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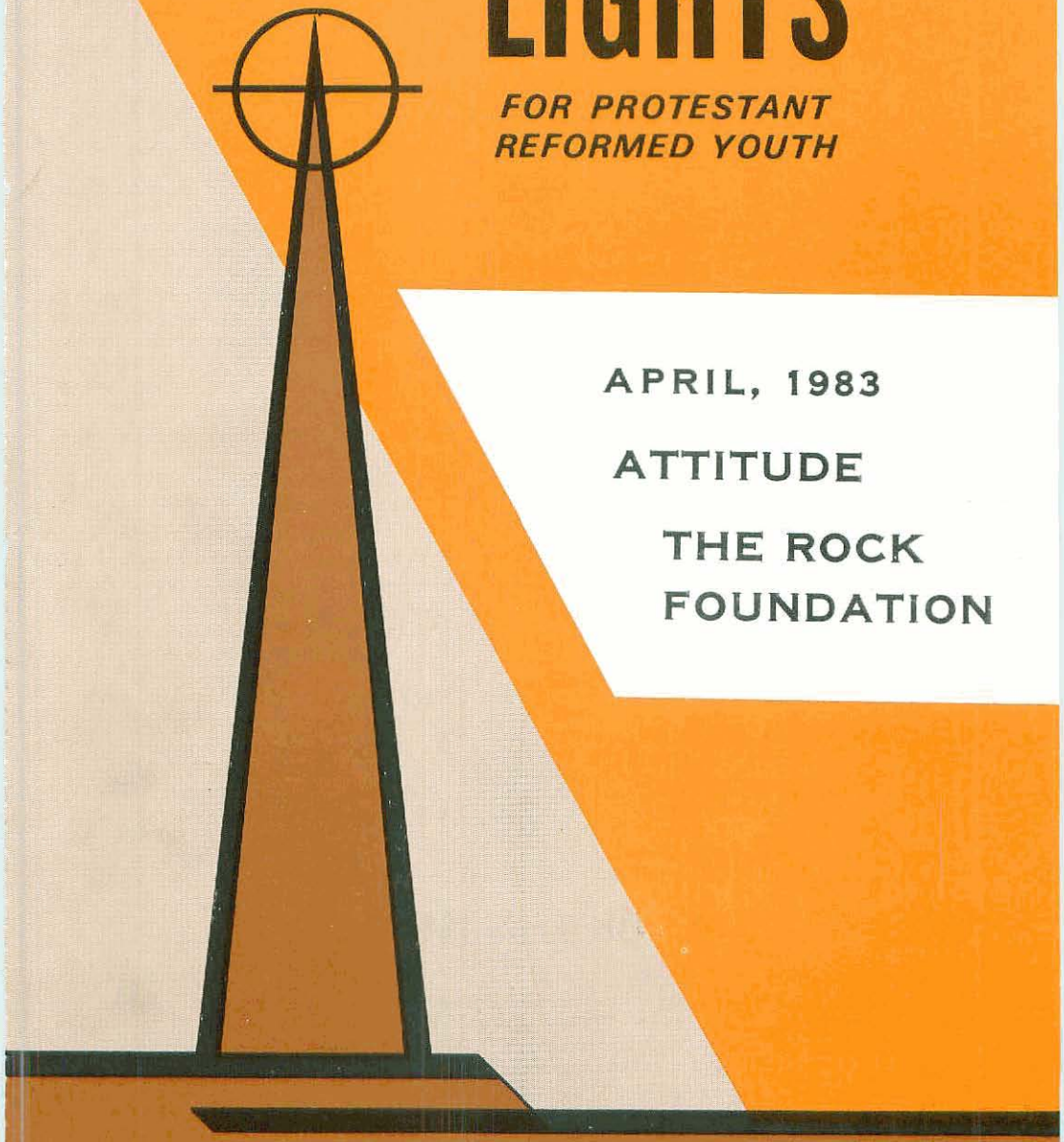

APRIL, 1983

ATTITUDE

THE ROCK FOUNDATION

VOLUME XLII APRIL, 1983 NUMBER 4

Published monthly (except June-July and August-September are combined) by the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies.

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Christchurch, New Zealand

If any material of **Beacon Lights** is reprinted by another periodical, we will appreciate your giving the source.

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**BEACON LIGHTS**
4625 Juleon S.W., Grand Rapids, MI 49504
Second Class Postage paid at
Jenison, Michigan (USPS 046-840)
Subscription Price $5.00

# IN THIS ISSUE

CRITIQUE - Attitude - Ben Wigger ..... 1
FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY - Our Communal Responsibility - Rev. C. Hanko ..... 3
FOCUS ON CHRISTIAN WOMEN - VI Blessings Result From Them - Mrs. H. Brands ..... 6
Music in the Church (3) - Rev. D. Engelsma ..... 9
TRUTH VS. ERROR - The Rock Foundation - Rev. R. C. Harbach ..... 13
News From, For and About Our Churches - Karen Vink ..... 16
The New King James Version - Rev. R. C. Harbach ..... 18

# ATTITUDE

*by Ben Wigger*

Have you ever been accused of having a bad attitude? I believe that it is safe to say that whether we have or not, we all have had days when we felt like the whole world was against us. Just think of your own personal experiences from day to day, and it soon becomes clear that our attitude towards all kinds of things is not always what it should be. Some days you just feel like there is a chip on your shoulder, and you just dare anyone to come along and knock it off.

Life comes at us from a lot of different directions every day. Sometimes we will feel like we own the world; and at other times we will feel like just giving up. Sometimes we will experience failure, and sometimes we will experience success. Let's face it, that's just a part of life; we will all experience a certain amount of success and failure, ups and downs in our lives.

This is why it is so important to achieve and maintain a "good attitude" when life comes at us from so many different directions. This is one of the most difficult, yet I believe one of the most crucial tasks that we will ever face.

We can not allow our attitude to become negative when we experience times of trouble. For if we do, we will suffer for it in all kinds of different ways. It seems to me that the more I consider this whole idea of our attitude that the more it becomes clear to me that one of the worst things a person can have is a bad attitude. It determines the way you feel, the way you think, the way you respond to almost everything. You simply can not separate yourself from your attitude any more than you can separate yourself from your shadow. Attitude is always there at the very center of things, shaping all of our thoughts, words, and deeds.

The attitude we have toward our work will affect how we do it; the attitude we have toward our school work will determine what kind of grades we get. The attitude we have towards our catechism classes will affect how we will learn our questions and answers. If our attitude toward our classmates is one of love, we will feel like doing all we can to help when help is needed; however, if our attitude towards our classmates is one of hostility and hatred, we will not feel like doing him any favors. Our attitude gives our inner outlook on things.

In a sense we are all what our attitudes are. One doesn't have to be around someone very long before he can figure out what kind of attitude he has. A person's attitude literally shapes his whole personality - how he thinks, how he feels, how he studies, how he works, how he plays, how he worships - everything.

No doubt it is easy to maintain a good positive attitude when things seem to be going our way. It's when school work becomes boring or difficult, or when parents seem to ask too many questions, or when the car breaks down, that's when we feel it is hard to hold on to that good attitude.

But this is exactly what the apostle Paul tells us to do; he says, and therefore the Word of God says, keep a right attitude at all times. "Let this mind (or attitude) be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God. . .made himself of no reputation, but took upon himself the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of man." Phil. 2:5-7. Paul here tells us that we should have the same kind of attitude Christ would have if He were in our place. What this tells us then is that there is no place in our lives for any sort of bad attitude, be it self-pity, resentment, pride, or a hundred other things.

Despite all of our shortcomings with our attitudes, there is one thing about them which we can be both thankful and grateful to God for; they can be changed. Our attitudes are not something that we can never hope to improve on; but first the change has to come from the heart. If that change is not there, then we are living a lie and not a Christian confession. We can say that we love our neighbor but our attitude may not prove that out.

You may have to live with the fact that you will never win any beauty contest, but your attitude doesn't have to be bad because of it. When people take advantage of you, you don't have to respond with a feeling of self-pity, resentment, or rage. We can and should return blessing for cursing, kindness for injury, love for hate. It is all a matter of living our confession. If you belong to Jesus Christ and testify that He is your Lord and Saviour, then you will respond as one who has Christ in his heart. You will find that you can not tolerate any sort of bad attitude in yourself, it's your own worst enemy. It will just spread unhappiness all the way around.

We can be thankful that Christ didn't only come to take away our sin; He also came to break its power over our lives, to transform us into His own children. Therefore we know that without a doubt we will have the victory over sin in this life. For Christ's work is complete; and by grace we will be able, if only in a small way, to respond to that work of Salvation in our own lives.

# Gems Out of the Gold Mine of God's Word

## Our Communal Responsibility

*by Rev. C. Hanko*

*"But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing; . . . and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel."* Joshua 7:1

We all are acquainted with the account of how God gave Israel the victory over Jericho as the key city to the land of Canaan. We also know about Achan, who took of the things that God had cursed, things that Israel might not keep to themselves, and hid them in his tent. We know how God brought defeat upon Israel in their attack upon Ai, so that they were driven back from before the enemy. Scripture tells us of the distress of Joshua, how he cried to the Lord in the realization that if the Lord forsook them they could only expect defeat wherever they turned. What a disgrace this would bring upon Jehovah of Israel. God informed Joshua that one of their number had sinned by taking of the accursed thing, and that the Lord would not be with them until that "accursed thing" was taken away out of their midst. When Achan was exposed and admitted that he had stolen a Babylonian garment and a goodly amount of silver and gold, the people were called upon, likely through their leaders to put this evil out of their midst by stoning Achan, his family, and his cattle, and burying them with the stolen goods under a heap of stones that would stand as a witness of this horrible offence in the valley of Achor. Without removing this offence the children of Israel could not be forgiven the sin that they committed through Achan.

It cannot escape us, that God ascribes to all of Israel the sin committed by one of their number. "The children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing." Verse 1. Again in verse 11, "Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff." (See also verse 18 of the previous chapter.)

This historical event plainly teaches us that there is a certain communal

responsibility among the members of the church, as well as among sinners in the world.

There are other references to this in Scripture. In II Samuel 21 we read of the famine that God brought upon the land of Canaan for three years during the reign of David, because of the sin of Saul in slaying the Gibeonites, who were promised protection by Joshua when Israel captured the land of Canaan.

In II Samuel 24 we are told of the three day pestilence that came upon Israel, in which 70,000 died, because of David's sin in counting the people.

This reminds us of the warning which God gives in the second command of His law, "For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." Just as God's covenant mercies continue in the line of continued generations of believers, so also God's holy vengeance carries on in the generations, even from father to son, of the haters of God.

History bears that out. Parents exert a tremendous influence upon their children, even unconsciously, not only in that which is good, but also in that which is evil. Children are great imitators of their parents, so that the evil practices of the parents will show up in the children and in the grand-children. Moreover, certain character weaknesses, such as dishonesty, lying, stealing, immorality, drinking, gossiping and swearing, may very well appear in the succeeding generations. We do not live on an island. We influence others, not only in the home, but also in the church, and in the school. Sin works like a cancer in the church, until a large segment of the congregation is carried along with a certain sin.

Besides that, the sin of an individual member brings a certain responsibility upon all the members. Never may the sins of others be ignored as if that were none of our business. Never may we take the Cain attitude of "Am I my brother's keeper?" The apostle Paul reminds us that we are all members of the body of Christ, and members one of another, so that if one member suffers we all suffer. If one member sins, we are all involved. In the affair of Achan no one seemed to know about his sin except possibly his immediate family. It does not seem likely that Achan could dig a hole in his tent and bury his loot without having the other family members know anything about it. But even so, the rest of the people must have been entirely ignorant of his transgression. Yet the sin was there, the "accursed thing" was in their camp, and all Israel suffered defeat at the hands of the men of Ai on account of it. Sin in a family necessarily involves the family, likewise in the school, and in the church.

The world of wicked men wants no part of this responsibility. Time and again we read of crimes committed openly, among many witnesses, yet no one interferes, no one wants to get involved. Every one acts as if he heard or saw nothing. People often refuse to be called as witnesses, because they take the "hands off" attitude.

That same attitude is often found in the church among fellow believers. It may be very well known that a member of the congregation is living in sin.

There may even be a lot of gossip among the other members about it. Some will even ask, "Why does not the consistory do something about this?" But they themselves take no action. The sinner continues in his sin. The gossipers continue to spread their sorry tales. The evil works like a cancer in the congregation. Those outside of the congregation point the accusing finger at the whole flock. "That is the kind of church that is."

That same attitude is naturally found often in both the elementary grades and in the high school. No one likes a tattle tale, or tale bearer. Small children, who like to tell the teacher about the wrongs done by other pupils, are told that they must not be tattle tales. That is proper, of course, but where does our responsibility enter in, and what do we do about it?

There is a grave danger that we become scandalmongers. One whispers behind his hand: "Someone stole a book from the class room." The second one confides in his friend, "Someone stole a typewriter from the school." The third confidently adds, "You know Jim, well, I think he is the one who stole the typewriter." And the fourth one goes around assuring his friends that Jim steals typewriters and other stuff and sells them. Jim gets a bad name. His family is looked down on. And the school is condemned for harboring thieves.

Yet no one will "squeal", even though he knows the facts. There is a certain unwritten law among classmates that they owe it to their peers to cover up for them. Anyone who would dare to break that unwritten law would be ostracized by the whole class. One seems to owe it to his classmates to say nothing that would expose the sin of the guilty party. No, not even if the wrong person should be accused and punished for it.

The question is, do we not have a responsibility to our God and to our conscience? Are we selfishly protecting ourselves from criticism and scorn because we are afraid to expose the sinner? Are we bringing God's disapproval on the school or church in order to protect ourselves?

Discipline is one of the earmarks of the true church. Where discipline is neglected the church is on its way to becoming a false church. God will not be mocked. It is true, that the consistory carries the keys of the kingdom and must exercise discipline in Christ's name. But does that relieve us of all personal responsibility?

What should we do when a sin is present among us and we are aware of it? Should we play possum? Should we pass this piece of information around among our friends as a choice morsel of gossip? Or should we have the spiritual strength and courage to travel that steep and hard road prescribed to us in Matthew 18? Should we speak to that person and tell him what he is doing to himself, and likewise to all those around him? And if that should fail, shouldn't we be honest enough to report that to the proper authorities, whether in the home, in the school, or in the church? What do you think?

Achan's sin had to be confessed and done away. For there is forgiveness through the cross of our Savior. Israel found that to be the solution, the only solution to their problem, the only way in which they could successfully conquer Canaan and inherit the promised land.

# The Sorrows of Conception: VI. Blessings Result From Them

*by Mrs. H. Brands*

Preface: This is the second to the last in this series of seven articles on the sorrows of conception. In this sixth article, I am discussing *blessings* which result from these sorrows for the child of God, and this article could apply not only to sorrows of conception but to all trials and sorrows which believers experience. In the seventh article, I plan to discuss in a more specific way the *joys* which result specifically from the sorrows of conception. This seventh article will also form an introduction to the second series of articles which I hope, God willing, to write, on the joys of conception. For now, keep in mind that this article forms a steppingstone to the next article and series of articles on joys specifically springing from Godly conception.

How different, how very different, is the response of the Christian to suffering from that of the world! Anyone who does any degree of reading will have read at least some articles which deal with people in the world who have suffered. Almost invariably, the theme is the same: look what *man* can endure. . .see what *man* can overcome. . .what a marvel is *man*!

How different is the response of Godliness! The only response which is Godly carries this theme: look what *God* accomplished through my suffering . . .*God* controlled all things for His purpose. . .how great and marvelous is *God*!

Yes, how great is my God! How great is He in knowing my heart in all its intricate patterns of sin! How great is He in being able to work His miracle of salvation in this sinful heart! How great is He in changing and molding this sinful heart to conform to His righteousness! How great is my God in sending exactly what I need into my life, giving me the exact amount of joys and sorrows which I need to lead me into His fellowship and into His eternal life!

This is the Christian response to all aspects of our life on earth, also including our suffering and including our suffering as women in the sorrows of conception. We see *God* at work, at work in our lives, at work in His own mysterious ways of blessing us. And the blessings which result from Godly suffering are great.

## THE BLESSING OF MEDITATION

When things go smoothly in our lives, we develop a pattern. Step 1: we relax and enjoy the pleasant--ness of our lives. Step 2: we gradually assume the attitude that we deserve and merit this pleasantness. Step 3: we gradually drift away from sober meditation, from taking sin seriously, from serious, personal study of the Scriptures.

Look at that pattern for a moment. Is it not accurate? Is it not almost always the case? Is it not true of *me*?

And then think of the results. If I continue to drift along in this pleasant way, growing more and more in self-righteous congratulations, then what? If I am allowed to neglect sober thought and the sobering contemplation of my own sin, then what? If I fall into the neglect of the Scriptures or else into nonchalant, impersonal reading of these Scriptures, then what?

The answer is that then I am ripe for serious falling into sin. If God allowed this pattern to continue, none of us would grow in grace. We would lose the assurance of salvation, lose the joys of growth in sanctification, lose our fellowship with God, lose our desire for heaven, and lose our faith. We cannot walk indifferently and in pride without fatal results.

And so our God goes to work. He knows the weak points in each life and works to overcome these weak points. By His grace He overcomes our sins, so controlling them that He does not permit these fatal results to occur but rather works out our salvation and His praise.

Thus the first great blessing of suffering, in whatever form God sends it, is that it stops us in our smug, self-assured path and makes us THINK.

Sinfully, our thinking often begins by asking, not submissively but rebelliously, WHY? The rebellion in this question is clearly sin but the fact of that naturally sinful response makes one thing quickly clear: we are *not* so faithful as we once assumed and we *need* contemplation. Yet if we ask that same question properly, not rebelliously, then the same question becomes profitable.

And as our thinking progresses from this starting point, God leads us as His children to the only place where His answers are found. He leads us to the Scriptures. He leads us to study them for ourselves, to find His answers. He leads us to listen more attentatively when His ministers preach His Word.

That is blessing! Study of God's Word with personal application is blessing in abundance. We may not always *like* it since it points to our sin, but the way of confession of sin and turning from it is, nonetheless, blessing. It draws us closer to God, the Fount of all blessing.

And so, in His love, God sends suffering. He sends it to bless us with sober contemplation of His way with us as revealed in His Word. He sends it that we may grow in our knowledge of Him through taking time for those things which are most important. Suffering produces the blessing of sober, Godly thought.

## THE BLESSING OF PRAYER

It is impossible to think soberly and seriously about our lives in the light of Scriptures without confronting our sin and the need for God's salvation. Such sober thought, confronting sin, must lead either to despair or, by grace, to prayer. No person can claim to be a Christian unless He has experienced the prayer of sin-confession. This prayer is the starting point of all experience of God's forgiveness. And every Christian knows, too, how beautiful is this experience of forgiveness.

Further, no Christian can do without the continual, repeated confession of sin and the repeated reassurance of his forgiveness in Christ. Suffering leads us to see our continual, daily need for forgiveness.

But prayer is not only confession of sin. Prayer is confession of and walking in salvation. Prayer is enjoying fellowship with God, delighting in Him and in His Presence. Prayer is submission of all our ways and thoughts to His control and power. Prayer is receiving strength from our Father.

To us it seems paradoxical that suffering will lead to praise of God. It seems strange that Someone can hurt us with the result that we love Him more and fellowship more with Him. Yet this is the fact of the mysterious way in which God works with us. Suffering does not drive us from God but to Him. It does not make us hate God but love Him. It does not make Him seem a monster to His children but rather leads us to adore Him more and more and to see His great and tender love.

When God sends us suffering, He sends us the blessing of growth in our prayer life. God's children who have suffered testify that this is the great blessing they have experienced. So real is this blessing in suffering that later, when ease and comfort may follow, God's children sometimes learn to see this need and even to pray, "Father, send me suffering if I need it so that I may grow more and more close to Thee." That's not a *natural* prayer but a prayer which yearns for fellowship with God, no matter how hard such fellowship may be on our carnal pleasures.

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# FUTURE PROTESTANT REFORMED TEACHERS AND MINISTERS

The Scholarship Fund Committee is taking applications for future teachers/ ministers for the 1983-1984 school year. If you are interested please contact Michael Lotterman, 1382 Su-Lew Dr., Walker, MI 49504, for application forms. An essay of 300 words or more is required on the topic "The Calling of the Minister (or) Teacher in the face of Philosophy and Vain Deceit (Col. 2:8)." Deadline for applications to be received is June 1, 1983.

# MUSIC IN THE CHURCH[3]

*by Rev. David Engelsma*

*"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."* Colossians 3:16

THE IMPORTANCE OF MUSIC IN THE CHURCH (cont.)

If we teach and admonish one another in our singing, it is implied that the words of our songs are sound, that they are the truth of the gospel, that they are the "Word of Christ." The words are the all-important thing, not the melody and rhythm. Nowadays, songs are brought into the worship services of churches because the tune is lively, even though the words are frivolous or doctrinally corrupt. This is wrong. The tune is secondary; it must serve the words. John Calvin warned against melody and rhythm that is not befitting the solemnity of the words with which the church praises God:

> As for the music, it should not be light and flighty like secular music but should have weight and majesty, agreeable to its subject and fit for singing in church. (quoted in T. H. L. Parker, *John Calvin: A Biography*)

Our concern about the words of the church's songs is not imaginary. False doctrine can be sung into the church, as well as preached into the church. As a matter of historical fact, Protestant churches have been corrupted by the gradual introduction into their worship of hymns that increasingly have the congregations sing their own religious experience, rather than the Faith of the Church. This is the heresy, fatal to the congregation, of subjectivism—making man and his religious feelings the center of worship, instead of God and His work in Jesus Christ. The result is that the church no longer looks out with the eye of faith upon the all-glorious God as revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ, so that her worship in song is "Hallelujah, Hallelujah"; but she now looks in upon herself, at her own religious navel, so that her worship in song is "In full and glad surrender I give myself to Thee" and "Take my life, and let it be."

Arminian hymns that condition salvation upon the free will of the sinner have helped to drive the gospel of salvation by free sovereign grace out of the churches of the Reformation. Even the better hymnals include "Jesus is Tenderly Calling," "Come to the Savior, Make No Delay," and "Softly and Tenderly." This is an additional reason why Reformed churches have opposed

the introduction of hymns into their worship: many hymns teach another gospel of man's saving himself by his will, and the introducing of hymns opens the way for these unsound hymns.

The truth that we teach one another by singing has application to the music that we listen to in everyday life. The music we hear is teaching and admonishing us; we are learning from it. Lyrics that promote a godless life-style—rebellion, irresponsibility, drugs, sexual promiscuity, worship of Satan, and the like—*teach*. If you listen, you are deliberately allowing the word of the Devil to dwell in you. Then, you must not be surprised that you begin to approve these things and even to practise them. For God's sake, let the Word of Christ dwell in you through the music you listen to; give the word of the Devil no place in your soul by his music.

In the worship of the church, since the main thing is the words, the organ accompaniment must be just that: an accompaniment of, and an aid to, congregational singing. The organ may never become the preeminent feature of the music of worship. The congregation (and visitors) may never assemble to hear the accomplished organist. Congregational singing may never become enslaved to the great organ. And in the organ-playing when the church is not singing—prelude, offertory, and postlude, the music must be conducive to Reformed worship. Certainly the worshipping church must not be disturbed by excerpts from popular, secular pieces, nor by a tune that inevitably puts them in mind of words that contradict the Word of Christ, e.g., "Throw Out the Lifeline." Since an organ does help congregational singing, it has a rightful place in the church; and those able to play serve the church, with their gift, in an important way.

That we teach, and are taught, by the singing at church implies also that we sing with understanding. We must think through words and thoughts of our songs. Psalm 47:7 demands, "sing ye praises with understanding." In I Cor. 14:15, the apostle says, "I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." Here is a common fault of ours, that we do not pay careful attention to the words we are singing; we utter the words in a mindless way. This shows that we are not singing from the heart, but it also hinders the work of teaching—the Holy Spirit does not bless the singing of the saints *automatically*.

A second indication, in Colossians 3:16, of the importance of music in the church is the teaching—the main thought of the text—that it is by singing that the Word of Christ dwells among us richly. It is the will of God for the congregation, that the Word dwell in her *richly*. It is not enough that the Word barely be present. And the members are called to be active in this rich indwelling: "*Let* the word. . .dwell in you richly." How do we do this? How does it happen that the Word dwells *richly* among us?

It is significant that the related passage in Ephesians 5 speaks of being filled with the Holy Spirit in connection with the singing of the people of God: "And be not drunk with wine. . .but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making

melody in your heart to the Lord" (vss. 18, 19). The congregation is filled with the Holy Spirit when the Word dwells in her richly. The same is true of the believer personally. But how does this happen? How are we to be filled with the Holy Spirit?

This does not take place through mysterious, private, spiritual exercises, nor by the devotions of small groups of super-saints, nor even by extraordinary activities of the congregation; but it happens through *singing*—through singing the Word of Christ. The apostle aims at growth in the Christian life and experience—being filled with the Spirit and being indwelt richly by the Word. He plainly lays out the way: singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

How important then, that we sing!

## THE MANNER OF OUR SINGING

But we must sing in the proper manner. This is singing with the heart. The source of the music is not the voicebox, but the heart. As the mouth pours forth the psalm, or hymn, or spiritual song, the heart is in the music. This warns against lip-service in singing—a real danger, and a serious sin. God abominates and condemns all external service, in which people praise Him with the lips, but their hearts are far from Him. God hates congregational singing, beautiful as it may sound, that does not resound in regenerated hearts. We are to put our hearts into our music, i.e., *know* the sorrow over sin that we sing in Psalm 51; *desire* the redemption that we celebrate in Psalm 107; *intend* the praise of Jehovah in Psalm 150; and *mean* the blessedness of a life of obedience to the Law in Psalm 119. To sing in worship is not easy, anymore than it is easy to pray.

Singing with the heart will show itself in enthusiastic singing. Now, mere noise does not impress God. Besides, Scripture does not say, "Bellow," or "Bawl," but, "Sing." Nevertheless, the heart will make singing both lively and loud. I have heard churches sing, whose singing must have caused the angels present at the worship to weep. So lifeless! So feeble! There are members, including young people, who barely move their lips for singing, and hardly utter a peep. So unenthusiastic! So bored! "Take a psalm and shout, Let His praise ring out, Lift your voice and sing," our *Psalter* admonishes us (418:2). Oh, how fervent will be the singing of the great congregation in glory: ". . .as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder" (Rev. 14:2).

"Glory to our King," number 418 in *The Psalter* continues, "He is Lord of earth, Magnify His worth." It belongs to the manner of our singing that we sing to God. Consciously, the congregation at worship, or the group of saints, directs the music to God. Although we teach and admonish one another, we do not sing for each other, ultimately, but for God. A warning is in order at this point also. Fascinated by beautiful sound, we easily find ourselves singing for people. It is not impossible that, enthralled by his powerful bass, or by her lofty soprano, as the case may be, the individual singer sings for himself, or for herself. We must sing to the Lord! Not only must a congregation sing to the

Lord God, but a choral society must also sing to the Lord—not to the audience, but to the Lord. All of our singing, ultimately, is to be praise. God's Church is a God-glorifying Church. She praises God in the preaching; she praises God in prayer; she praises God in the singing. And it is exactly the outstanding characteristic of the Psalms that they are God-centered and God-glorifying. They are the Word of Christ, to be sure; but Christ is the revelation of God, that "unto Him (may) be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." (Ephesians 3:21)

### THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH SINGING

The possibility of music in the church is grace. This is not the loveliness of our singing, but the free favor of God in Jesus Christ to sinners, forgiving their sins for the sake of the cross and renewing their hearts by the Holy Spirit.

It takes grace to sing. No one can sing, or want to sing, except the man whose heart is reborn by the grace of Christ. No people will sing, save the people who hear the joyful sound of the gospel of grace.

Let there be music in the church!

God grant the church His grace!

---

# The Psalter No. 167

Thou visitest the earth with show'rs,
Thy boundless store supplies its need;
For fields enriched and well prepared
Thou dost provide the sower's seed.

The furrows where the seed is sown
Are softened by thy gentle rain;
Thy gracious care and providence
Supply and bless the springing grain.

The year with goodness Thou dost crown,
Thy ways o'erflow with blessedness;
The hills and valleys, clothed with green,
Are joyful in their fruitfulness.

The pastures teem with flocks and herds,
The golden grain waves o'er the fields;
All nature, singing joyfully,
Her tribute of thanksgiving yields.

# II. Earnestly Contend For The Faith
# The Rock Foundation

*by Rev. R.C. Harbach*

*Therefore, everyone who hears these My Words and does them shall be compared to a wise man who built his house upon the rock. And the rain descended and the rivers came, and the winds blew, and fell upon that house, and it did not fall; for it had been founded upon the rock.*

*And everyone hearing these My Words and not doing them shall be compared to a foolish man who built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the rivers came, and the winds blew and struck against that house, and it fell, and great was its fall.*

(Mt. 7:24-27, —Translation: RCH).

In this part of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus had warned against: 1. the false way (7:13-14), 2. the false prophets (15-20), 3. a false profession (21-23), and 4. the false foundation (24-27). In this last passage we have the parable of the two foundations. The "saying" or "My words" are "the testimony of Jesus," the truth, the Word of God (Jn. 8:46f). The wise man is the Christian, the foolish man is the natural man. The house is a man's life. The cascading rain, whelming rivers and stormy winds smashing against the house represent the event of death. The rock is God (Duet. 32:15, 18; Psm. 18:2; Isa. 17:10) in the person of Christ (I Cor. 10:4; 3:11). The sand represents whatever is *not* Christ's word, *not* "His doctrine" (teaching, v. 28). The doing or not doing of Christ's words is the acting or not acting on His word. The immediate effect of this sermon on the mob was that they were *amazed* at His teaching (v. 28). The root meaning of "amazed" is that they "struck out." They were amazed, so to speak, that three strikes were called on them before they knew what happened. They were weighed in the balances and found wanting. They were overwhelmed with admiration for Christ's teaching, but would not *do* His words. But only he is a Christian who does what Christ tells him!

A man's house is his castle. His castle will be a real defense if built on the rock. If we view a wise man's house built on the rock as the Christian's defense of his Christian position, then the foolish man's house built on the sand would imply that the natural man has no defense for his humanistic position. For "all other ground is sinking sand." The Bible uses the term *defense* often. Paul defended his position as a Jew newly converted to Christ. "Hear ye my

*defense*'', he had said, stating his case before the Jerusalem mob (Acts 22:1-23). He defended his civil rights as a Roman citizen before the chief captain (captain of thousand men; v. 34-30). Before the Sanhedrin he defended his faith in the resurrection of the dead (23:1-10). The Lord himself had made His defense of His own divine Person and His claims before this same Sanhedrin (Lk. 22:66-71). Peter and John, before this highest Jewish court, defended the gospel of Christ crucified and risen, and their calling by a much higher Court to preach it (4:5-22). The whole apostolate so defended the name, cause and doctrine of Christ before the Sanhedrin that once again it was forced to adjudicate the claims of Christ and of His Church (5:21-40). Stephen, too, a great Christian apologete (expert defender of the Faith) in the apostolic church, accused of threatening changes in Israel's customs, defended himself before this same body on the ground that the Old Testament church underwent repeated changes through the ages from Abraham to Solomon (6:12-7:53). Then Paul made his defense before Felix, arguing his innocence of the Jews' charges, taking his stand on the Law, the Prophets and, again, on the doctrine of the resurrection (24:10-23). He made his defense before Festus (25:8-12, here he was given opportunity to answer for himself, that is, argue in self-defense, v. 16), then before King Agrippa II (26:1-32), arguing his faith in the Jews' doctrine of the resurrection and in the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah. Finally, Paul made his defense before the chief of the Jews at Rome (28:17-28), expounding and proving Christ's messianic doctrine.

Paul had defended and vindicated his apostleship (My answer = my defense, I Cor. 9:3). Godly sorrow and repentance on the part of believers results in ''clearing of yourselves,'' literally, in *apologia, defense* (II Cor. 7:11). The church which shows no repentance has no defense against just charges of sin. Paul testified that he was set (appointed) for the defense of the gospel (Phil. 1:7, 17). He was the great defender of and contender for the faith! Peter exhorts us ''to be ready always to give an answer (to *make a defense*) to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear'' (I Pet. 3:15).

In these passages we have the word (Gk. apologia) *apology*, which, we've seen, does not have the newer sense of the word, namely, ''an excuse; something said or written in defense or extenuation of what. . .is not perfectly justifiable. . .but which the apologist deems to be right.'' (Webster, First Ed.). Also this newer sense of the word is illustrated in Funk and Wagnalls, as follows: ''the tone of an *apology* is always a tone of weakness and does injury to a good cause.''—Jowett, 1864. This sense of the word, as we have demonstrated, does not at all apply to the New Testament usage. That usage is more in harmony with the old sense of the word: ''a valiant *defense* — as in Justin Martyr's *Apologies* for the Christian faith.'' (F. & W. Dic.). These apologies were arguments in defense of Christianity against the charges of the heathen and the attacks of the Jews. In these days, a sermon or a lecture in our churches on the Bible of necessity would be of an apologetical nature (apologetical in the more theological sense of the word). In such a discourse a

defense of the Bible is certainly presented. Our defense (house, bastion) of the whole truth of scripture is based on the rock of Christ and His words. Then our fortifications, we may be confident, are impregnable.

This rock foundation must be the basis of every sphere of our lives. We must be conscious of this in thought, speech and work. As Christians, our thought is antithetical to the thought of the natural man. As already shown, his thoughts are atheistical, and, to God, an abomination (Ps. 10:4; Prov. 15:23). So the Christian's speech is antithetical to the speech of the man of the world. His is characterized at best as "excellency of speech. . .with enticing words of man's wisdom" (I Cor. 2:1, 4). His words are iniquity (Ps. 36:3). The Christian must learn to use "great plainness of speech" (II Cor. 3:12), and "sound speech that cannot be condemned" (Tit. 2:8). The words of the wise are gracious (Eccl. 10:12; Col. 4:6). The works of the regenerate are antithetical to the works of the unregenerate. Their works are abominable (Ps. 14:1), wicked (Col. 1:21) and nothing (Isa. 41:29). Our works in Christ and by grace are principally good (Mt. 5:16).

Going into the vocation of the farmer is not to go into a neutral area. For scripture tells us that "the plowing of the wicked is sin" (Prov. 21:4, KJV). it is his duty to plow the soil (Gn. 3:19), yet the way he performs this duty is a sin. For he does not do it with the right motive—faith (Rom. 14:23b), nor according to the right standard—scripture (Isa. 8:20), nor according to the highest goal—the glory of God (I Cor. 10:31; Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 91). Plowing in this sense of a truly good work, is a religious action. The Christian plowman acknowledges so very much God as Creator of the soil, sun, rain, etc.; these things as His creatures; he himself a creature; that it is the Creator who gives the increase; and that his skill as a farmer is from the Lord his God (Isa. 28:26). But the wicked plows as though God does not exist, without any regard to Him. The act of plowing is in itself good (Gn. 3:19; Isa. 28:24-26), but as the wicked performs the act it is sin, ungodliness, since in his doing of it he puts God out of His own world. So "his eating as well as his gluttony, his drinking as well as his drunkenness. . .are. . .sins" (Bp. Hopkins). When he prays, his prayer is an abomination (Prov. 28:9; whereas the prayer of the upright is His delight, Prov. 15:8). When he neglects to pray, that is wicked pride (Ps. 10:4). Whatever he does, he can only sin. Yet he is responsible for his sin. To die is to go into everlasting punishment (Mt. 25:41-46). To live in unregeneracy is worse, for he only daily heaps up wrath against the day of wrath (Rom. 2:5). His only hope is in the new birth (Jn. 3:3, 5, 7). Even the preaching of the natural man is hypocritical (Rom. 2:21); it is mere humanism (I Cor. 2:4), is false doctrine (I Cor. 15:12) and is accursed (Gal. 1:8).

You see, then, how the Bible must undergird every segment of your lives; how it must permeate thought, word and work. Otherwise, we stumble in the dark, full of doubts and surmises. With God's revealed will (the Bible), His directive counsel, we have certainty and our path is plain (Ps. 119:105). Build on the Bible, the Word of God, or you build on sinking sand! The Bible is our defense and is also that which we defend. Therefore, we set our defense on the

Bible itself, and not the Bible on our defense. The Bible can never be made to rest on a foundation of philosophy, human reason or rationalistic argument. The Bible (the Christian Faith) can never be made to rest on a foundation of our own verifications (as in archaeological or existence-for-God arguments) of its truths. It will never work to try to balance the thick foundation slab on the sharp peak of the steeply slanted roof of our house.

In the battle for the truth the Lord himself has already set the battle in array. We believers, trained in His Word, and so, to a degree, in handling God's own weapons of defense and offense, are good soldiers of Jesus Christ. We are ready to fight for the truth, but must enter the conflict according to the King's strategy. That is all laid out for us in the Bible.

Suggestions for Further Study

1. Read Arthur W. Pink, "The Sermon on the Mount," comment on Matt. 7.
2. Read the doctrine of the trinity in Calvin's *Institutes*, Bk. I, chap. 13.
3. Read B. B. Warfield's *The Plan of Salvation*, Chap. 1, The Differing Conceptions.

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# News From, For and About Our Churches

*by Karen Vink*

Southwest Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan

Mr. & Mrs. Ron Kuiper rejoice in the birth of a son, Matthew Dale, on March 5. Dan Butler and Beth Kuiper were united in marriage on January 7. Southwest received the membership papers of Mr. & Mrs. Charles Bult and three baptized children from Hope; Mr. & Mrs. Tom Buiter from South Holland and Hudsonville, respectively; and Mr. & Mrs. Rod Kooiman and one baptized son from Hull.

Loveland, Colorado

The Ladies Circle sponsored a skating party and bonfire on January 22. Mr. & Mrs. Ivan Griess were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Anna Marie, on January 25. The young people hosted an appreciation dinner for the senior members of their congregation on February 7.

First Church of Holland, Michigan

Holland was blessed with the births of a son, Timothy Jay, to Mr. & Mrs.

Erv Kortering on January 4; a son, Jeffrey John, to Mr. & Mrs. John Van Uffelen on January 9; and a daughter, Crystal Lynn, to Mr. & Mrs. Carl Weener on January 18. The membership papers of Mr. & Mrs. M. Zuverink and family have been transferred to Hudsonville. Rev. Miersma and his wife, at the request of First Church, labored in Jamaica from March 16 to April 15.

Faith Church of Jenison, Michigan

Mr. & Mrs. John Kalsbeek were blessed with the birth of a son, Alexander David. Miss Barbara Hoven was accepted into the congregation as a baptized member. The Young People held a breakfast at Hope School on March 12.

Hope Church of Redlands, California

The Young People held a Pancake Breakfast on February 12. The Hope School Mothers' Circle sponsored a Soup Supper on February 25.

Hope Church of Walker, Michigan

Mr. & Mrs. Greg Engelsma were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Valerie Lyn, on February 8. Marc Kamps made public confession of his faith on February 20. At the request of First Church, Rev. Flikkema and his wife labored in Jamaica from March 2-28.

Hudsonville, Michigan

Hudsonville rejoices in the births of a daughter, Alisha Joy, to Mr. & Mrs. Bret Dykstra on January 24; a daughter, Kendra Sue, to Mr. & Mrs. Dave Kamminga on January 25; a daughter, Holly Renae, to Mr. & Mrs. Ken Elzinga on January 26; a daughter, Melissa Joy to Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Lubbers; a daughter, Nicole Ruth, to Mr. & Mrs. Mark Dykstra on February 4; and a daughter, Maghaan Leigh, to Mr. & Mrs. Kim Oudman on February 16. Bob Prins and Carolyn Van Baren were united in marriage on March 4. Hudsonville received Calvin Mulder as a member from Beaverdam Reformed Church.

First Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan

First rejoices in the births of a son, Nathan, to Mr. & Mrs. Ken Hanko on February 1; and a daughter, Pamela Sue, to Mr. & Mrs. Bill Rutgers on February 4. Tim Thompson and Kristi Peters were united in marriage on

February 18. A singspiration was held on February 20. Rev. Joostens and his wife labored in Jamaica from February 10 to March 8.

South Holland, Illinois

South Holland was blessed with the births of a boy, Timothy Lewis, to Mr. & Mrs. Lewis De Jong; a boy, Joel Edward, to Mr. & Mrs. Rich Wories; and a boy, Todd Michael, to Mr. & Mrs. Gysbert Van Baren.

Hull, Iowa

Hull rejoices in the births of a boy, David Lee to Mr. & Mrs. Don Ver Meer; and a boy, Kevin Jon, to Mr. & Mrs. Peter Westra. Todd Goelder and Lorna Hoksbergen were united in marriage on February 12. A Hostess Supper was held January 18. Rev. Smith spoke on "Spiritual Rags to Spiritual Riches."

New Zealand

Born to Mr. & Mrs. Kevin Inskeep of The Protestant Reformed Fellowship of Wellington, New Zealand, a son, Jonathan Edward, on February 27, 1983. Married February 25, 1983 at Gisborne, New Zealand, Tim Geuze and Yolanda Vooys.

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# THE NEW KING JAMES VERSION

*by Rev. R. C. Harbach*

The title may seem somewhat like a departure from the unique, for there is only one good old King James Version, and so unique it is that it has an undiminished popularity and is regarded as indispensably precious. It still has a place, and certainly with us as Protestant Reformed people, of top priority! That is not to say that there is no place among us for the modern language bibles as a means of comparing with our criterion, our touchstone, the King James Version.

In this article we aim to compare the New King James Version (NKJV) to the KJV. We begin by calling attention to a comparative "Study of Certain Passages As Found in Various Bible Versions and Translations Compared With the KJV," Prepared by Pastor R. W. Shekner, published by The Lutheran Reformation Hour, P. O. Box 37, Chicago Heights, Ill. 60411, 99 pp. In this study, about 67 places in scripture are examined where the KJV is compared with and contrasted to eleven other versions. These are: Beck's Translation (BT), New International Version (NIV), New American Standard Bible (NASB), Revised Standard Version (RSV), Today's English Version (TEV), Living Bible (LB), New English Bible (NEB), Jerusalem Bible (JB), Amplified Bible (AB), Common Bible (CB) and Phillips's NT (Ph). In most of the places examined in this study (about 61 times) the NKJV agrees with the KJV. It differs in about 6 instances as follows. The NKJV has "descendants" for "seed" when reference is, correctly, to the elect descendents of Abraham. The NKJV does retain "seed", correctly so, when the reference is to Christ. But it has "sheol" and "hades", instead of the KJV "hell," which transliteration is not as suitable as "hell", since it takes "hell" out of the Bible. At Isaiah 7:14 it more consistently has "*the* virgin," where the KJV has "*a* virgin." While at Matthew 1:23, to be consistent with itself, the NKJV ought to read not "a virgin," as it does, but "the virgin." For both the Hebrew and the Greek text have the definite article before the word "virgin." Further, both the NKJ and the KJ, at Heb. 8:8, 9, 10, 13 have the word "covenant." When, however, the NKJV in Heb. 9:15 has "covenant", in 9:16, "testament," in v. 17, "testament" and then again in v. 18, "covenant," whereas, in each of these four verses the old KJV has "testament," there is, nevertheless, in the NKJV, good and obvious reason (check the context!) for having this change from "covenant" to "testament" (twice) to "covenant."

There are disadvantages to this NKJV, as, e.g., *thee, thou, thy, thine* and the endings *-est, -eth* are absent. In the preface we read, "Unless a speaker is schooled in these verb endings, there is common difficulty in selecting the correct form to be used with a given subject of the verb in vocal prayer". . .should we use *love, loveth* or *lovest*? Should we use *do, dost, doth, doest* or *doeth*? or *have, haveth, hath* or *hast*? Few today would be able to correctly answer these questions. But it is better that we be corrected and more perfectly instructed by our teachers and ministers in the proper usage of these KJV archaisms than to eliminate them altogether. Also there are in the NKJ changes in the names of clean and unclean animals, and in the names of trees and other plants. These changes may prove of little value since commentators differ in identification of these creatures, and as to the newer Bible dictionaries, do they have any more authoritative documentation than the old, where they differ from the old? On these points of interest, do your own research and mark your KJV study Bible accordingly.

There are advantages to this New KJ. 1. Subject headings identify topics and transitions in the biblical account. Most of these are quite helpful; yet a good many could be greatly improved. 2. "Verse numbers in bold type indicate

paragraph divisions." 3. Where poetry appears in the scripture the NKJV has it in verse format. 4. Today, the direction in the biblical textual field on manuscripts and versions and their evaluation, moving to the production of this NKJV, proceeds in a good vein toward a better-than-ever language text, especially in the Greek New Testament. Although vastly more work in this field needs to be done, the NKJV is a giant step in the right direction. 5. There is the substitution of "who" for "that" and "which." 6. Punctuation and unfamiliar words are updated. 7. Pronouns referring to God are capitalized. 8. Quotation marks are utilized. 9. King James doctrinal terms, such as, seed, blood, redemption, propitiation, justification, sanctification, are retained. 10. Many archaic words are replaced, but it would be better for the NKJ edition to have a detailed glossary of the 1611 archaisms at the end of the volume. In the back of your own KJB begin forming your own glossary. (New editions of the KJV ought to include such a glossary.) 11. The NKJV may be consulted for various renderings of the Greek New Testament verbs. This is not always done in this new book completely consistently and accurately. But the Bible reader may consult the rendering of the Hebrew in a good Old Testament commentary, such as Keil and Delitzsch's commentaries (also cp. E. J. Young's, J. A. Alexander's and Young's or Strong's Concordances); and to consult the renderings of New Testament Greek, see Lenski's commentaries, as well as the concordances. Mark your findings in your KJV study Bible. (*Do* mark your Bibles!)

Another advantage of the NKJV is that in the back of the book there are 16 pages on the History of the King James Bible. Everyone ought to read this. There is much more detail as to the new features of the NKJV. To pursue further this interesting material read *The Revised Authorised Version*, lead article in the latest *Trinitarian Bible Society Quarterly*, January—March 1983, No. 482 (Gracey Blvd., Weston, Ont. M9R 1Z9 Cda., or Grand Rapids Auxiliary, 1710 Richmond, NW, Grand Rapids, Mi 49504, Phone 453-2892). Reading this article did two things for me — it helped me to see what is about the best of the modern language Bibles, and it diminished not but increased my esteem for the old KJV.

A comparison of the NKJV with other modern versions reveals its superiority. In the November 1976 *Beacon Lights* we examined the Moffatt Bible, especially in regard to 44 places where the MB differs from the KJB. Nothing like the Moffatt strangeness is found in the NKJV. In the December 1976 BL we surveyed Weymouth's NT, comparing it with the KJV at 14 places in scripture. The NKJ differs from the KJV (in this article) only on the Matt. 22:1-9 passage where it has, as Weymouth, "invited" and "invite." This may be regarded as an acceptable translation as long as we understand that not everyone (head-for-head) is invited to a wedding or wedding feast!

In the January 1977 BL we reviewed Helen Barret Montgomery's *New Testament in Modern English* as to 27 places in scripture. At Matt. 26:74 the KJV has, "immediately the cock crew," while the NKJ has the improvement, "immediately the rooster crowed." The KJV at John 12:32 has *men* in italic to

show that it is not in the original. The NKJV, instead, has the italicized *peoples*, which is not much better than *men*. The text literally reads, "I will draw all unto Me," and requires the mental supply after "all" of two words, *My own*. See John 10:14, *New* KJV, "I know My *sheep*, and am known by My own." Also where Montgomery translates *boats* (and not *ships*, KJV) in Luke 5:5, 6, the NKJ does likewise, and this is correct. In Rom. 1:18, the KJV has "hold the truth," Montgomery has "smother the truth" and NKJV, "suppress the truth," both (M and NKJ) graphically correct.

In the February 1977 BL we criticized the American Standard Version. It was there pointed out that among the OT passages printed in verse format there should have been printed in that format parts of Ecclesiastes, most of Isaiah, many parts of Jeremiah, most of the minor prophets, certain parts of the NT, including certain parts of the book of the Revelation. This has been neatly accomplished in the NKJV! But where the ASV either omits or suggests omission of textual references to the deity of Christ, the NKJV, with the KJV and the best Hebrew and Greek texts, retains these reference proofs of Christ's deity. The ASV has *many* omissions where the NKJV does not omit, but in footnotes indicated where and which inferior sources do have omissions. Some modern language bibles omit Matt. 21:44. The NKJ has it. The RSV omits Luke 24:12. The ASV includes it, but in a footnote states, "Some ancient authorities omit v. 12." The Nestle NT Greek text omits this verse, putting it in a footnote. However, the Hodges/Farstad Greek NT includes it in its text, and so the NKJV retains it (being based on the better H/F Greek text).

For examinations of the RSV, the LB, the TEV, see *Beacon Lights*, Mar.-Apr. '77, June-July '77, Aug.-Sep. '77 and Oct. '77, respectively. Compare all these versions with the NKJV; the latter does not belong in the same class with any of them. To those who admire the more popular NIV or NASB, it is recommended, Get in on the trend toward a higher and more trustworthy Hebrew and Greek scholarship by using for a modern English version the NKJV.

Regrettably, the NKJV completely eliminates Thou, Thee, Thy, etc. It is hoped that the Thomas Nelson Publishers will, in future editions, publish at least a limited supply of the NKJV with these archaic but cherished pronouns. For there are many church and Christian school spheres, as in our own, where the old KJV is entirely familiar and exclusively used at home, in the pulpits, in the Bible classes and Sunday schools, daily in the Christian day schools, in our own seminary, by our home and foreign missionaries, and by our fellow saints in this country, in Jamaica, in Singapore, in New Zealand and in Australia. Throughout all these areas, in our prayers we use the language of the KJV. The same language appears in the biblical hymns and oratorios we sometimes sing. This is the language, too, of our Psalter, the book we exclusively use for singing in public worship. We use it in all our private and public Bible study and personal devotions every day of our lives! So it has been from the beginning of our history, from the beginning of our lives. We have no plans to deviate from this beloved practice. May we never do so. Amen.

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**The Lynden Prot. Ref. Young People's Society**
invites you to the Northwest,
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# The Youthful Sojourner Saved
(I Peter 3:14-17)

I. Saved to Speak
II. Saved in the Way of Suffering
III. Saved to Serve

held at **Trinity Western College**, Langley, B.C.
August 15-19