spring of this year, they hope, the Lord willing, to profess their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ publically. Soli Deo Gloria.

For more information on this ecclesiastical/evangelistic methodology, see Michael S. Horton, "Beyond Style

Wars: Recovering the Substance of Worship" in The Banner (June 9, 1997)13-15 and J. Mark Beach, "Contemporary Worship and the User-Friendly God" (1 & 2) in The Outlook (October and November, 1995).

Fraternally,  
Bill DeJong  
Grande Prairie, AB 

# OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



## Dear Busy Beavers:

Do you have family all over the world? Or do you have a penpal in another part of Canada, or another part of the world? Don't you think it would be exciting if you have uncles, aunts, and cousins somewhere else in the big wide world which was created so many years ago? If you do have relatives or friends somewhere else, write to me and tell me where they are. Some of you may have cousins in Holland, or Australia or South Africa, or somewhere else.

You will be back at school now for about five weeks. Did you have a nice break? What did you do over your Christmas and New Year break? Are you enjoying it back at school? Be sure to study real hard until your spring break. Have a good year.

### FEBRUARY BIRTHDAY

- |                        |                         |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 5. Melissa Hovius      | 24. Francien Breukelman |
| 7. Stephanie Post      | 27. Rebecca VanDyk      |
| 18. Alicia Koolsbergen | 28. Amanda Zwaagstra    |
| 20. Jonathan Slaa      | 28. Rianne Boeve        |
| 21. Nadine Barendregt  |                         |

### ANIMAL WORD SEARCH

C A G B P L A T C A U P S R A C R B  
 G O D I L H R D A P S R B U R E E E  
 H G W R A K O S R I R A I Q P A E A  
 I V L W T S P R S G W I R S R E D V  
 S C A T Y A Q Z S R D R D Q P B E E  
 Q C D B P Q N N D E Y I C U L L G R  
 U S K C U D O L F I N E D Z A H I G  
 R U P E S U O M S X Q D O H S T U R  
 T S R U V X R S P R R O W Z O R S T  
 P Q X R A T S Q P S Q G P S Q T T T

#### Find:

- |       |      |      |          |        |             |
|-------|------|------|----------|--------|-------------|
| cow   | deer | dog  | mouse    | pig    |             |
| duck  | cat  | rat  | dolphin  | horse  |             |
| whale | bear | bird | platypus | beaver | prairie dog |

## MARCH BIRTHDAYS

- |                         |                        |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Virginia Jager       | 14. Katie VanSpronsen  |
| 3. Candace Shuurman     | 19. Diana Nobel        |
| 3. Jessica Bos          | 21. Lydia Jongsma      |
| 4. Emily Boot           | 23. David Smeding      |
| 7. Nicholas Koolsbergen | 25. Gail Schoon        |
| 7. Daniel Vis           | 28. Carolyn Vanleeuwen |
| 8. Denise VanDelft      | 29. Erin Buitenwerf    |
| 10. Janina Veldman      | 31. Carling North      |
| 13. John Boerema        | 31. Rosalynn vanAndel  |

## MATCH THE CAPITAL CITIES TO THE THE COUNTRY

- |                   |                              |
|-------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Washington, DC | 1. Australia                 |
| 2. Seoul          | 2. Canada                    |
| 3. Rome           | 3. China                     |
| 4. Paris          | 4. England                   |
| 5. Ottawa         | 5. France                    |
| 6. Moscow         | 6. Holland                   |
| 7. London         | 7. Italy                     |
| 8. Canberra       | 8. Korea                     |
| 9. Beijing        | 9. Russia                    |
| 10. Amsterdam     | 10. United States of America |

## PICTURE CODE

by Busy Beaver Shannon Tenhage

- |       |      |       |      |       |      |
|-------|------|-------|------|-------|------|
| A- \  | F- W | K- ;  | P- m | U- >  | Z- ☒ |
| B- !  | G- ↓ | L- ≡  | Q- ≡ | V- // |      |
| C- // | H- ↑ | M- \  | R- ↓ | W- S  |      |
| D- +  | I- ☒ | N- // | S- Z | X- ;  |      |
| E- ⊙  | J- ! | O- X  | T- ○ | Y- ~  |      |

m ↓ // ☒ Z ⊙ ○ ↑ ⊙ ≡ X ↓ +

X // ↑ ☒ ↓ ↑