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Dialogue

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May 1989



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Roald Koh

Dialogue

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—Jeff VanAbbema

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By the way, *Dialogue* encourages submission of art, poetry, and prose. Submissions should be accompanied by a S.A.S.E. to be returned.

Cover: "Dance, Children"

—Ron Kok

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Editorial

Church in State

A quick way to polarize almost any crowd, is to bring up the issue of apartheid and South Africa. Political repercussions of the South African government's official policy of racial segregation have hammered at the core of that country's identity for years. Media attention has focused on apartheid but the problem is viewed by many as a strictly political one. The roots of apartheid, however, stem not simply from a well-defined government policy. Instead in South Africa apartheid is a result of policies and doctrines created and maintained by state churches. Today, while governments use diplomatic means to deal with apartheid, the church in South Africa is arguably the single most influential body in determining apartheid's future in that country.

There are many different denominations within the church in South Africa (see "Alphabet Soup")—some white, some black, some mixed congregations—yet virtually all of the existing denominations have Dutch Reformed roots. Within these different denominations are many different positions on apartheid; some are viciously committed to apartheid and others are committed to reform. One of the goals of this issue of *Dialogue* is to provide an explanation of what those denominations are and what power they have.

Why that explanation is necessary to a Calvin College audience, however, brings up the immediate reason for this issue. Calvin is the official college of the Christian Reformed denomination, and the Christian Reformed denomination is one of very few churches in the world that maintains ecclesiastical sister-church ties with the most ardent supporter of apartheid in South Africa, the denomination referred to throughout this issue as the Dopperkerk.

The legitimacy of those ties has been criticized for years within our denomination. Synod has reportedly dealt with overtures aimed at either severing those ties or maintaining them, and has, since the early eighties, repeatedly put off committing to a decision regarding those relations, referring the question to committee and granting two- or three-year reprieves to the Dopperkerk in hopes that that church will amend its ways. The end of one of those periods of grace is approaching and still very few people within our denomination are aware of the situation. When our denomination has so much influence to help support repression, even inadvertently, it borders on negligence to be uninformed. The primary goal of this *Dialogue*, then, is to provide a history of the CRC relations with South African churches and to provide an informed commentary on that situation. There is a limit to how far and how many times a moral decision can be settled by compromise. The question of the CRC denomination's moral responsibility in the present situation is the fundamental subject of debate. Perhaps the contents of this issue will help resolve that question.

—JLG

Alphabet Soup

One of the biggest obstacles lay-people face in trying to make sense of the church situation in South Africa is the tangled confusion of denominations, schisms within denominations and the multitude of similar sounding acronyms that represent widely different denominations. The confusion is doubled when Dutch and Afrikaans churches in South Africa are renamed in English for North American reference. The following is an attempt to briefly outline the historical schisms within the South African churches and put all the acronyms in proper historical perspective.

NGK: *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk*
 NHK: *Nederduitse Hereformeerde Kerk*
 GK: *Gereformeerde Kerk: "Dopperkerk"*
 NGSK: *"Sending Kerk"—colored*
 NGKA: *NGK in Africa—black*

The first church in South Africa was the *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk* [NGK], (or Dutch Reformed Church [DRC]). The NGK soon suffered the schism that is historically referred to as "The Trek," a conservative reaction led within the church by Andrew Murray in the 1830s to evangelical reform and revival. The Voortrekkers, as they became known, soon surfaced as the *Nederduitse Hereformeerde Kerk* [NHK], a name that mimicked the new state *Hereformeerde Kerk* [HK] of the Netherlands. Soon, though, the NHK became careless in doctrine and an

ultraconservative splinter group of the Trekkers formed in response, creating their own denomination, the *Gereformeerde Kerk* [GK] nicknamed the "doppers" (referred to outside the country as the GKSA, *Gereformeerde Kerk of South Africa*). It is this denomination that has historically supported apartheid within the church.

Those two new denominations, however were not the only to spring up as a result of the Trek. Within the NGK in 1857 a decision was made to fundamentally change their position on race relations and to adopt the policy of apartheid favored by the Trekkers. In 1888 a "missionary" denomination, the *Sendingkerk* [NGSK] was created as the national church for "coloreds." Men such as Alan Boesak and Rev. Nico Botha (see *The Grand Rapids Press* article reprinted in this issue) belong to that church. Around the turn of the century, the NGK formed another denomination, the NGKA, for blacks, and the RCA (Reformed Church in Africa) for Asians.

It is very important to realize that there are different denominations within the South Africa church, and they all hold different positions on the racial policy of apartheid. It is more important, however, to realize that of all the denominations in South Africa, the Christian Reformed Church continues to maintain ecclesiastical ties with the *Dopperkerk*, the one church most firmly and historically committed to apartheid.

—JLG



—Jeff VanAbbema

OLD WOMAN BAY

We could see her shore around the curve of the land:
A short stretch of sharp stone and driftwood.
But a river flowed before us and fought the bay
At water's edge, where granite slabs jutted skyward
Then slid beneath the swell.
Beyond all, the cliff looked out at sky and sea,
And in upon Old Woman Bay and its intruders.
 With furrowed brow and frown, she watches all
 From her crag above black Gitchigumee.
 She summons wind to twist her silver hair,
 Rain to wash the lines at the corners of her eyes,
 The sun to blink and wrap her in low hung curls of clouds.
 The bay, whipped white, leaps and splashes to land;
 Rocks change and curve to embrace.
 The ghosts and spirits of centuries do her bidding.
Though to stand on and feel her far bank
We rolled blue jeans to the knee and waded
Barefoot across the thigh-deep, pebble-bottom river,
Felt the clear water flow cold over our skin
To where it blackened, swallowed by surf,
Though we stretched and slid
Over green moss and slabs,
Her ancient arms held us back.
As we turned from that shoreline,
We could feel her far behind us,
Deepening the lines in her time-worn smile.

—Brad Monsma

Features

South Africa: A Reformed Church History

by Jeffrey Stoub

Although apartheid has only been an official part of the South African government since 1948, racial segregation has been an integral part of South African life for several centuries. From the time of the first European colonies, whites have attempted to maintain a separate existence from blacks. The policy of the colonists had been to keep the blacks from integrating with their race; the only variations were in the number and type of rights the blacks were allowed. Until 1807 white colonists were buying and selling native South Africans as slaves. Even after the abolition of slave trading, the Hottentots and Nguni, two of the native peoples, continued to work for the Dutch and English settlers as laborers. Whites continued to dominate the blacks by controlling the work that was available to them. In the present time, blacks remain under the control of the whites who run the country even though only five million of the country's 32 million people are white.

The history of the Reformed Church in South Africa traces back to 1682 when the first Dutch people landed at what was to become the Cape

Jeffrey Stoub is a junior English major at Calvin.

Colony. Under the guise of the Dutch East India Company, a group of about 80 Dutchmen created a station intended to provide supplies for ships involved in trading. The company had no intention of forming a colony or doing any missionary work in the Cape. By the end of the seventeenth century, however, the arrival of a number of settlers as well as the need for more supplies and defense prompted the Dutch East India Company to begin forming a colony. New areas were opened for settlement and Simon van der Stel was appointed governor of the colony. During the forming of this new colony, the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland [NGK], or Dutch Reformed Church, had established its first consistory in South Africa with Johan van Arckel as its minister.

From the beginning of the GKN in South Africa, a key issue for the growing church was the question of how to deal with the "heathen" natives and to what extent the church should be doing missionary work. The Synod of Dordt in 1918 had declared that "the children of heathens were not baptized, even if they had been taken into Christian households and would be brought up in the Christian way of life." One of the first independent decisions of the

church in South Africa, however, was to allow the baptism of the children of slaves if they were to be brought up by white Christians.

With this decision, the church in South Africa began to exercise some independence which pointed the way toward a separate South African denomination.

Although the NGK continued to develop during the eighteenth century as the official Dutch Church in South Africa, the beginning of the nineteenth century marked a turning point in the church's history. In 1795, the British took over the colony from the Dutch in an effort to protect the trade route to India from the French who were at that time attacking parts of Europe under Napoleon Bonaparte's command. During the peace of Amiens the Dutch regained control of South Africa, but only for three years before the British took over again. During the time of the war in Europe, the NGK remained one of the two officially recognized churches in South Africa along with the Lutheran church. At the same time, the NGK had taken on a more important role. The church became a sort of political agency responsible for the spiritual as well as the material needs of the citizens of South Africa.

Under British rule, the church's role did not change significantly, except that the NGK was no longer the only church supported by the government. With the shift from British occupation to colonization after the war, the Anglican church became the government church leaving the NGK as the colony church. The NGK, although no longer considered an agency of the government, continued to receive financial support as well as to remain under government regulations. The effect of the British control of the NGK was to sever all official ties between the church in South Africa and the church in Holland. These ties were never to be completely restored in that the NGK in South Africa became a separate denomination, no longer under the direct influence of the church in the Netherlands.

The last major event in the history of the Reformed church in South Africa before modern times was The Great Trek. During the 1830s a large number of Boers, often called Trekkers, emigrated west across the Cape Colony to escape the restrictions of the British government. Although the immediate reasons for the Trek were political, some of the Trekkers had religious reasons as well. One group, called the Doppers, a strict puritanical group, wanted to maintain the traditional doctrines, (including not singing hymns during worship) that they felt their church, the NGK, was beginning to abandon. During the time following the Trek, the Trekkers had a difficult time maintaining their separate group because they could not attract an accredited clergyman to lead them as a church and to perform their sacraments. Although the Doppers were an extremely pious group, devoting their day to day life to their reli-

gion, they had to worship without baptism or communion as part of their services. This lasted for almost twenty years with the NGK showing little sympathy for those who had left and showed no intent of coming back to the church.

By 1853, the result of the doctrinal differences was the formation of a separate church in the Transvaal, the area where many of the Trekkers had settled. This church, called the Nederduitse Hervormeerde Kerk [NHK], eventually became independent from the NGK and was made the official State Church of The Republic of the Transvaal next to the NGK which was the official church of the Cape. Although this separation settled some doctrinal differences, the Doppers were still unhappy, saying that the NHK was far too liberal. In 1859 the clergy of the Transvaal assembled to finally settle the matter of the use of hymns in worship. The debate had been running for many years and was exacerbated by a visit to the Transvaal by Dr. D. Postma, a minister of the then newly formed Christian Reformed Church in America. Postma was asked to become the minister of one of the churches in the Transvaal and was subsequently asked for his opinion of hymn singing. Most of the clergymen present at the meeting accepted his position of using hymns that were taken directly from scripture but no others. The Doppers, however, would not accept this compromise and broke away to form the Gereformeerde Kerk [GK].

Until the 1880s, native Africans were never treated as anything but "heathens" that were to be "Christianized." Missionary work was an important part of the churches in South Africa, mostly because of the white's situation among the blacks. But the

philosophy of missions in South Africa evolved through many stages by the time the first native church, the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk [NGSK], or Dutch Reformed Mission Church, was formed in 1888. It can be argued that missionaries who came from Europe in the seventeenth century were mainly sent to assist in the forming of a colony, an official duty performed for the government. Once the colony was established in South Africa, the rulers soon realized that it was important to "civilize" the natives in order to make living in the colony safe for the whites. Although most of the churches in South Africa adopted missionary policies, few agreed on how they should go about making Christians out of the natives. According to Peter Hinchliff in *The Church in South Africa*, "There were those who believed that separation of black and white was the only way to secure justice for the former or safety for the later. There were those who believe that races must live together, either because Africans should provide labour or that peaceful co-existence was right and good." Hinchliff goes on to say that missionary strategy often took a separationist approach in that natives, once converted, were to live among their own people and be missionaries themselves.

Before the NGSK was created, black Christians had very few rights of worship. In the early days of the NGK, black Christians were allowed to participate in communion but often only after the whites were finished. There were various attempts such as the Ordinance 50 of 1828 that supposedly gave colored persons the same legal rights as white colonists. But these attempts always failed because of fear of the natives and the so-called missionary theories of the

colonists and their government. When the Nederduitse Hervormeerde Kerk was formed, the constitution that recognized the church also stated that "there was to be no equality of black and white in either Church or state." By the time the NGK formed the NGSK (mission church) for coloreds in 1888 and the NGKA (about 1900) for blacks as daughter churches, separation of whites and non-whites had become the accepted policy toward missions as well as for the growing population of non-white Christians.

It wasn't until 1948, when the National Party took control of the government of South Africa that the official policy of separate development,

apartheid, came into existence. But apartheid did not create the problems between whites and blacks, problems that had been developing since the Dutch landed in South Africa. The new government proposed apartheid, according to their justifications, to solve racial problems. According to Hinchliff, "The only way to maintain peace and preserve 'white civilization' is to separate the races in every way, socially, politically, economically, geographically." Hence the modern-day situation in South Africa. Blacks are separated from whites for what is proposed to be the good of all. But laws such as The Group Areas Act of 1950 have made it very diffi-

cult for churches opposed to apartheid to maintain fellowship with black members. Homes and churches can, by law, be moved to accommodate new racial zones thereby splitting whole congregations between Sundays. Blacks and sympathizing whites have had to deal with strict regulations and a continuous state of martial law as a part of their daily life.

For most whites in South Africa, apartheid is not a problem. The NGK (Dutch Reformed Church) has adopted the policy that "there ought to be no mixing of races but that equality and justice ought to be secured for members of each race separately," according to Hinchliff. Other whites

What has gone before:

CRC Stance on S. African Church

—Reprinted from the
Grand Rapids Press, Thursday,
June 23, 1983

By Tom Fitzgerald

The Rev. Nico Botha, black pastor from a small coastal fishing village in South Africa, fights segregationist government with the Gospel and liberation theology.

"I'm not afraid of anything," he said quietly. "The Lord is with me."

Botha was disappointed when the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church Wednesday stopped short of severing century-old ties with the primarily white Reformed Church of South Africa (GKSA), which maintains separate congregations by race and hasn't strongly opposed apartheid.

The synod said it is "deeply grieved and disturbed over the unbiblical ideology and persistent practice of apartheid/separate developmental in the society of South Africa and within the white Reformed churches."

It particularly lamented racial

separation is maintained "even at the table of the Lord."

But the ruling body—in its last day of deliberation—also said it would be "premature" to break off the CRC's longstanding relationship with the GKSA because the American church has "exerted a minimum of effort" to launch serious talks aimed at changing GKSA policies.

"Most people in the black churches will see the decision not to sever ties with the GKSA as support for apartheid," said Botha, carefully measuring his Afrikaans-accented words.

Botha came to Calvin College for the synod as the delegate from the Dutch Reformed Mission Church, a colored church that established relations with the CRC last year.

He said black South African churches "will be compelled to reconsider ties with the CRC, unless the CRC is clearly prepared to show where they stand."

Backers of the synod's action said

it was meant to admonish the GKSA, to put it on notice.

"Our church has to go into dialogue with them," said the Rev. Anthony DeJager of Bowmanville, Ont., who helped draft the report. "We're telling them to take a stronger stand (against apartheid) or else. . . ."

The GKSA is separate from the 1.5-million-member Dutch Reformed Church, which openly defends racial segregation. The GKSA has 150,000 members.

At last year's synod, the CRC resoundingly said it would not enter into "ecclesiastical fellowship" with the DRC because of its role as the "state" church. The DRC had requested fellowship in 1978.

Wednesday's action goes back to the 1982 Synod when the All Nations CRC of Halifax, Nova Scotia asked the synod to sever fellowship with the GKSA because the GKSA encourages membership in the *Broederbond*, an underground, "oath bound" racist/nation-

believe that the church should not interfere in policies lest the situation explode, weakening the government's control of the country.

The relationship of the Christian Reformed Church to South Africa is a relatively recent development. The first public awareness of the involvement of the Reformed churches in apartheid came from the Reformed Ecumenical Synod [RES] of 1968 when the synod adopted a mandate to "reactivate or initiate correspondence with the Reformed Churches of South Africa concerning the need for their corporate opposition to the apartheid policy of the government of South Africa."

Although the CRC was formed at about the same time as the GK (or Doppeker Kerk) and there is evidence that members of the CRC corresponded with the Doppeker Kerk as early as 1944, official ecclesiastical ties were not established until 1974.

In response to the mandate of the RES, Warren Van Tongeren observed in a July 23, 1971 *Banner* article that, although we were not in ecclesiastical fellowship with the NGK and the GK, the CRC did maintain fellowship with those churches through its membership in the RES. He says, "Whether we like it or not, to be Reformed is to be linked to the apartheid policy of South Africa. As a member

of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, what is the responsibility of the CRC to the Dutch Reformed Church [NGK] and the Reformed Church in South Africa [GK]—her ecumenical sisters there? Does not the continued support by these churches of their government's racial policies strain the credibility of the Reformed witness worldwide?" Even though Van Tongeren's intention was to prevent the creation of ecclesiastical ties with these churches, Synod went ahead with the decision in 1974, largely on the basis of the RES's advice to encourage the South African sister churches to end apartheid, rather than rebuke them by cutting off fellowship.

After Synod's decision to accept the GSKA's role in apartheid, the issue was not really debated again until 1982. That summer, Synod received an overture drafted by the All Nations CRC in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The overture called for the CRC to sever ties with the GKSA based on two accusations: that the GSKA allows and encourages membership in a secret, oath-bound society called the Broederbond, and that the GKSA tolerates and actively supports the South African government's policy of apartheid. The following year, when the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) of the CRC addressed Synod, the committee's president, Clarence Boomsma, said that there wasn't enough evidence to decide the truth of the charges. Rev. Nico Botha, a black pastor in the NGSK who attended the Synod as a delegate from South Africa, told the *Grand Rapids Press*, "Most people in the black churches will see the decision not to sever ties with the GKSA as support for apartheid."

At Synod of 1984, the IRC reported on "The Current Position of the Reformed Church in

Dismays Black Pastor

list society, and because the GKSA tolerates apartheid government policies.

The charges were referred to the permanent Interchurch Relations Committee of the CRC. The IRC told the 1983 Synod there isn't enough evidence now to decide the truth of the charges. The IRC's president, Rev. Clarence Boomsma, is in South Africa where he is to discuss the charges with GKSA church leaders.

Botha is pessimistic the CRC will have any effect on the GKSA. "Until now the whole world has poken to the white church in South Africa and it hasn't listened," he said.

"I don't see how a small church like the CRC can convince the GKSA to reject apartheid and work together with blacks for change."

Wednesday's statement started out much weaker. A report issued Monday merely had rejected the call for severance, said the synod expresses "deep concern" about apartheid and lamented there are

racially separate churches.

Many delegates were concerned the report did not go far enough and were worried the CRC would be embarrassed after having just voted to limit ties with the Reformed Church in the Netherlands (GKN) because of its liberal stand on homosexuality.

"People outside are going to look at this as a blessing on apartheid and a curse on homosexuality," said Rev. Gordon Negen, pastor of Eastern Avenue CRC.

DeJager said criticism of apartheid held was deliberately soft-pedaled in the first report in an attempt to be "diplomatic." He said he is encouraged that the GKSA has publicly protested the South African government law against the racial intermarriage.

But Botha called the GKSA's stand against the government's marriage law meaningless unless the clergy is willing to "practice civil disobedience" and perform interracial marriages.

South Africa [GKSA]." The IRC concluded that the GKSA position at some points "gives four square support to the policy of apartheid, seeking to base this on scriptural argument and to make its defense a part of the Christian's prophetic calling." Although Synod did not make any decision based on the IRC's information, the IRC was given time to present their report to the RES meeting in Chicago to discuss the issue.

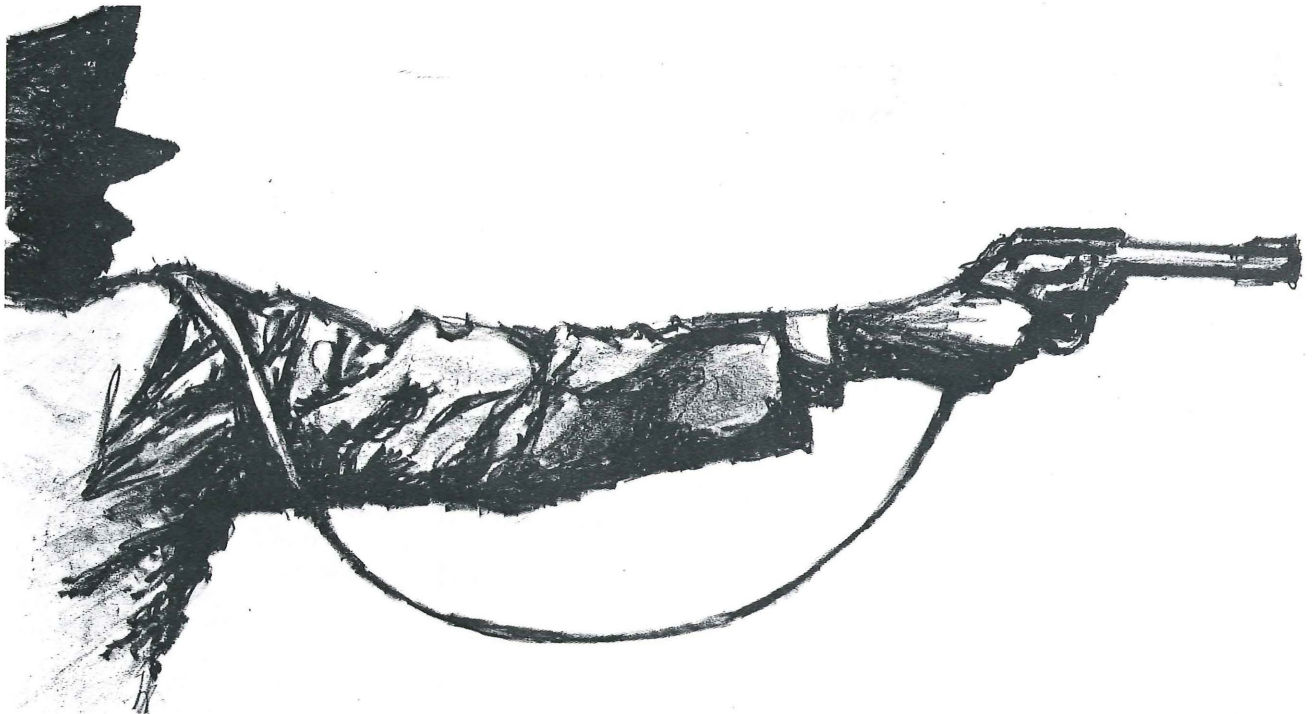
The IRC noted their concern about the issue but did not press the Synod to make a decision. The IRC stated that the charge that "the GKSA are false churches" were "exceedingly serious charges" and that "such a charge has serious implications for. . . our relations with the GKSA" and a "strong bearing on the membership of these churches in the RES." A part of the IRC's report involved an ad hoc committee created to examine the issue of "Is Apartheid a Heresy?" In the report, the committee examined the statement made by the World Alliance of Reformed

Churches [WARC] and the NGSK which declared that "apartheid is a sin, that the moral and theological justification of it makes a mockery of the Gospel, and that it is consistent disobedience to the Word of God is a theological heresy." The committee concluded that "any church that supports or warrants such an ideology in the name of the Word of God is untrue to the Word of God, and the teachings it propounds in support or defense of such an ideology must be judged heretical. And any church that does not vigorously oppose such an ideology must be judged guilty of disobedience to God's Word and to Christ its Lord."

Without making any decisions regarding the issue, the Synod of 1985 chose to appoint a four-year committee to study the issue, effectively putting off any decisions until 1989. Since 1985 there has been a considerable amount of dialogue in the Christian Reformed Church concerning apartheid and especially the CRC's involvement in South Africa. The *Reformed Journal*

published a number of articles/editorials during 1986 that presented information and opinions regarding the situation. Both James LaGrand and Clarence Boomsma wrote regarding ecclesiastical ties between the Doppe Kerk [GKSA] and the CRC. LaGrand, supporting the All Nation's overture to Synod, wrote that "meaningful CRC 'ecclesiastical fellowship' with the Sendingkerk [NGSK], and NGKA, and the Reformed Church in Africa [NGK], as well as real dialogue with the Doppe Kerk, will become possible only after we break our awkward official ties with the Doppers." Boomsma, on the other hand, wrote, "While the church owes the secular world the witness of the gospel against discrimination and injustice, it must also witness to the world how Christians deal with one another in times of sin and estrangement to bring healing and hope."

On March 12, 1989, the problems with the South African churches seemed to be instantly resolved. A front page *Grand Rapids Press*



Shots were fired.

—Ronald Kok

article on that day declared, "Afrikaners' Church Calls Apartheid Sin." The article continued, explaining that the Dutch Reformed Church [NGK] apologized for their role in apartheid: "We confess with humiliation and sorrow the participation of our church in the introduction of the ideology of apartheid and the subsequent suffering of people." Although the church confessed its sins, they offered relatively no course of action to put an end to apartheid. The article also notes that the NGK is "probably Afrikanerdom's strongest single unifying factor" of which South African President P. W. Botha and "virtually his entire Cabinet are congregants." An accompanying article addresses a report issued a day after the NGK's statement by a South African government appointed commission which "called for an end to all apartheid laws and the creation of voting rights

for the black majority."

Only four days later, however, another front page article in the *Press* stated that the NGK sidestepped opposing apartheid and that "it will not support resistance to apartheid." The withdrawal of the previous statement came from a high-level commission of the church which stated that "apartheid was a mistake but stopped short of calling it a sin or heresy." The church made no attempt to apologize for its previous statement. Both statements came as the result of a week-long meeting between the black and white churches mediated by the Reformed Ecumenical Council, a worldwide body of churches with its offices in Grand Rapids. The meeting brought Rev. Allan Boesak of the mission church and Rev. Johann Hynes of the NGK together to discuss the black churches' statements on apartheid. According to

Richard vanHouten, the president of the REC, the meeting offered hope in that the black churches "banded together" to condemn apartheid with "a unified voice." The NGK, holding to their policy of not opposing apartheid, abstained from making any decisions based on the black churches' statement.

Even without any firm opposition to apartheid in South Africa by the NGK or the CRC, there is still hope for resolution of the injustices occurring in South Africa. Continued dialogue and support for the minority churches of South Africa will eventually force the government, and its supporting churches, to reconsider their policy of apartheid. The unification of the black churches in South Africa and the support of whites who oppose apartheid will allow blacks to gain their rights as citizens of South Africa.

Where We Stand Now:

—from *SCORR's Response to the Reversed Race Policy of the RCSA, 1989*

Recommendation

That Synod sever ties of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Reformed Church in South Africa (RCSA) while pursuing and developing a closer and more intense relationship with the Black and so-called Colored Reformed Churches.

Grounds:

1. The RCSA in its revised declaration on Race continues its history of support for apartheid in its use of Scripture and its theology.
2. Synod of 1984 declared apartheid a sin and the moral and theological justification of it is a theological heresy.
3. Our focus and energies must now be directed toward those who are experiencing the pain that is inflicted upon them through the sin of apartheid.
4. The Christian Reformed Church's vision of an All Nations is contradicted by the declarations of the RCSA as noted by point a through e.

Conclusion

Failure to sever ties at this time both suggests and will be understood by oppressed South African brothers and sisters in Christ as our complicity with the system of apartheid by which they are oppressed.

To counter such an image, we urge that, as ties with one group are severed, we simultaneously pursue and develop a closer and more intense relationship with the Black and so-called Colored Reformed Churches in South Africa, as well as with others in the RCSA and DRC who struggle to abolish apartheid. By these coordinated actions we will enable the CRC to continue promoting the Reformed faith in South Africa and enable the CRC to begin a more supportive dialogue with those who are the victims of apartheid.



—Sue Engelbrecht



Usutu!

—Ronald Kok

Special Writing Section

Writers' Guild: An Anthology

Believe it or not there are students at Calvin who write for fun and not just when they're forced at grade point to put pen to paper in an attempt to sound sensible. Writers' Guild is a group of such people. When the spirit moves and the schedules are able, these insane individuals gather together to confess their crimes and reconciliation with the world; sometimes they just kick back and watch the sky fly by. And sometimes they go public; such a time is now: the following pieces are a small sampling of their work and play. Enjoy.

CARNIVAL

Although only nomadic tents in a desert place,
A homeland for the desperately poor.

A place to go on rides like
The Himalaya—a train of cars that goes in a circle,
To spin and wheel until you retch,
And then to throw a dart at a pocked board
Because the girl with the heavy eye shadow behind the plywood
Scared you into it: "Don't you want to double your money come on."

Carnival:
From the Italian *carne levare* meaning "to put away the meat";
Not however from the folk Latin *carne vale*,
Except that it fits better because the only thing
You can think of when you go to one is "farewell, flesh!"

But you can bet that the guy with a film of dirt and black oil on
his face and forearms and the fiery sideburns that flare out
below his temples despite his sooty complexion and who runs the
Ferris wheel doesn't know that according to the etymology this
carnival is supposed to take place on the Tuesday before Ash
Wednesday because now it's past Ash Wednesday and we're all
Barbecuing in our sackcloth.

Nor the ticket booth attendant with the mouth that forms an o
slightly off center as she deliberately counts out the tickets
three for a dollar—one, two, three; who is isolated in her
bright blue booth from which she can see crabgrass, dirt, candy
wrappers, cheap stuffed animals, and the woman in the faded
velvet dress with bright red hair except for the black spot on
top of her head who is running the ball toss.

But especially not the grimy-faced idiot riding the cylinder at
the Fun House and scowling while twirling a broom above his head.
A good example of the sound and the fury signifying nothing. An
absurd caboose.

Carnival
Car-ni-val
Carne vale
Flesh, farewell!

— Tim VandeBrake

Brown haired beggars sit on the cold cobblestones by the side of
the road.

Huddled under rags, clothing carefully mended times untold,
They bear the shadow of a decaying cathedral whose cornerstone is
tarnishing gold

Where Saint Peter is peeling, and Saint John, just an icon
beginning to mold.

The air inside is less reverent than musty and dusty stained
glass sheds light that is grey

On a white woman kneeling between black, hard pews to pray—
Hail Mary, Our Father, and when penance is paid with a toss she
hurries away.

But coins of eased consciences miss the tin cup and the blind
cannot see where they lay.

So day after day the church bells ring, but no angels sing,
For the rich never stay and the beggars sit outside and grow old.

—Amy Olson

WE AMERICANS, US

We Americans, us we are
and to us belongs this land. We
live here. We work the dirt
for us, to us it looks
like rain but rain brings life

And life is what we Americans
love, with us is life just
and justice for all (that's us). To us
we give our hearts, our homes
then return them again to us

Anthem of us is peace and love
and all things great
but hardly ever small (to us
are all things grandiose,
a ragtime band, a Sousa march,
a smalltown parade to us is nice)

We Americans, us we claim
the sun, the moon, the stars,
whatever God made
he made for us (we think
this way, for in God we trust). For us
are all things that were made,
made in the USA by God, by
gum, by twiddle dee and twiddle

Stars and stripes
for better or worse

—Heather Gemmen

A POEM TO FILL TONIGHT

There's nothing to say
but to waste space and kill time,
maybe flip a few words your way,
spit in the wind, and force rhyme.

There's nowhere to go
but from beginning to end,
nothing to show
but what comes round the bend.

Maybe I'll get out my guitar, tune the strings,
whisper while the sweetness sings,
then get bored and wait for the phone to ring,
turn on the TV, see what the late show brings.

Or just pray the Lord my soul to keep,
forget this all, and go to sleep.

—Timothy J. VanNoord

An Obligation to History

Tim VanNoord

“Remember one who is dead, and in addition to the blessing which is inseparable from this work of love, you will also have the best guidance to rightly understanding life: that it is one’s duty to love the men we do not see, but also those we do see. Our duty to love the men we see cannot be set aside because death separates them from us, for our duty is eternal; but consequently our duty toward the dead cannot separate our contemporaries from us so that they do not remain objects of our love.”

—S. Kierkegaard

“Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.”

“And parents, never drive your children to resentment but in bringing them up correct them and guide them as the Lord does.”

—The Holy Bible

We should be the wisest generation that ever lived. Just go to the library and gaze across the shelves and shelves of books; consider all the lives still living there. Pull down one of these books and read: suffer with those who’ve suffered, mourn with those who’ve mourned, rejoice with those who’ve rejoiced. Get angry at our mistakes. We have man’s secrets at our fingertips; with little effort we can travel through

time and through space to see life through another’s eyes.

The words are of those who have gone before us: our mothers and fathers, both the sinners and the saints, the ancient patriarchs, the common laborers, the prodigal sons. They speak still, even now, in a language easy to comprehend; the least we can do is stop and listen, honor the sacrifices that have been made. To agree or disagree is our responsibility to ourselves, but to sit at their feet and listen is our responsibility to them.

Listen to the Proverbial Wisdom: “Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost you all you have, get understanding.” What are we willing to sacrifice for wisdom? An hour less of TV each day? Each week? Fifteen minutes less sleep each night? A little time out of the time-and-a-half overtime? Though it cost you *all* you have: get understanding. Not if you feel like it—this is a command.

But what do we gain when we gain wisdom? What is it that is worth *all* we have? And while we’re at it—why even try to gain wisdom if all we’re gonna do is die?

Are questions like this even valid to ask? A soldier in the army is trained to follow commands, not to ask why. The fate of his side depends upon his ability to carry out orders. Get wisdom.

If we can’t see the sense in gaining wisdom for ourselves, then the least we could do is gain it for our children. We should be the wisest generation who ever lived; yet we’re not. Our children are losing touch

with their history and heritage because we have discarded wisdom and replaced it with instant food, instant fashion, instant information, and instant identity. It's too much work to study the past; besides—who really cares about a bunch of dead people long gone thank God—they have nothing to say to today. The most respect we give our history is when we honor past presidents by having sales on their birthdays or when we sell t-shirts at some battlefield where hundreds have died. "Somebody was killed at Gettysburg and all I got was this damn t-shirt!" We're making money off the blood of our forefathers; we're disowning our children.

If we insist on having children then we must also insist on teaching them what we have learned. But what do we care about learning? If we would give all to gain wisdom we would have something to pass on. Instead we pass on the bomb, we pass on our greed for success, we pass on our despair. We're provoking our children to anger because instead of passing on wisdom we pass on foolishness.

All of this in an age when communication is at its height: TV, cable, VCRs, AM/FM radios, short-waves, newspapers, magazines, and, yes, tons of books. Too many books. Go into a bookstore and glance over all the new titles; surely it must make a writer want to weep. Why even add to the mess?

We live in an age when words are bought and sold without a second thought and hammered down our throats; we're giving our children a

language which has been drained of meaning. We talk too much. Our actions don't reflect our words or our words our actions. Instead of sitting still and listening to the wisdom of the ages we squawk and squawk and squawk about the most irrelevant and insignificant things—or relevant and significant things which have been trivialized by so much talk. Most of what we call news is but glorified trivia selected to stir our passions and insure an audience to be sold to advertisers. How much of what we see on the six o'clock news really makes a difference in our everyday lives?

Along with no language, we ourselves have no identity. We don't know who we are, nor do we seem to care. We're too busy having fun to really think twice about all the blood, sweat, and tears that were shed to get us where we are today. But we don't even know where we are. We've forgotten not only the blood of our immediate forefathers, but also the blood shed by those, like the Indians, who got in our way, or those, like the slaves, who've done the dirty work, or those who've given silently and are now long forgotten, those who've paid the price in the past so that we might be free to study that past, speak to the present, and preserve the future.

We Americans have no identity because we cling to our own race—be that Dutch or Jew or African or Indian—while we still claim to be Americans. But we have no idea what it means to be an American.

Our American identity is supplied not by our history but by our big business: you're truly American if you buy this car, drink this beer, shop there, or visit here. We are what we own.

Those we call Native Americans are but a minority; the new native majority have no idea who they are. Identity only comes through knowledge of those things which make us what we are, most of which are found in the past, in our history.

Yet the ancient wisdom is being locked up and left in libraries, becoming nothing but research material for the scholar-scientist and the experts of the world; which means our history is gathering dust. Our history is for all of us to not only study but enjoy. The experts have their place, but they too, like all of us, are part of a history which can only be studied from inside history; the only thing with the Big Picture is that which is outside of history: God.

But, like all the words which have been written already, these very words on this very page will soon gather dust. Perhaps only considered an interesting diversion but as trivial as all the rest, not having much to do with the tangible things of life. But at least considered.

About all that's left to say is this: child, if you care enough to read this, please forgive us, even though we know what we were doing. And, child, though we refused to listen, you please listen: Though it cost you all you have, gain understanding. Please.

Nature vs. Nurture: An Educational

So, virtue then, is knowledge, as we have seen in our discussion, and as the rudder that steers a man to the ideals of happiness and well-being, it is man's immediate and primary goal.

Necessarily, then, virtue is to be found in the educational institutions, whose purpose is the deliverance of knowledge to the young.

Yes, Glaucoma, it would seem so, but we must first be assured of that purpose. Our educational institutions attempt to impart something to our young, but what is that profound thing?

Surely, Soboxes, we attempt to teach them knowledge, that they might better adapt to adulthood.

Ah, so the goal then is adaptation into the adult sphere of existence. Yet this too leads us to ambiguity, for what is it that finally enables this adaptation? Is it physical strength, that they might fight their way among other adults, or is it rather a mental capacity?

Our educational institutions attempt to impart something to our young, but what is that profound thing?

Undoubtably mental, Soboxes.

Very well then, if we seek to impart to our youth a certain *mental* capacity to adapt into the adult world, we need to clarify the type involved. It seems we face two choices: mental adaptation to ourselves or to others. Let us examine the latter first. In adapting to others our young learn to survive and associate with others in the adult world, do they not?

Certainly, Soboxes.

Our young, then, are trained with the social abilities necessary to guarantee them success with others in everyday communication and society, as well as those occasions more abnormal to common experience. They enter a situation and respond to the stimulus as instructed.

You exaggerate and dehumanize the process, Soboxes. We are certainly superior to the animals in these social functions.

Are we indeed? Are not young birds taught instinctively which songs are appropriate at which times and places? Do we not teach our dogs to defecate in certain areas, that social organization might be improved? Humans are no more developed than other animals in this knowledge: social customs are necessary for a more fluid, unimpeded existence, that man might focus more of his time to *higher* things. We agree to walk on the right side of a road so that we need not use our conscious mind to ponder and consider every time we encounter another on a path. Social customs free our minds to higher, uniquely *human* purposes. It is these higher things on which we must focus. If schools exist only to impart social instruction to our young, surely a great waste occurs, for our young become mere animals without the capacity to understand or utilize the very purpose of social instruction: to reach beyond it.

Surely education must aim for something other than social instruction.

Yes, and therefore we turn away from a mental adaptation to others, and to one to the self. What would it mean to adapt to oneself?

To get to know oneself, of course. To become aware of one's full potential and abilities, and to act independently with this knowledge.

Ah, so the goal is to gain a certain independence of mind which allows one to think in a uniquely different way than anyone else?

That seems reasonable, Soboxes.

So our schools must then encourage the growth of the *individual* above all else. They must seek out the unique person in every youth and guide him to independence and autonomy. And how is this done?

By teaching to him the thoughts of past, great thinkers, that he might learn from them and continue his own exploration and quest for knowledge and self.

This seems so, Glaucoma, yet by teaching him the thoughts of others, are we not programming him into thinking certain ideas and theories? In this scenario he merely regurgitates old thoughts and uses them for his own purposes, rather than originating his own new thoughts. In order to recognize his true *self*, needn't we insist that his mind remain untainted by *others'* thoughts during his formative years? How can one learn independence through dependence on foreign thought? It is like learning about democracy by experiencing tyranny.

Debate

Clearly this cannot be.

That is correct, and furthermore, our educational institutions teach not only information and ideas of others, but even teach *methods* of thinking about and learning those ideas. The very process of thinking becomes taught and programmed, and thus the youth loses his individuality in yet another way. His mind is trained in mathematics in a way that perhaps is unnatural for his individual mind, but which is now locked in and unalterable. Both the meaning of a poem and the subjective process by which one comes to a meaning are taught and regurgitated in the same way. This cannot be named a success in education, if its very purpose is trampled upon.

We agree to walk on the right side of a road so that we need not use our conscious mind to ponder and consider minds to higher, uniquely human purposes. It is these higher things on which we must focus.

Surely not, Soboxes. Yet we cannot abandon the youth, neither to this constrictive school, nor to his own lonely, ignorant wanderings. He must learn and be guided to independence and autonomy, yet by our dialogue I can see that any guidance as such is self-defeating. Yet what other options have we?

I claim no wisdom, my friend, and can only examine hypotheses as they are set before me. I cannot conclude that the educational institutions as set up today face in the opposite direction of their primary goal, and each step taken incurs but more damage to our youth. What have you there, Glaucoma?

A hemlock martini. Certainly you have tried one before, Soboxes?

I have not. I am, however, never hesitant to participate in the ever-broadening quest for experience and knowledge. As you know, virtue follows the inquisitive by but a few paces.

Indeed it does. Perhaps even as its shadow.

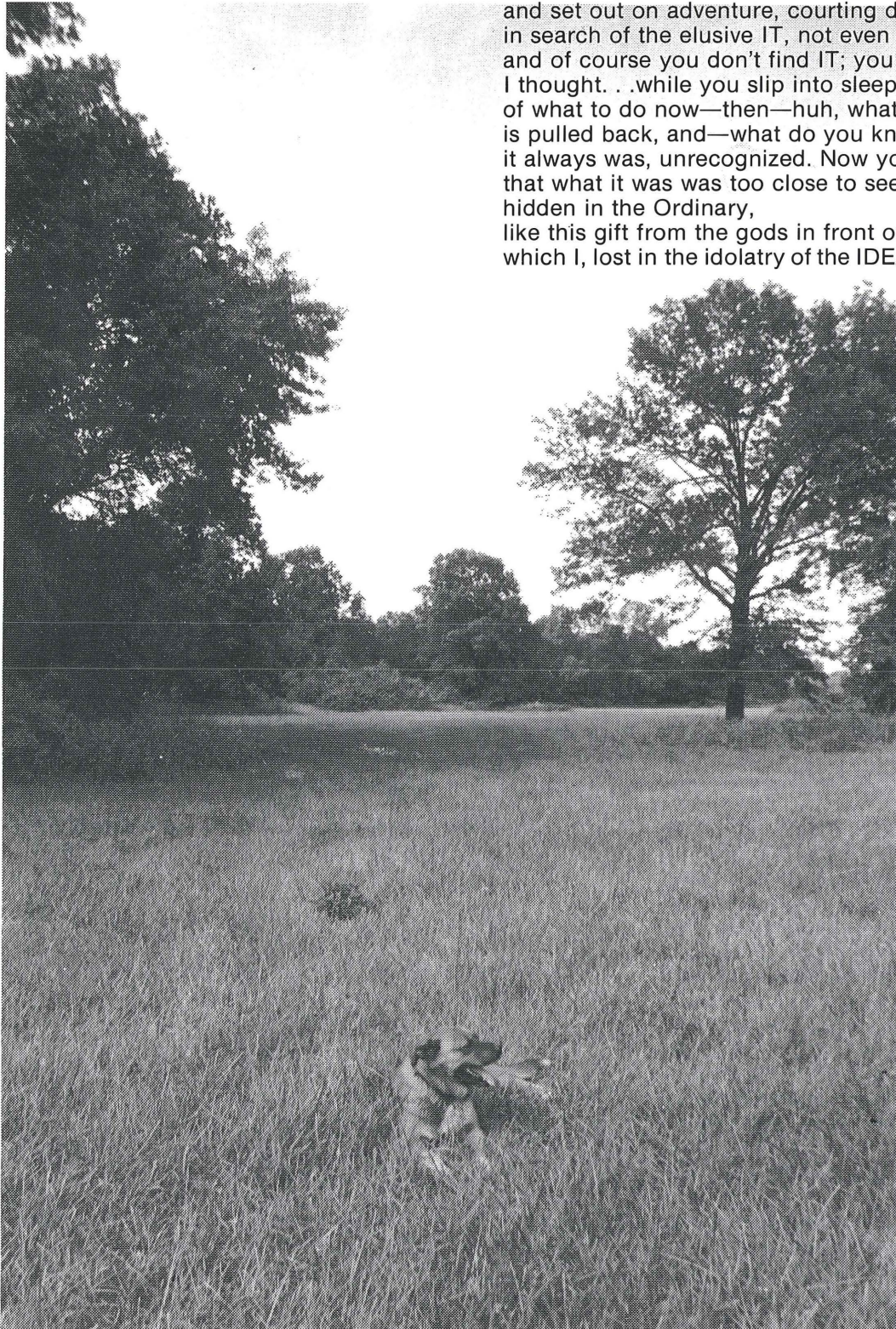
—Steve Mulder

GRACE

a gift from the gods just appeared to me
clothed in nothing more than Ordinary.

It's funny how you pack your gear
and set out on adventure, courting danger and mocking fear
in search of the elusive IT, not even sure WHAT,
and of course you don't find IT; you say: But—
I thought. . .while you slip into sleep, uncertain
of what to do now—then—huh, what's this—some curtain
is pulled back, and—what do you know—right under your nose
it always was, unrecognized. Now you realize, now you know
that what it was was too close to see,
hidden in the Ordinary,
like this gift from the gods in front of me
which I, lost in the idolatry of the IDEAL, had been too blind to see.

—Tim VanNoord



—Tim VanNoord

AMONG WELSH HILLS

The clouds rest low among us,
inky gray smudging green and blue,
wisps falling and rising
as flitting birds,
falling from cool mother-bank
to caress pine-tips
and float unfelt.
Hilltops fade in salty mist,
tasting the sea,
sipping its moisture.
And the form hovers,
descends,
painting the valley,
whispering calm.
A potent silver air
erasing day and night,
creating a pause:
over stone church tower
and thatched roof,
over hill-caps
and sheep heads.
A lone gull
curves smoothly upward,
is swallowed by the mass,
is spat back
toward the real.
Then sea joins
its feeder brook
as mist kisses foam,
and blanket muffles laughter.
And the valley cradles the sky,
until sword-thrusts of
clean sunlight
perforate the mother-bank,
and morning eats the cloud,
slices and tears it
from its mossy bed.

—Steve Mulder

CLIFF DANCING

I peer over the edge of a red clay gorge
With a twisted river surging hungrily at the bottom.
The drop would be fatal, I think to myself.

But as I arise the rocks look less sharp,
The drop less deep.
I glance around.
Other people walk near the edge,
But they do not watch their feet.
Perplexed by their impunity, I give it a try.

Soon I'm skipping along the ledge.
Some dirt crumbles beneath my fearless foot
And I fall.

—Tim VandeBrake

PARADISE LAKE; WASILLA, AK

At lake edge spread out glass-like mirrored red sunrise;
I take one last stone, circular smooth, throw it side wise
and skip it, skip, skip, until it joins the skies.
Better than the splash and bubbles of my first try.

I find another stone, wind up, and almost
throw the thing, but don't. Instead I glance
at what I've picked up. Sculpted by the Heavenly Host
it hints fire—blood red—glints flame—out there broken glass

mirrored past rings round rounds back slaps at toes
tosses foam and subsides, dies. An eagle flies past.
Presently pink silver returns, reflects, the rays rip open
another day given birth again; another moment floats past;

I come this way not often enough, only after night is broken,
skip a few stones, and listen to the unspoken.

—Timothy J. VanNoord

Commentary

Why Should We Care?

There are three kinds of comparison which are typically applied to the South African situation by those who wish to tame the stridency of worldwide condemnation of apartheid. Each of them begins by admitting that the state of affairs is less than ideal, but then proceed by comparison to show that things are actually as good as or better than could be hoped for.

The first is a comparison to the North American situation. Two years ago the South Africa ambassador to Canada spoke at a Canadian university. He claimed that Canadians, having stripped native North Americans of their land rights and made their culture impossible, should not point the finger at South Africa, which was striving to grant land to its native population, and to grant them the freedom to preserve and develop its own national identity—or, rather, national identities, since the South African government regards the black population as composed of a number of distinct tribes. No doubt the same comparison is made in the U.S.A. with regard to its Indian population, if not its black population. In essence, they argue, we have not attained the just system which we demand of them.

It is also often noted that the standard of living for blacks in South Africa, though significantly lower than that of whites, is many times higher than that of citizens of other African nations. When compared to other Africans, black South Africans are doing very well. This comparison is used not so much to convince black South Africans to be content as to dissuade the West from pushing for a solution similar to those developed in other

African nations. At this point, it is often added that South Africa remains the last bastion of capitalism in southern Africa: the fate of the black population would be endangered by a communist government in South Africa.

The third comparison is a temporal one: though it is admitted that the situation is less than ideal, it is nevertheless maintained that things are much better than they have been. The government is moving toward dismantling apartheid in a gradual but determined way—granting more rights and freedoms while maintaining an economic and political environment conducive to productivity.

All of these comparisons have one thing in common: they argue that if we would put aside our naïve idealism and compare the South African situation not with our image of utopia but with that which actually obtains, we would see that outright condemnation is simplistic. In short, we see in South Africa a complex situation for which comparative contexts—North American history, African history, and South African history—do not provide emulable models. Rather than hold South Africa up for comparison to standards which we ourselves have not been able to meet nor have we seen met, we should acknowledge our ignorance and allow the South African people to achieve a just solution without foreign meddling.

All of the comparisons are refutable, if only because non-white South Africans have judged them to be flawed. If there is one thing that is insufferable in Afrikaner apologetics it is the notion, implied or stated, that the non-European peoples are not capable of knowing what is good for them.

But I will refrain from dismantling the argument against

condemnation in order to focus on a significant part of the debate, to which we are alerted by these apartheid defenses: *our* place in it. These comparisons actually help clarify the question, "Why should we care?"

When we consider this question, "What is our place in the struggle for justice in South Africa?" we need to define the antecedent of the pronoun in the question. We first need to ask, "Who are *we*?" before we can ask, "Who are we to be meddling?" In this case, we are members of an academic community established and supervised by the Christian Reformed Church. Though ethnically Dutch and German in origin, it was established in a schism from the Reformed Church in America in 1857. By the early 1900s the CRC had planted churches in Canada, and to this day is a North American entity. And though Calvin College and Seminary has of late questioned its relationship to the denomination, and though many of its students have no other link to the CRC than its school, nevertheless the question of "our" involvement in South Africa must necessarily take the denominational matter seriously, and the ethnic matter as well. It seems clear, furthermore, that at least some in this community understand this connection (though wrongly), since the proposed interim in South Africa is being organized through the Dutch department.

We should realize, then, that the involvement of Calvin College and Seminary in the struggle for justice in South Africa does, in fact, demand serious self-examination—not, as the Afrikaners would have it, with the result that, admitting our own limited success in the area of race relations, we would back down from our insistence on fundamental change in the South African structure; rather, that we would

ommit ourselves once again to the vision of reconciliation of black and white in North America, especially in the cities where black and white live together. By our involvement in questions which rock South Africa, we would be forced to ask ourselves why the college and seminary have been largely unsuccessful in attracting black students not only from this city but from other cities in which congregations exist with large numbers of black members. We would ask ourselves why, having established a whole classis of Navajo Indian congregations, we see so few North American Indian students among us. We would ask ourselves why we moved off of the Franklin Street campus, and how committed we are to making the city a place of joy and prosperity.

When we make the comparison between South Africa and other African nations, we would be forced to remember and consider our role, through our foreign missions, in the African churches for whom the South African struggle is a matter of continual prayer. Not only do we share with them a concern for that country, however: for the political independence that these African countries have achieved since World War II is often seriously compromised by the economic colonialism

still practiced by first and second world nations. That white South Africa exploits black South Africa from an "on-site" position (though even now, with the erection of "independent" homelands, this is changing), while the fates of other African nations are determined from offices in the East and West is

It is no coincidence that those who hold a theory of separate development of races should insist on western non-involvement. Apartheid is in essence the entrenching of isolation. If we protest, we must be clear about our sense of involvement with, of mutual responsibility for, not only

We are forced to consider our role in African churches for whom the struggle is a matter of continual prayer.

not, in the end, significant.

Finally, the comparison with the past should compel us to articulate the nature of biblical peace and strengthen us in our commitment to it. Furthermore, it should make us more aware that the matter of apartheid is not a discussion between whites on democratic theory; rather, it is fundamentally a question of the quality of life. And since to be fully human is to have responsibility for one's destiny and to take seriously one's share in the destiny of others, a reflection on the quality of life of all South Africans would involve us in discussion with members of the oppressed classes.

the inhabitants of South Africa, but people of all nations and races.

The best way for Calvin students to gather "first hand information" regarding the political situation in South Africa is, though it may seem curious, not by going there, but by involving themselves in the situations to which Afrikaners compare their own plight. Instead of an interim to South Africa, Calvin should consider courses of study in the inner city, more courses in other African nations, and a course in South African history.

—Tom VanMilligen



Van Abbema

—Jeff VanAbbema

Words & Works

Open Eyes and Opening Eyes

Some artists create beautiful things to look at. Some create new and marvelous universes. Some explore the soul. My work in this show is not beautiful, not an escape and not an inward exploration. My work is about open eyes and opening eyes. Too many eyes are closed in our world. In fact, the American culture in which we live has dulled our senses and made us apathetic. Movies, books, newspaper stories and photos about South Africa have made anti-apartheid struggles a trite thing, a "passing fad" for activists. That is why I have chosen images taken from news stories about South Africa. It is my prayer that through these images we will become aware that our fellow human beings, be it South Africa, Chile, El Salvador or the United States, are being persecuted, humiliated and murdered. As a Christian artist I feel a respon-

sibility to join in the fight for human rights. Christians should not sit silently and passively and pretend that they do not see. I pray that Christians never close their eyes to their world. That is why I create what I do.

**Ronald
Kok**



Nkosi Sikelel' i Afrika (God Bless Africa)

“ ‘Nkosi Sikelel’ i Afrika (God Bless Africa)’ ”



10/21/88

Ronald Koh



You and I



Cry Azania



"Lo, You Can Kill Me/ But You Will Never Rule This Land."

6/6

12/88

JWA Harold Koh

Lo, you can kill me/ but you will never rule this land.



Hope

My Hope

Commentary

Good News, but. . .

The news that has come out of South Africa in the past weeks has been very welcome news indeed. The admission of guilt or compassion of guilt by the Dutch Reformed Church who were the propagators or people who provided the theological theory for apartheid is a step in the right direction, although it is not to me in itself a solution because action and rhetoric are not one and the same thing. The whites in South Africa fear sharing power, ending apartheid for fear of losing their privileged positions that they have enjoyed now for over a century. For example there is a different salary scale for people depending on your color whether or not you have the same academic qualifications. There are in addition to this rules that tell you where you should have your house depending on your color, regardless of your workplace and needs. Even the church you go to is determined by your color and not creed or confession.

If these privileged positions are too high a sacrifice to pay is the opposite yet a better sacrifice? What exactly is the opposite? It is a driving of more and more white youths into the South African Army: dying defending what they call separate development (apartheid). It is also the driving of more and more black Dutch Reformed

Christians into militancy and alignment with the unChristian ideology of Communism—a severe blow being done to the name of Jesus. Added to this are humiliations, hurts and pains caused on God's people by apartheid. The consequences of this later stand is disastrous not only to South Africa but to the whole Central and Southern Africa. The economies and peace suffer, too.

People are forced to choose between communism and apartheid. They are both bad options. In fact, they do not do justice to the growth of the church and the Christian message. The Dutch Reformed Church family is among the most influential Calvinistic group in Central and Southern Africa, I thank God I am the product of this growth. I thank God not for what the Dutch Reformed Church has done in the region, but despite what they have done. He has used them in his grace. I really accept the confession of our brothers and sisters and "mother." May God continue to use them in this struggle to abolish what they have made. We now need action.

I still feel there is something missing from the consultation; I hear little or nothing about the Reformed Church in Africa and others, the so-called "doppers." Definitely a statement from them or a confession and participation in dismantling apartheid is needed, they too contributed to and embraced apartheid.

Rev. Paul Moyo is a lecturer at the theological seminary in Zambia and is presently pursuing a Masters degree at the Calvin Seminary.

—P. H. Moyo

Commentary

Knowing the Enemy

by Sam Maluleke

Since the beginning of March, I have been joyously and quite innocently informing every living creature that crosses my path (squirrels included!) about my imminent departure from this country. "Two months to go," has been my latest battle cry as I bury myself into books, assignments and exams. And I have often used the same cry in place of the more common, "Not much" when asked, "What's up?". The reactions have been literally overwhelming. Most of the reactions have been verbal but some proverbial. They range from envy to concern and everything in between the two emotions. At one level, it is all entirely understandable considering that it is South Africa I am going back to, given the fact that I do not look white.

Of course nobody has come out and told me to the face what they really think of it all. Not in so many words. People here are too nice for that kind of violent confrontation. It is not what you say, but how you say it, that seems important. Similarly it is not how you are, but how you look that matters. Let me quickly say that I am not talking about racism here. The racism topic is pretty worn out, don't you think? I am talking of weightier matters. I know a terrific young girl. Terrific in both body and soul with lots of personality. But the poor girl is convinced that she is a few pimples away from her true self. Now, that was an unwarranted diversion. For all I know, more than a few pimples stand between her and her

true self. Enough of that. Back to me and my home-going blues.

Under these circumstances I have had to be careful how I interpret what people say in reaction to my crazy anticipation of home. Some people have smiled and said, "How nice, you must be thrilled!" But between their smiling teeth I have read a different message. One rare person came close to telling me that I must be crazy getting so worked up about going back to South Africa. She even promised me USA citizenship if I made myself sensible enough and stayed a few more years in the USA. I do not think she would make many friends in the U.S. Immigration Department. As for the South African Embassy in D.C., they could not care less if I stayed.

"So why? Why throw yourself back into the dungeon? Are you trying to be a martyr of some sort?" people have asked me. I do not have any hero ambitions. To be honest, I am not made of hero stuff. Nor can I afford to be one in South Africa. South Africa is no place for heroes. Martin Luther King, Jr., would not have lasted for a week there. I am just a regular person born two and a half decades ago in Soweto near Johannesburg. Just over a year before I was born sixty-nine black people were shot to death by police, all in a matter of a few minutes. A further hundred and seventy were injured. This happened at a black township called Sharpeville, east of Johannesburg. The occasion? A peaceful protest against segregationist laws.

Around the time of my birth, Nelson Mandela was being hunted by the police and their special agents. Eight months later he was arrested and subsequently sentenced to life imprisonment. Why? For daring to speak out against racism and oppression. He has

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been in prison ever since. Between 1976 and 1977 more than 700 blacks were killed in a bullets-against-stones war between the army and students.

South Africa has been under martial law since 1985. Thousands of people have been killed and detained (often indefinitely without trial). Political activists and journalists have been the worst victims. Half of the media including television is owned and run by the government. The press (including the international press and media) has been silenced through the introduction of countless curbs. All the major anti-apartheid organizations have been banned. But the worst kind of victims are perhaps black school children. Many of these youngsters have been detained, tortured, maimed, and killed by police and soldiers. Only God knows what kind of adults these kids will make.

I find it hard to understand why the world student body (of course I am concerned with the USA here!) has remained unmoved by this. Again, I am not talking about race. I am talking about students. Fellow students who appear to lack the rights and facilities you as students have. Good grades and fraternities and sororities and calories and even pimples have their place in a student's life. But surely there could be more to being a student. Hope can make a start here (notwithstanding other admirable projects Hope students have tarted off already). In South Africa lack education, as well as being a ham, is in a deep crisis replete with sit-ins and class boycotts. The classroom is a battle ground. People die daily, physically and emotionally. So what? Who cares?

Of course all these apply to the black section of the South Africa. The other section, which constitutes one third of the country's population, is peaceful.

All is well there. Education as well as political activism goes on unhindered. In the white suburbs, you have all the usual stuff—the green lawns, tennis courts, swimming pool. It is business as usual. The peace and the quiet that characterize good neighborhoods envelopes these suburbs. They are all the same. If you have been to one, you have seen them all. But is it really as peaceful as it looks? Back to our little theme about looks.

Admittedly I have an obsession with looks. I am deeply suspicious of them. I think there is more to reality than the way things (even people) look. I was born and brought up in a world of harsh realities. People like to hide their eyes from harsh realities. Tom Brokaw of NBC knows this, so he makes sure that it is possible to watch the nightly news without losing either your appetite for dinner or your sleep for the night. How else could Hitler have massacred so many Jews before the world acted? Or should we blame it on the Jews?

I am both uneasy and suspicious of easy-going peaceful atmospheres, so called. How real are the opinions, gestures, situations, and people I have met in the USA, for example? How peaceful and how different is the USA from South Africa? Sure it is different. But how different? At least in South Africa I know the enemy. Knowing the enemy, I know what to expect. I do not expect nice gestures and mannerisms with ambiguous coded messages. Nor do I expect people to act apologetic when they mean to be mean. Call it the devil I know, if you will. There is a devil here for sure, but who knows what (s)he looks like?

An Interim Abroad: China

SHAANXI BOUNDARIES

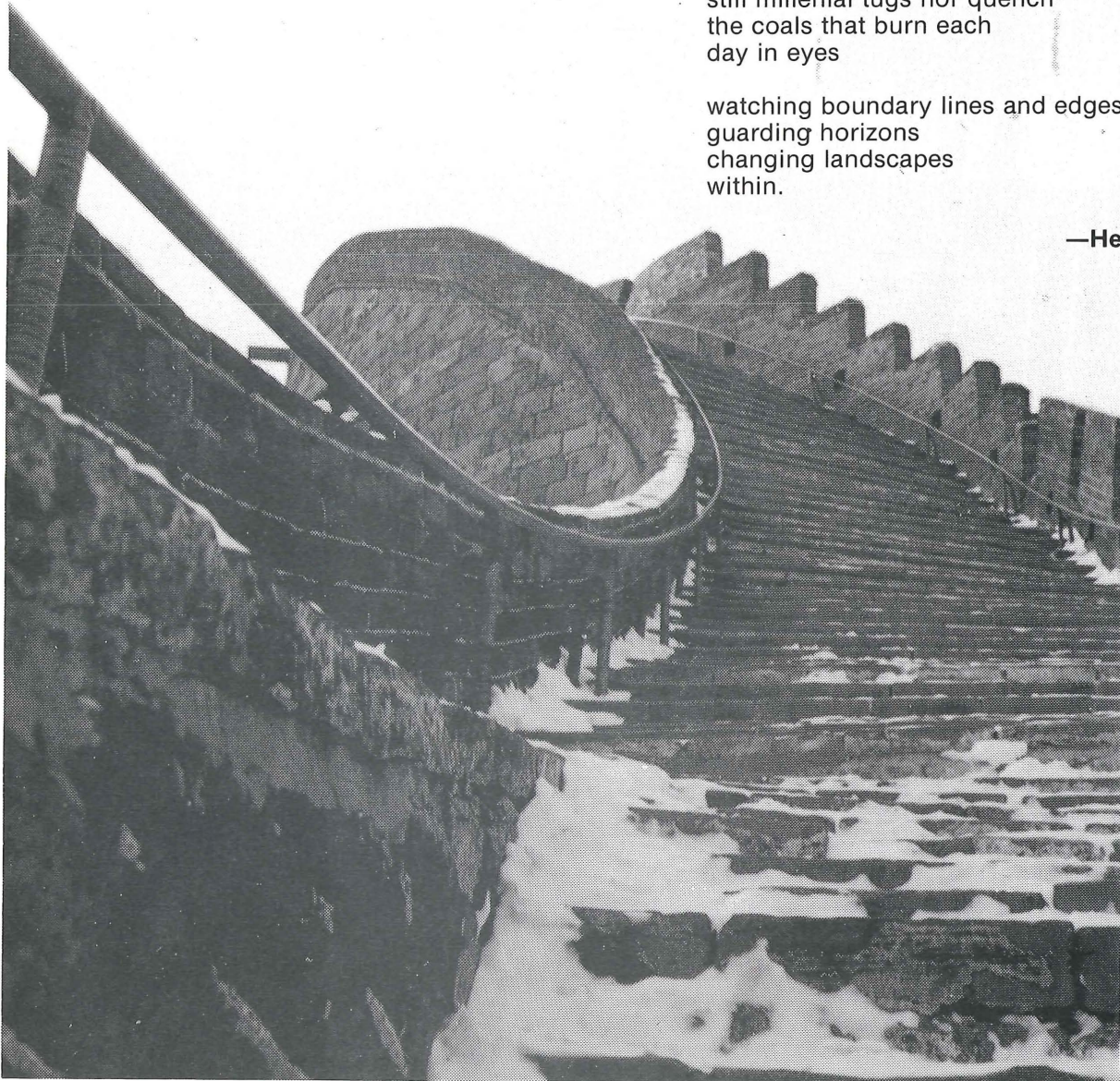
I climb eleven stories to gray rooftops and chimney
a landscape hung with morning smoke.
Three derricks poke the sky and roosters crow

as sycamores on Renmin Road sweep up the haze
and quiver to the shrieks of iron gates.
Day voices mount the city walls
to clear the edge where
I stand knowing
I do not know

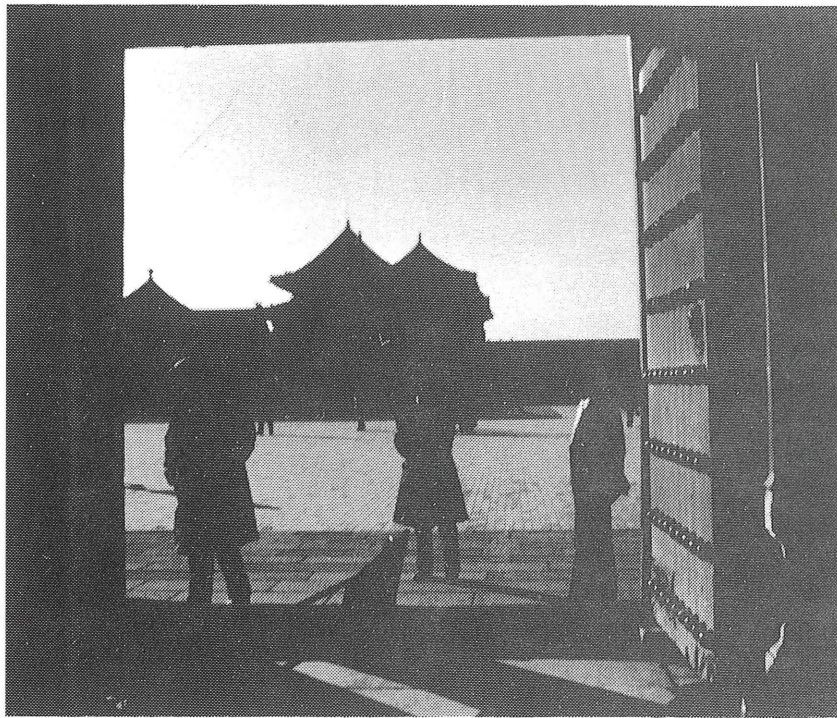
this world that leans back in dynastic lines
that stamp the curves and planes of faces
brooding the shadowed present.
Eleven new cement stories will not
still millenial tugs nor quench
the coals that burn each
day in eyes

watching boundary lines and edges
guarding horizons
changing landscapes
within.

—Helen Petter Westr



—Scott Faber



SEPIA CONCUBINES

No I have not imagined this
 in some mad moment
 here (in this hall of dynastic documents
 among seals and notes
 household inventories
 records of goods and land acquired) this
 faded sepia photo
 holding ten tiny girls
 bodies cased in stiff brocade
 beaded caps hiding the hair
 feet bound in silken shoes
 only the ivory hands soft
 folded like lotus buds
 while a guide's voice fogs the winter air
 explains these children from another time
 were raised imperial concubines
 these ten unsmiling toddlers
 still before a lens capturing their littleness
 their silent shadows on the wall
 raised for life with the imperial dragon
 daughters with hobbled souls
 still whispering soundlessly
 this is not past

—Helen Petter Westra

CHINESE BIRD SONGS

I

Each daybreak
 the aging petty officer
 airs his goldfinch
 in a courtyard
 swinging its cage
 to work the fluttery wings
 that cannot soar.

II

Few birds twitter
 in Chengdu's trees.
 Cicadas buzz
 on hot August evenings
 and an old rooster
 clears its throat
 in the morning.

II

Hoping for birdsongs
 I climb Qingcheng Mountain.
 Warbles pour from a pine grove
 beyond the path.
 but it is woodcarvers
 playing the whistle they sell.
 Where did they first hear
 those notes?

Helen Petter Westra



LESHAN MOSS

Easy to overlook in gray
 like shades of last year's moss
 or sun-dried pebbles
 but when she spoke
 through summer evenings
 her voice orange silk and
 sweet as sandalwood
 wove brocade sounds
 an oriole in plum blossoms
 her words spilled
 pearls on a jade plate and
 a silver mouse running through moonlight

—Helen Petter Westra

BAMBOO BEAUTY

Spring bamboo shoots cover the hills
 the savory tips gleam marble-white in the rice pot
 their skins slip off like purple veils

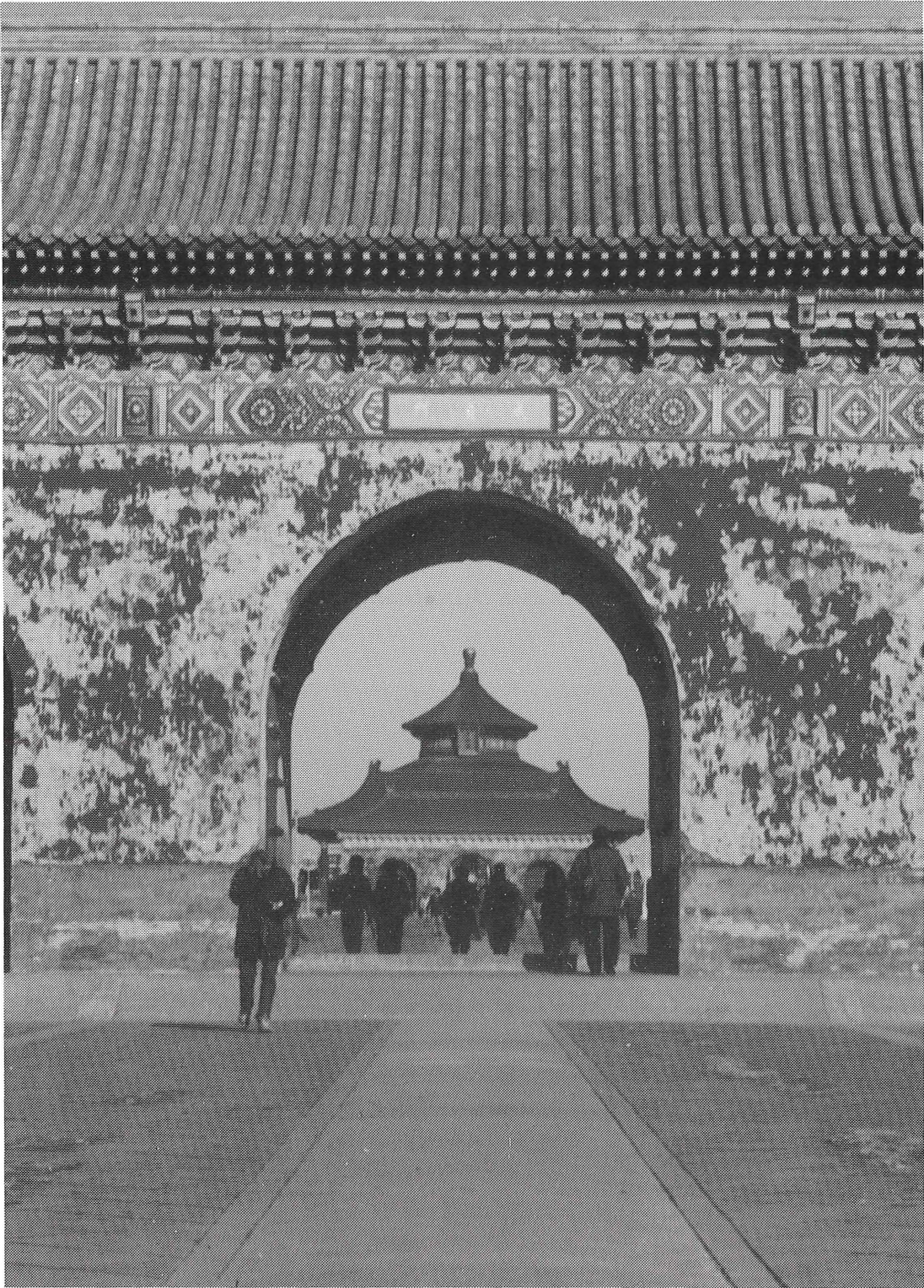
In groves along the Jianjiang
 rustling bamboos turn the air green
 their fingery leaves sign secrets
 at the water's edge

A woman's hand woven bamboo fan
 moves in half revolutions
 repeats the ancient rites
 moving the noonday air
 shading a sleeping child
 shielding shy eyes
 scattering flies from the soup bowl

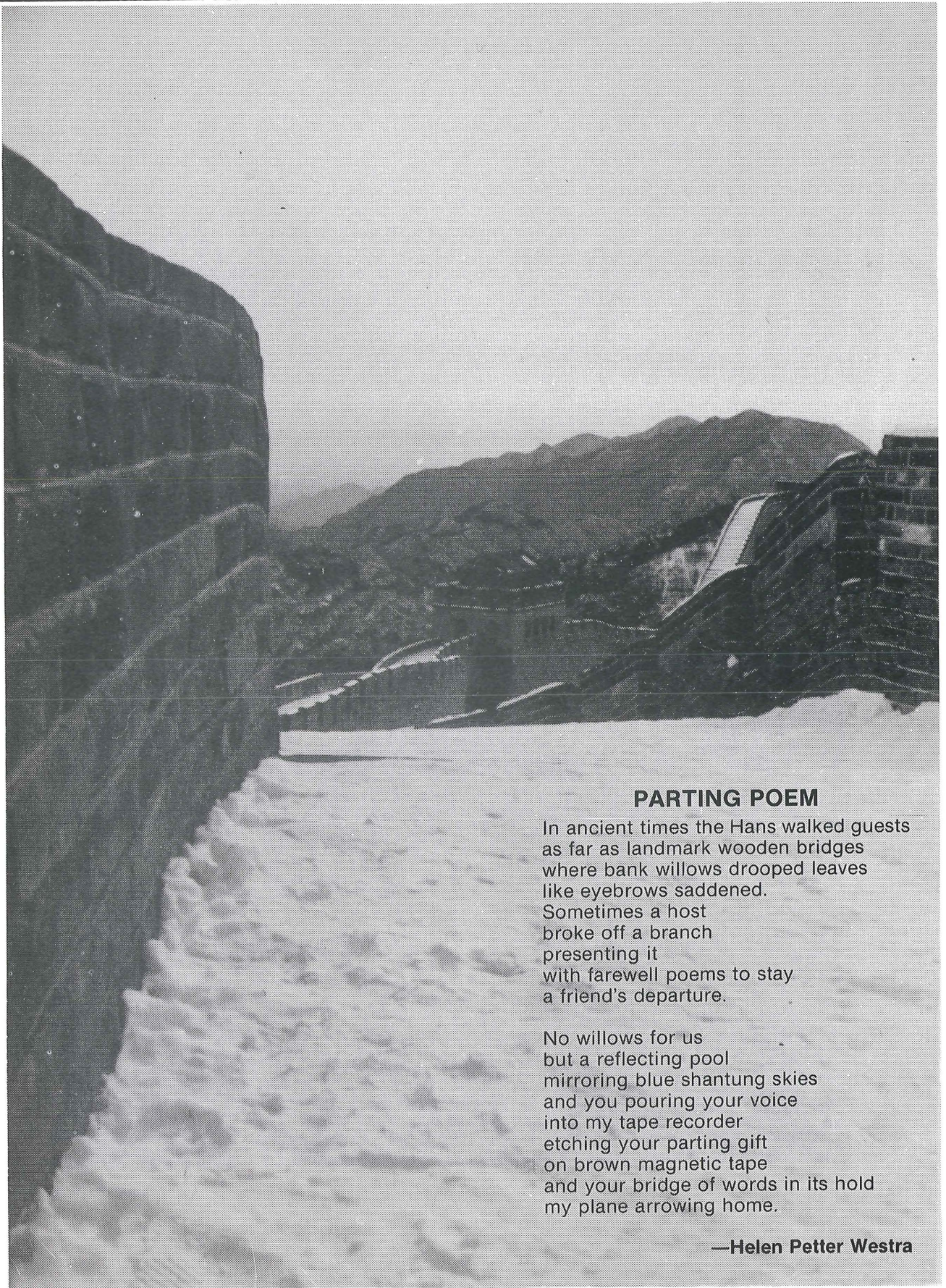
Watching slender bamboos dance
 on Matui Mountain
 Liu Zongyuna whispered
 "Beauty is made manifest
 when you praise it."

So I have made this record.

—Helen Petter Westra



—Scott Faber

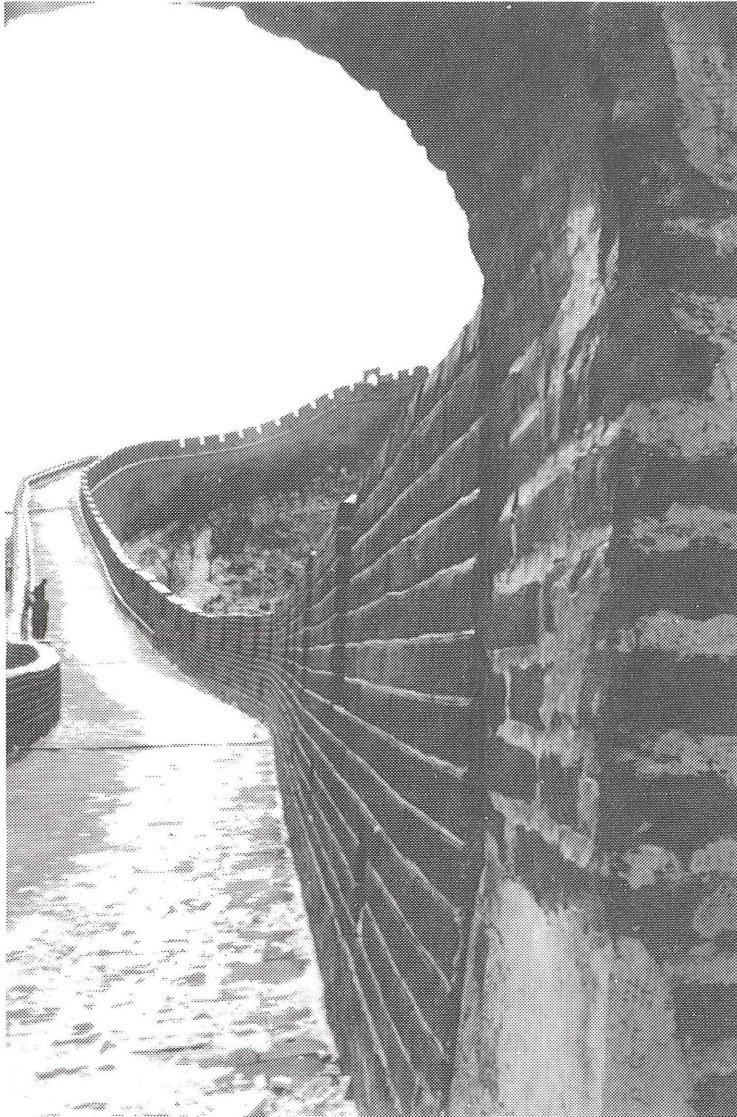


PARTING POEM

In ancient times the Hans walked guests
as far as landmark wooden bridges
where bank willows drooped leaves
like eyebrows saddened.
Sometimes a host
broke off a branch
presenting it
with farewell poems to stay
a friend's departure.

No willows for us
but a reflecting pool
mirroring blue shantung skies
and you pouring your voice
into my tape recorder
etching your parting gift
on brown magnetic tape
and your bridge of words in its hold
my plane arrowing home.

—Helen Petter Westra



—Scott Faber

NKHOSI SIKELERI AFRICA

God bless Africa
Let its horn be raised
Listen to our prayers
Bless us your children.

*Come Spirit Come
Come Spirit Come
Come Spirit Come
Come Spirit Come
God bless us your children.*

Bless our kings
So that they may remember
their creator
So that they may fear and
tremble before you
God bless them your
children.

Bless all nations
So that they may rule their
countries well
Let them humble themselves
in awe
God bless us all your
children.

