



# CONTENDER

*“contending earnestly for the faith...” Jude:3*

## WARS AND RUMOURS OF WARS

Terror struck America, the world's most powerful nation, and fear quickly spread throughout the western world, including Australia. Some fear the possibility of further attacks. For others life has returned to normal as if nothing happened. What should be our reaction to the world events of the past weeks?

### **Warning**

It seems clear that these events are a warning to the western world, which appears to be quickly turning away from the one true God to the gods of money and pleasure. Many times in the Old Testament, God used the heathen nations to punish his unrepentant children when they served other gods. Today we live many years later, yet the same God is in full control of all things.

But is it also a warning for us Free Reformed youth? Ask yourself: Am I truly thankful for God's many blessings to me, or do I think or complain more about others who have more or receive greater attention? Is my life focused on serving the gods of money and pleasure or is it to serve God by daily talking to Him, listening to Him, and helping others as He has commanded? Since we

all fall so far short, may we humbly pray to our Father to forgive us through Christ and work renewal in us by His Spirit.

### **Fear Not**

Most of us have lived our whole life in peace, so it is easy to forget the possibility of war and suffering. However it should not surprise us for the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 24:6 “And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.”

Indeed, we need not fear for “we know that all things work together for good to those who love God” (Romans 8:28). God will not abandon us. At our baptism we were given the sure promises of His love, forgiveness of our sins and eternal life. We indeed can confess the words of Psalm 118:6 “The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?” Thanks be to God for supplying our spiritual and physical food each day again.

■ **Andrew van Burgel**

November 2001 Vol 6 Number 8

### **In this edition**

#### **Editorial**

*Andrew van Burgel*.....1

#### **Afghanistan: a profile**

*Kristy Gunnink*.....2

#### **Urban and Regional Planning**

*Lindsay Bergsma*.....4

#### **Thinking Cap Lost**

*Sean Wagenaar*.....5

#### **Logos**

*Joslyn Hordyk*.....7



**MAGAZINE FOR THE YOUTH OF THE  
FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA**

# *Afghanistan: a Profile*

In response to the terrorist attacks in America on Sept 11th, war against terrorism has been declared. The first to come under fire in this war is Afghanistan, in whose land the infamous terrorist leader Osama Bin Ladin has taken refuge. After three days of airstrikes, the Pentagon has declared that the US possesses the skies over Afghanistan and can fly over that country virtually unchallenged. The Afghani people have previously been embroiled in a 22- year war, and once again find themselves being bombed. One wonders how much more can Afghanistan and her people take.

The Afghani political situation has been turbulent for decades. In 1973 the monarchy was overthrown in a coup led by Muhammed Daud, and Afghanistan was declared a republic. Daud's government was fiercely opposed by other parties, and he began executing much of his opposition. This sparked a revolt which resulted in Daud's death, and government falling in the hands of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (the communist party).

Rivalry between the two factions of the Communist Party {the Parcham faction (pro-Soviet), and the Khalq faction (more radical and independent)} kept the political scene tense and ready to erupt. An important point to remember here is that these events were occurring at a time when the international scene was dominated by Cold War relationships. The 70's and 80's saw Afghanistan as the stage on which the USA and the USSR battled out the Cold War.

The USSR invaded Afghanistan on Christmas Day 1979, to aid the Parcham faction of the Communist Party and to secure a communist government in Afghanistan. They were fighting guerrilla forces, known as Mujahadeen, consisting of refugees from many different Middle Eastern countries. There were approximately seven different factions, but they

were united in a common goal: driving the Soviet Union out of Afghanistan, and the pro-Soviet government from power. The Mujahadeen received money and weapons from the United States CIA and the Saudi Arabian government. During the 1980's the Mujahadeen grew stronger and gained control of more and more of the country. It was a long and devastating war, for both sides. Peace accords were eventually signed in 1988, and the Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan by February 1989. It has been estimated that approximately 40,000-50,000 Soviet soldiers died in action.

Unfortunately, peace did not lie in the wake of the retreating Soviet army. The Afghanistan government still lay in the hands of the pro-Soviet faction of the PDPA, with Najibullah (ex-head of the Afghan Secret Police) as President. Fighting continued, and although peace had been officially signed, both the US and the USSR maintained their supply of money and weapons to the factions they were supporting. It wasn't until late 1991 that they finally signed an agreement to end military aid to Afghanistan.

Still, the Mujahadeen continued to resist the government, and succeeded in gaining control of Kabul, and overthrowing Najibullah in 1992. Afghanistan was declared an Islamic State and Professor Burhannudin Rabbani became President.

The Taliban militia movement appeared in 1994 as an off-shoot of the Mujahadeen. Calling themselves "religious students", they aimed to force Afghanistan to adhere to Islamic fundamentalism. They were well armed, and in 1996 took over Kabul, driving Rabbani and his government out. By the late 1990's the Taliban had gained control of most of the country.

So... where does all these years of fighting and Civil War leave the people of Afghanistan? In short: very desperate. The civilians in

Afghanistan have suffered immensely from the war. Medical supplies were and still are in short supply due to the frequent hijacking of relief convoys. (Medical supplies fetch a fortune on the Black Market.) Amnesty International has reported that a lot of civilians have been killed in deliberate and indiscriminate attacks. Homes, schools and other civilian buildings were also unnecessarily targeted in the bombing. Between March 1998 and Dec 2000, the International Committee of Red Cross recorded 2 812 mine and unexploded ordnance casualties, half of whom were children.

The war has also resulted in a huge number of displaced persons, both internally and externally. During the Soviet/Afghan war, approximately one-fifth of the population fled. Together Pakistan and Iran supported 6 million refugees. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated in September 2001 that there are still 2 million refugees in Pakistan and 1.4 million in Iran. Following the events of September 11th though, the UNHCR is expecting new waves of large numbers of refugees to the countries bordering Afghanistan. For obvious reasons, this creates huge burdens on those countries (even with international aid) and now Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have effectively closed their borders to any new refugees.

In addition to so many years of war, Afghanistan experienced two years of drought between 1998 and 2000. Also, in February 1998 and then again in February 1999 earthquakes rocked the North East and Eastern regions of the country, leaving in total over 4000 people dead, and thousands of people homeless. Crops and livestock have been destroyed, leaving most of the population without sufficient food; poverty leaves them without the means to adequate clothing, shelter and medical care. These desperate circumstances have led to a huge increase in drug production and trafficking as a source of income. (A means that has been utilised by the major political parties.)

It is estimated that the hectares of opium poppy under cultivation in 1998 had increased by 23% by 1999 to 51 500ha.

The Afghani people continue to suffer under the oppressive Taliban regime. The policies of the Taliban are strict and anyone caught breaking the rules are severely punished. It is especially women who suffer, as they are not allowed to work or study; they are not allowed out of the house without a male chaperone; and in public they must always be covered from head to toe in a black, tent-like garment.

Such strict enforcement of the Islamic religion on the people obviously leaves very little room for an alternative religion. Yet these people too are in need of the Light of the Word of God. The Afghani people have suffered immensely, and continue to do so, in their war-torn country. Perhaps God will use the events of the past two months to bring an end to the Taliban rule, and allow peace to come to this country that has known so much blood-shed. We can pray that the Gospel may also be brought to Afghanistan, and that the people may come to know about the "Peace of God, which surpasses all understanding..." (Philippians 4:7)

Sources :

- [www.afghan-web.com/history/](http://www.afghan-web.com/history/)
- [www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/af.html](http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/af.html)
- [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)
- "Journalist and the Jihad", "His Business is Terror", "Declaration of War" in The Bulletin, Sept 25th 2001.
- Peter Marsden., The Taliban: War, Religion and the New Order in Afghanistan, Zed Books, New York, 1998.

■ **Kristy Gunnink**

# Urban and Regional Planning

**W**hen I tell people that I am studying Urban and Regional Planning at Curtin University, I often get the same response; “What is that?” or, “What does that involve?” I am currently completing my first year of the course, and although I may not know all the ins and outs of the profession, let me enlighten you in regards to both urban and regional planning in general, the course of study, and why town planners are necessary.

There is definitely a place for town planning in this world. When God created heaven and earth He made it perfect and orderly. Psalm 104 tells of the wonders of creation and goes through the days of creation and the things which God created:

*“O LORD my God, You are very great: You are clothed with honour and majesty, Who cover Yourself with a light as with a garment, Who stretch out the heavens like a curtain...He causes the grass to grow... He appointed the moon for seasons; The sun knows its going down... This great and wide sea, in which are innumerable teeming things, living things both small and great...(Psalm 104:1 ff).*

The Psalmist further describes the order and pattern of creation:

*The waters stood above the mountains... You have set a boundary that they may not pass over... He waters the hills from His upper chambers... He causes the grass to grow... You make darkness, and it is night... When the sun rises,... Man goes out to his work... (Psalm 104:1 ff).*

The Psalmist sees these wonders of creation and ends with the words, “Bless the LORD, O my soul! Praise the LORD!” (Psalm 104: 35b). We can see through this that God is a God of order and so we should continue this order in the way we function in this world. It is not for us to do what we like and not worry about the consequences. We must be responsible and good stewards of what God has given us to work with. In this way, town planning is very important.

The Curtin Undergraduate Prospectus gave as information under the course description, “Town/urban planners are essentially involved in the planning and design of the range of public and private communities through the

theoretical and applied evaluation of physical land uses, environmental, economic, market and social data within the hierarchy of local, metropolitan, regional, state and national levels of government.” Similarly, the job guide states that, “Town planners develop policies and plans for the use of land and resources, and advise on the economic, environmental, social and cultural needs of local, sub-regional, regional and metropolitan areas.” Basically therefore, town planners are involved in planning of various land uses for different areas but are also involved with the economic, environmental and social factors affecting this.

The course Bachelor of Arts (Urban and Regional Planning) is a four-year course with an honours option in the final year available to qualified students. The course is only available at Curtin University and when the students have completed the course they, as qualified planners, can find themselves careers in government and private sectors. Currently, there are many job opportunities available in this field of work.

As stated earlier, town planning involves many fields of study and incorporates them

into the one course. This comes out very clearly in the units that make up the first year of the course. The first year has included units that deal with design, economics, the environment, government, history and sociology. This is what I personally enjoy about the course. The wide ranging fields of study make the course very interesting.

Town planning came about mostly as a result of the lack of planning, and the consequences of this, in the past. A major turning point in this regard was the Industrial Revolution. Before this however, the Greeks and Romans already began the planning process by focusing their towns and cities on the

market places and meeting places (Greeks) and building settlements around military establishments (Romans). The Industrial Revolution however, gave rise to major reforms that are still in place today. This was due to the lack of planning of that time in which residential areas were located adjacent to factories. Conditions became appalling and caused many illnesses and deaths. As a result, a public health act was approved which addressed all health issues and this act may be seen as the birth of town planning processes today. Still today, disasters can be seen to allow new planning initiatives to come into fruition.

God did create the world long ago but He still upholds it

by His Providence. We may therefore know that “indeed, all things, come not by chance but by His fatherly hand” (The Heidelberg Catechism, Q/A 27). Paul acknowledges this when he says, “He gives to all life, breath, and all things... in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:25, 28). Moreover, we may know that God’s plan of salvation is also currently being fulfilled. Every passing day brings us closer to Christ’s return when He will take all His chosen ones to himself. May this day come soon!

■ **Lindsay Bergsma**

---

CROSSROADS

## *Thinking Cap Lost*

**A**lmost eighty years ago Rev Herman Hoeksema, of the Protestant Reformed Church, spoke to a gathering of youth in a farewell address as editor of their magazine. His warnings and encouragements were aimed at those young people, involved in their social and cultural context. However, even after so many years, it is powerfully relevant for us. Indeed, the accuracy with which it depicts the present situation is remarkable.

The speech began:

*If you ask me what, in our time, our people need above all, in the first place, my answer is: Doctrine! If you ask me what they need in the second place, I say: Doctrine! If you ask me what they need in the third place, I say: Doctrine!*

*You say, that’s a bold statement. Doctrine is*

*not popular. Most people say: we have had too much doctrine. We need practical stuff. Service is the watchword. Others say more reservedly: we need truth all right, but a restatement of the truth.*

*Naturally, one asks himself the question: How must this doctrinal indigestion be explained? One tremendous cause is the spirit of the age, that powerful, indefinable, but very real influence that imbues the general populace, invades literature and pulpits and finds a ready response at a certain period, which we designate as the spirit of the times for want of a better expression. The spirit of the times is against doctrine.*

*There is another reason. One of the causes is the loss of the thinking cap.*

*And the loss of the thinking cap stands for a general mental laziness. Now, I maintain that I have reason to think that the thinking cap is lost especially*

*among our young people. They are averse to do some straight and sound, some real and continuous thinking. Our young people are loath to think.*

*You want evidence?*

*In the first place there is the subject of reading. Very few are interested in reading books that require some study. Religious books, doctrinal works, are hardly read at all.*

*Let me call your attention in the second place, to the character of the various programs that will "draw the crowd." The lecture course that is annually prepared by the [Youth Club] of Grand Rapids has degenerated into a course of entertainment.*

*Let me call attention to the condition of our [Youth Clubs]. It is a general complaint that they do not flourish. Why? Because the thinking cap cannot be found.*

Can anyone honestly claim that this 'dumbing disease' is not a problem among the youth of the Free Reformed Churches? When we consider the points Rev Hoeksema proffers we can not deny their truth in our context. In fact, we can go further and identify other qualities that are being lost, such as the ability to engage in logical, structured discussion, and the openness to productive polemical interaction. Obviously these are symptoms of the previously mentioned lack of reading and thinking. For when there are no principles and insights gained by hard study and humble meditation, then there is nothing left but emotional impulsiveness. And once we descend into this arena, there are no reference points, but only vague, ambiguous subjectivity. In this misty playground the Bible says whatever the reader demands and any opposition can be written off as heartless traditionalism or closed minded oppression and conveniently ignored.

It is obvious that this trend toward a shallow, emotion driven approach to doctrine and life should be a matter for grave concern when there is a dire need for scripturally competent and humble analysis of our attitudes and practices. How can we test our lives when we are not familiar with the required standards? How can we revel in the solid food of God's revelation when we roll our eyes at its supposedly 'theoretical' and 'heavy' nature? Of course we can have a clear conscience about our entertainment habits if we don't know anything about the attributes of the God we image. Of course there will not be one right answer if we are not busy where the ultimate truth is found. Of course we can challenge Reformed doctrine when we have not even tried to understand it. Indeed, ignorance allows one to treat the richest truths with patronising disdain. It is certainly bliss. Every action can be defended and

every attitude justified.

Without diligent studying and thinking, we can no longer answer the fundamental questions. What does it mean to be Reformed? What is the church? What is the world? What is the difference? What do the confessions teach me about this and many other important aspects of my life as a believer? How can I learn from the marvelous heritage of literature that the Lord has allowed His church to produce through the ages? The less knowledge we have the more susceptible we are to satan's attacks, regardless of how good our intentions are. Zeal without knowledge is like a speeding car with no steering wheel. It is a dangerous thing but it satisfies the leader of the opposition and so the unwillingness to study and the disrespect for the confessions will continue to be a threat to the holiness of God's one church.

So, what can be done? Well, Rev Hoeksema asked this question too, and provided some poignant suggestions, and a fitting way to close this brief introduction to the issue.

After he had further deplored the loss of the thinking cap, Rev. Hoeksema asked:

*But the question that is of prime importance is still to be answered. It is: What can be done to restore this valuable thinking cap?*

*In answer to this question, I would say in the first place: our young [people] must simply put that cap on again. The only way to do it is to do it. And I urge you to do it. I have attempted to show you the importance of the thinking cap and the deplorableness of its absence. You must fight the battle against the desire and tendency to spend all your spare time in seeking enjoyment rather than education. Read, study, investigate, get away from that craving for amusement and nothing but enjoyment. For, your position in the church, the position of the church itself in the world, the establishment of God's covenant, the glory of our covenant God are at stake! Let us wake up to the importance of sound doctrine, to the realization of putting on our thinking caps again, and let us stand shoulder to shoulder in our battle for clear, definite, strong, and full Reformed truth!*

■ **Sean Wagenaar**

Hoeksema, G. 1974, Therefore have I spoken: A biography of Herman Hoeksema, Reformed Free Publishing Association, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

# “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage ....You shall not steal.”

Exodus 20: 15

“**Y**ou shall not steal”. How often have we heard this commandment? Every Sunday morning we hear it from the pulpit as part of God’s holy law. We may sit there in our pews and think “this commandment isn’t a problem for me, I haven’t stolen anything this week -I’m certainly no thief”. Sadly, the truth of the matter is that we are in fact all thieves. Perhaps not by definition of our current civil laws, but when we realise that God is the owner of all things, then this commandment gains a lot more depth. Our Christian definition of what stealing is should go far beyond the expectations of our civil authorities to fulfill the expectations of God.


We know from both God and the civil authorities that it is wrong to steal. However, the civil authorities seem to define “stealing” as acts of theft from other people such as robbing, fraud, usury etc whereas God’s command defines “stealing” as robbing from God, man and from oneself! We all know that it is wrong to steal as the civil authorities regard stealing and hopefully none of us commit such acts of stealing. Therefore we will not dwell on this aspect a great deal but will look more closely at how to refrain from stealing from God and ourselves and instead be good stewards of all that God entrusts to us.

God requires us to treat all our possessions with the utmost respect and care and to use them to His honour and glory. He is the supreme creator and owner of all things and we are merely stewards of the possessions He places into our care. Any misuse of our time, money or goods is stealing from both ourselves and from God. This is an aspect of the 8th commandment which is often not thought about but is transgressed frequently.

One example of when we steal from ourselves and from God is when we misuse our time. When we spend hours of time for our pleasure and vanity but spend little time building up our faith and for the furtherance of the kingdom of God, we are stealing. Most of us have a couple hours of spare time every week, but apart from taking out time for ourselves, for our own enjoyment, do we take time to study God’s word, make prep study for club or attend the congregational, school or SPYSC meetings? No, more often than not this spare time is spent playing a game of sport, or wasted by watching TV and this is not showing good stewardship of our time. That is not to say that we are not allowed to play sport, or watch TV, but we must ensure that we get our priorities right - putting God and work for His service before pleasing ourselves. Likewise, when we should

be going to club but instead go down to the pub for a few beers, we are not only stealing from ourselves an opportunity where we can learn about our heavenly Father and all that He has done for us, but we are also stealing from God! He gives us the opportunity to get together as His youth and study His word and we should be more than happy to use this opportunity and make the most of it! When we fool around and joke while we should be discussing God’s word we are actually slapping God in the face - showing that we would rather use His time for our own amusement rather than for His sake and to help our fellow brothers and sisters. We must realise why we are on the earth: to praise and glorify God. And if we truly love our God then we will place Him in the center of our lives and focus all that we do around Him. Therefore we must be good stewards of our time - using it whenever we can and may to promote God’s glory and honour. If we live our lives in this way then we will be blessed by God.

Another example of stealing from ourselves and from God is when we misuse our money. A good example of someone who misused his money is shown in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-31). He spent all his inheritance on earthly pleasures and got absolutely nowhere! We also receive an income and maybe even receive some money back from our tax return, but do we all manage our money as we should? Although some of us receive more than others, we all receive the amount which God, in His almighty wisdom, sees fit to give to us. We can be comforted in that fact that He knows all our individual needs and will never leave us short of anything! Therefore we must remember that the money which God entrusts into our care is not ours to spend as we like. Rather, it remains God’s money and we are to manage it as good stewards of God. Too often we get our ‘wants’ confused with our ‘needs’. God provides us with enough money to take care of our needs, but when we use it to fulfill our ‘wants’ instead, we will get into trouble. Spending our weekly wage on entertainment and eating out too often, partying and drinking, and having no money left for God’s service, are examples of bad stewardship. Likewise, we should never come into the position where we can’t afford to pay our contributions to the Church and school because we went to see the latest movie, or because we bought clothes, tools or “toys” that we just “wanted” but didn’t really need at all. This too is stealing from God. Money cannot buy happiness and whatever we gain in this life is basically useless in relation to eternity. “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?” (Matt 16:26). It is



more profitable for us to store treasures in heaven (for example, using our time wisely and studying God's Word) than to build up treasures on earth - "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt 6:21). Therefore, out of thankfulness to God for all that he gives to us we must first give to Him. Good stewardship begins with loving. And if we truly love God we will be most happy to give him our first fruits. It is usually not those who make the most money that give the most to God, but those who have learned the blessing of giving. If we give God our whole hearts, we will surely give our wallets too!

Another example of stealing from God is dishonoring the 4th commandment! God commands that we honour the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Therefore we must devote the whole day to God and not only part of it. We have six whole days for our daily work, so why should we begrudge God any part of His day, the Sabbath day?

There is a great deal to discuss on this topic and so far we have only dealt with the aspect of bad stewardship - stealing from God. However, we must not overlook the fact that this commandment promotes contentment. While on the one hand it is written as "you shall not steal", on the other hand it is saying "be content with all that you have". However we only receive this contentment through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. If we don't have this faith we will never be content with what we have and will always want more and more and seek our comfort in earthly treasures. Yet we as Christians know that no treasure here on earth is even close to the great treasure we will receive in eternal life hereafter. We also have the assurance that our Father in heaven knows all our needs and will provide us with all that we need and therefore the desire to steal to further our own ends should never arise within us. At the same time we must ensure that we are good stewards of all that God has given us, using our time, goods and money to His honour and glory. Our Lord taught us to first seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness

and all what we need will be given to us (See Matt 6:33). Let us strive to encourage each other in our service in God's kingdom.

■ **Joslyn Hordyk**



# CONTENDER

**Aim:**

Romans 12:2 teaches all of God's people:

*"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."*

This magazine will encourage its readers to earnestly contend for the faith, and to think and act Biblically, in the good traditions of the Church of all ages. Its basis is God's word, as the Church confesses in the Three Forms of Unity. It is intended for the younger members of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, and is produced in co-operation with the Una Sancta. Subscription to the Contender is automatic with subscription to the Una Sancta.

It is not meant to be exclusively for unmarried members who still attend the Youth Bible Study Clubs, but for all those who fit within the loose parameters of 16 to 30 years of age.

Editorial Board

Mick ten-Haaf  
Matt Schiebaan  
Royce Vermeulen  
Sean Wagenaar

Hans van der Jagt  
Kristy Gunnink  
Andrew van Burgel

Editorial Address

2 Haimlee Street, Kelmscott 6111  
tenhaam@frsa.asn.au

The deadline for materials to be used in the next issue is **November 27**

The Contender can now be viewed on the web

<http://www.frsa.asn.au/contender/>