

Dr. Kun, Sam Lee and Reformational Theology

Memorial Lecture

March 31, 2008, Kosin University, Pusan, S. Korea

Dr. John C. Vander Stelt

Esteemed family members of the late Dr. Kun, Sam Lee,

Honorable colleagues of Evangelia University and Kosin University

Respected university students,

Dear friends and guests:

On January 14, 2008, we gathered at the Evangelia University in Los Angeles to commemorate Dr. Kun Sam Lee's legacy in Christian higher education after his death in January, 2006. Now we are assembled at Kosin University in Pusan, where some forty years ago he began his educational career, to conclude this public commemoration. His national and international legacy in Christian higher education is amply evident in the more than a dozen volumes of his prolific writings published earlier this year and officially dedicated at Evangelia University last January to his family. We want to reflect on ways to continue, and enhance, what he, with the help of many others, started decades ago as professor of theology, educational administrator, and president of both Kosin University in Pusan and Evangelia University in Los Angeles.

To participate in this solemn, but joyful, occasion I regard a great privilege. Your invitation through Dr. Kim Sung Soo, your present president at Kosin University, to reflect on

“Dr. Kun Sam Lee and Reformed Theology” is for several reasons a bit of a challenge for me: *first*, Dr. Kim Sung Soo is still a little ‘Confucian’ in believing that, because I am older than he, I also have more authority and wisdom than he; *second*, how can I possibly say “No” to someone who still has black hair and is better looking than I; and, *third*, how can I respond to his presidential advice to make this lecture “neither too difficult, nor too simple”?

In this memorial lecture, I want to reflect on the following four topics: (i) the last six presidents of Kosin University, (ii) the “tripod” of Christian higher education, (iii) the cultural and historical context of Christian higher education, and (iv) the *magna carta*, or fundamental charter, of God’s kingdom.

Six Presidents of Kosin University

The purpose of my brief remarks about your six university presidents is to highlight a common feature in their vision from the very start of this institution, namely, their belief that truly Christian higher education is forward-looking and local-global. Under difficult circumstances in the nineteen fifties, the founders of Kosin University, Rev. Sang Dong Han¹ and Rev. Nam Sun Ju, sensed the need for formal training of your future leaders in a way that resembles John Calvin’s passion, four centuries earlier, when he in 1559 established the Academy of Geneva to provide future teachers, preachers and political thinkers for the international Christian community throughout Europe.

Their visionary and courageous *local* struggle against the foreign, and deadly, ideology of

¹ For details, see Rev. Kook Sik Shim, “*Till the End of the Age*” *The Life of Rev. Sang Dong Han. A Living Witness of the Korean Church*, edited and translated by Dr. T. Kitai Hahn [he and I were classmate at Calvin College, in Grand Rapids, from 1954 to 1958]. At the 4th Annual Rev. Sang Dong Han Lecture series at Kosin University in Pusan in 2000, I read a paper on “Theological Education in the 16th-Century Reformation and Subsequent Reformed Tradition,” published in *Rev. Sang Dong Han and Theological Education*, 2000, pages 67-1000.

Shintoism in the name of God, whose kingdom in Jesus Christ opened their eyes – slightly at first perhaps, but more widely quite soon thereafter – for your international role in a *global* world. They remembered that Jesus Christ is *Lord* over all, even over Japan’s Emperor who, in vain, tried to break your soul as a people and a nation. Led by God’s Spirit, you were eager to share with others in your severely weakened, but not utterly defeated, country and culture a peace that passes all understanding, a shalom not merely for your private ‘souls’ but also for your country and the larger world beyond it.

Dr. Kun Sam Lee

Dr. Kun Sam Lee, your third president, I met for the first time at the Free University in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, when he studied there from 1958 to 1962. His professors at this university – J.H. Bavinck, G.C. Berkouwer, J. van den Berg, G.E. Meuleman and S.U. Zuidema – were also my teachers. I remember when in 1962 Kun Sam Lee defended his doctoral dissertation on the internationally crucial issue of *The Christian Confrontation with Shinto Nationalism*.²

In 1975, we met again at Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education in South Africa, as participants in the first international conference of (what is now known as) International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education (IAPCHE), and again, three years later, at the second international conference of IAPCHE at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA.

As graduates of the Free University in Amsterdam, as participants in the Association for

² *The Christian confrontation with Shinto nationalism: a historical and critical study of the conflict of Christianity and Shinto in Japan in the period between the Meiji Restoration and the end of World War II (1868-1945)*. Van Soest: Amsterdam, 1962. 211 pages.

Reformed Faith and Action (IARFA) and as members of IAPCHE, we were united in our strong opposition to the ideology of *apartheid* in South Africa. Both of us were involved in teaching at christian colleges committed to advance Reformed higher education by deepening and broadening ongoing reformation within the academy, society and culture.

Dr. Oh Pyeng-Seh

Your fourth president, Dr. Oh Pyeng Seh, attended the *third* international conference of IAPCHE in 1981 held at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa, USA. He was elected to serve on IAPCHE's international board of governors for the next three years. During those difficult years, he took a clear *coram Deo* stance against *apartheid* and for justice of the oppressed.

When we met again in 1995 and 2001 in Pusan, we discussed on issues effecting local and global Christian higher education, reflected on your struggles against Shintoism and on the Korean War (1950-1953), and on IAPCHE's need to promote a Christian higher education that is integrally Christian.³

Concerning the next two presidents, Dr. Kim Byong-Won⁴ and Dr. Hwang Chang-Kee,⁵ see the footnotes below. Dr. Chung Hyun Kee, the fifth president, I look forward to meeting at this Memorial Lecture.

Dr. Kim Sung Soo

³ For details, see John C. Vander Stelt, "Dr. Oh Pyeng-Seh: Reflections on His International Role" in *Gracious Days Like Early Morning Dew – A Book in honor of Rev. Dr. P.S. Oh's Years of Holy Ministry*, published by the rev. Dr. P.S. Oh's Anniversary Committee, 2002, pages 261-265.

⁴ We met at Kosin University in 1995, and in 1999 at Dordt College, when he spoke at the annual dinner of Dordt College with its Board of Trustees, and when I officially retired from Dordt College as professor of philosophy and theology.

⁵ We met in 1995 and 2001 at Kosin University, in 2003 in Los Baños, the Philippines, at the first regional consultation in the Asia-Oceania region of IAPCHE, and in 2007-2008 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. We conversed about the history and societal-cultural context of Kosin University, and the possibilities and pitfalls of Christian higher education..

The sixth president of Kosin University, Dr. Kim Sung Soo, I met when he, and his family, lived for several years in the late 1980s and early 1990s in Sioux Center, Iowa. He had studied at the Christian University of Potchefstroom in South Africa under mainly Dr. Bennie J. van der Walt, who, like Kun Sam Lee and I, was a graduate of the Free University. Being interested in reformational thinking, Kim Song Soo was a member of Dordt College's Study Institute and audited my philosophy courses and some of my theology classes.

Ever since that time, we talked often about the meaning of scripturally-directed thinking for philosophy, education, and theology at Kosin University in Korea, Dordt College in the USA, Institute for Christian Studies (ICS) in Canada, and IAPCHE internationally.

Tripod of Christian Higher Education

You are all familiar with a tripod. It is a contraption with three equally long legs which, when properly spread, provide a steady platform for a camera, placed on top of it, to take a picture of the world around it. To use the *tripod* and *camera* analogies, if the scenery to be photographed is the world and the camera represents a perspective on the world, then the three legs of the tripod can be thought of as *proclamation*, *articulation*, and *implementation*.

If one of these three legs is missing, broken, or ignored, then the other two legs cannot fulfill their role, the tripod will collapse, the camera will fall to the ground, and the picture will be distorted and become unrecognizable. If *proclaiming* what humans need to believe about God's central law of love represents one leg of the tripod of life, if *articulating* the meaning of God's Word for different human tasks in daily life stands for the other leg, and if *implementing* the things proclaimed and taught illustrates the third leg, then it is clear that no leg can be missed.

For each leg to function well, the other two legs must be present and operate properly. The

three legs are interdependent, mutually supportive, and equally important.

These three legs of the tripod point to the distinct roles of instituted churches, all levels of formal education, and societal and cultural agencies and institutions. No one leg is more important than the other two. No one segment of human life dictates to the other two segments what precisely God's mandates are for created reality. Instead, they must *together* and in a *heart-centered way* respond to God's full (creational, incarnational and scriptural) revelation. What is fundamental in all human responses is genuine piety, child-like obedience, heart-centered love. Love-filled *proclamation* needs love-filled *articulation* and both need love-filled *implementation*.

No one leg can be the norm for, dictate to, or control the other two legs. To proclaim, articulate and implement, i.e., to *believe, think* and *act*, in such a 'religiously' radical way is not revolutionary. *Not* to do so, *not* to work together as people who trust each other as they live in the one covenant of God's grace – *that* is covenant-breaking, revolutionary, cause for concern, a prescription for disaster.⁶

Historically, it is true that elementary and secondary schools, as well as institutions of Christian higher education, have often been established by pastors, teachers and theologians of organized Christian faith communities. Without vibrant faith communities and visionary pastors, Kosin University in Pusan and Evangelia University in Los Angeles, and many other institutions of Christian higher education elsewhere, would not have gotten started.

Just because a mother gave birth to a child does not mean that she (and her husband)

⁶ For persons with great wealth, political power and personal fame to *assume* to have the right, if not obligation, to be in charge of formal education is potentially a recipe for trouble. The same holds true when gifted educators and scholars and charismatic pastors and theologians make this assumption.

should govern that offspring when that child has become a grown person. So also a Christ-engrafted and Christ-centered Christian college and university – or any Christian labor union, medical association, farmers organization, political party, or any other organization – should perhaps not remain (in semi-Roman Catholic fashion) under the direct guidance of organized faith communities and traditions through pastors and theologians.

We do well to remember what J. Arminius, once a student at Calvin’s Academy in Geneva, said in his inaugural lecture at the (calvinist) University of Leyden in 1613, when he stated that all *non-theological sciences are subordinate to the president’s throne of theology!* With this view concerning what makes a curriculum Christian, he perpetuated in Reformed higher education the medieval scholastic idea that Christian higher education is *theology-dependent*. This notion became typical of most Reformed, especially Puritan, higher education in the Netherlands, England, Scotland, South Africa, North America and South Korea.

A strong *coram Deo* attitude was emphasized in the study of theology, and Reformed theologians and educators provided all other, i.e., non-theological, studies with some so-called Christian context and Christian purpose. For historically understandable, but scripturally questionable reasons, not enough attention was paid to a more reformational, or covenant-kingdom directed view of *proclamation, articulation and implementation*. Instead, it opted for (not the “tripod” model, but) a scholastic “triad” approach, in which the three legs are no longer coordinated, but one leg is thought to be “superior” to the other two, and makes them actually “inferior,” or subordinate to, and dependent that the most important one.

Not the *reformational tripod* described above, but the *scholastic triad* depicted below, has become the dominant way of viewing christian (elementary, secondary and) tertiary, or

higher, education as far as curricular, pedagogical, administrative and supervisory issues are concerned. In Reformed, as well as Presbyterian, Lutheran and Baptist traditions, it is not uncommon to think in terms of such scholastic “triads” as:

sanctuary	school	state
church	college	commonwealth
minister	master	magistrate
preacher	professor	politician
priest	prophet	king
soul	mind	body
sacerdotal	doctoral	royal
love	truth	justice
Christian	renaissance	classical
theology	philosophy	ethics

In each one of these triads, the first term has priority and directs, guides and determines the Christian character of the other two terms. A main goal of Christian higher education (second column) is to prepare students to become an “ordained” person with a “sacred” calling from the Lord, and the ultimate aim of public life in society (third column) is to protect the freedom of what people profess privately and express in churches as organized “religions” publicly.

Such a view of Christian higher education is laudable in what it intends and, as was stated earlier, a common way to start a Christian college. It is, however, in my opinion, a questionable approach *if* it reflects a *dualistic* way of living and thinking. According to scholastic dualism, “faith,” “religion” and “revelation” are most important for all the terms mentioned in the first column, “intellect” and “reason” are fundamental for the terms listed in the *second* column, and both of these columns are normative, or determinative, for all the realities indicated in the *third* column.

The effect of such a dualistic view of Christian higher education has, often in subtle and

imperceptible ways, contributed to Christian colleges and universities becoming quite quickly, sometimes already after a few generations, ‘religiously’ anti-Christian.⁷ Imperial “reason” enthroned and dominant in colleges and universities started to compete with a imperial “faith” embodied in organized churches and theological seminaries and centers. In this major conflict, the former (cf. autonomy) gained cultural and historical dominance, and the latter (cf. revelation and religion) was discredited and pushed aside.⁸

Historical and Cultural Context

The aim of Christian higher education is to be open-minded as we closely observe the world as God’s marvelous handiwork, to be fascinated in learning about his laws for created reality, and to understand more fully the calling of humans as his covenant image-bearers. Such living requires being relevant for the culture in which we live and the kind of witness we provide to God’s love for a world in great need.

To follow Jesus Christ also in higher education is concrete, not abstract. It involves careful listening to God’s power-packed Word for the world he made, to the beckoning call of the Word incarnate who, through the Spirit, is the Lord over all. Such a *coram Deo* lifestyle is not boring, but exciting, not easy, but demanding. Dr. Kun Sam Lee was aware of this even before he became president of Kosin University, as is evident from the topic he choose for his doctoral dissertation. In order to help South Korea, he wanted to understand the ideology of Japan’s Shintoism that had terrorized Korea for so many years and in such brutal fashion.

⁷ In reaction to which divinity schools, theology faculties, bible colleges and (inter)denominational theological seminaries were established, in an attempt to protect the identity of the Christian faith communities and traditions.

⁸ See Calvin S. Seerveld, “Why Should A University Exist?,” published in 2000 at Kosin University, pages 197-240 (241-184 in Korean) concerning Harvard University (1636), Yale University (1701), Princeton University (1746) and other North American and English universities, in which *faith*, *religion*, and *revelation* are restricted to departments and chapels.

His graduate study helped him as professor in theology to challenge young men and women, your sons and daughters, to become servant-leaders in your society and culture. It enabled him as president of Kosin College, now Kosin University, to remind faculty, students, fellow administrators and thousands of faithful supporters to see the great importance of Christ-centered higher education not only in Christian faith life, but also in education and in health care and nursing. He helped lay the rails for the train of Christian higher education to move forward on for all the presidents after him for the next three decades.⁹

Unique to your cultural and historical background are, besides your heroic struggle against Shinto imperialism and its militarism, at least four more dangers. Two most harmful dangers, and *native* to East Asia, are Confucianism and Shamanism. The other two dangers may seem to be less dangerous, but are actually more dangerous, because of their subtlety and their *non-native* origin, namely, the negative consequences of theological training and missionary endeavors from western Roman Catholic and Protestant dualistic world-views and thought-patterns.

As to the two *native* threats, Confucianism and Shamanism, the former is dangerous in that it correlates *age* with authority, wisdom and obedience. This correlation distorts the true meaning of being human as far as the structure of society is concerned. It prevents Christians from freely expressing their child-like faith in how they relate to fellow humans, and forces them to live in two different worlds at the same time – a Christian and a Confucian one.

The two *non-native* dangers from western Christianity are closely intertwined. They are

⁹ For a perceptive analysis of various models of higher education in South Korea, see Shin Kuk Won, "Four Models of Christian Higher Education: An Overview and Comparison in Korean Context," Philip Yuen Sang Leung & Peter Tz Ming Ng, editors, *Christian Responses to Asian Challenges: A Glocalization View on Christian Higher Education in East Asia*. Chung Chi College, the Chinese University of Hong Kong: Centre for the Study of Religion and Chinese Society, 2007, pages 77-98, esp. 82-83 for his comments about Kosin and Chongshin universities.

related to the *twin-dangers* of the “faith-reason” approach, carefully formulated by the famous medieval Roman Catholic philosopher-theologian, Thomas Aquinas. “Truth” is something natural, rational, or intellectual. It is attainable by means of the highest “faculty” of the human “soul.” This faculty guides the human “will” and “feelings” as two lower “faculties” of the soul.

A fundamental assumption for Aquinas is that, according to this Greek anthropology, the “truth” of *human* faith is something essentially logical, apologetic, propositional, rational, foundational, and introductory to theology. Natural *truth* is the basis for *natural* theology.

At the same time, *Christian* faith has to do with what is *supra*-natural, with God’s special revelation of grace and salvation in Jesus Christ. This redemptive “faith” is sacramentally added to a person’s rational life. Being higher than “reason,” salvific faith supercedes, or trumps, human natural life, guides it, and (re)connects human reason with God’s *supra*-natural revelation. Just as faith guides reason, the church guides the academy, *Christian* (not *natural*) theology controls all non-theological studies and disciplines.

The twin-dangers of an intellectualistic anthropology and a theology as queen of the sciences are the two pillars supporting the roof of Christian higher education and scholarship. This scholastic *two-realm* theory, together with its tension between “faith” and “reason,” barricades the way to integrally Christian, or reformational, living and thinking. It tempts Christians to accept, not resist, being *two*-faced, *double*-minded, *half*-hearted.

These two dangers imported from Western Christianity resemble in a sense, and reinforce, the dualism East Asian Christians cope with in their daily encounter with Confucian ways of living, thinking and structuring society.

The “Magna Carta” of God’s kingdom

The basic charter of God's kingdom is simple, radical, all-encompassing and liberating. It is God's covenant law of love! It is not success, fame, or age; nor is it philosophy, theology, or any other discipline. God's commanding (creational, scriptural and incarnational) Word for created reality is foundational and revelational of his faithfulness. His sovereignty is loving, and his love is sovereign. Whenever humans acknowledge this, the door to true wisdom and genuine liberty has opened.¹⁰

It is impossible for humans to escape living in God's presence. No creature can get away from the Creator. Crucial is *how*, not whether, humans respond to God. Either the response is one of acceptance or defiance, covenant keeping or covenant-breaking. At a time of widespread decadence in society, old Eli instructed young Samuel to respond to God's call at night by saying: "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."¹¹ It is God's prerogative to speak, and it is the human duty to listen as his servants. When and where that occurs, renewal starts, reformation begins, a person's total being changes, and a community and society can breathe sighs of relief again.

Such radical reformation is the opposite of radical deformation. The latter happens when humans, in their arrogance, speak to God and think of him as their servant, who must listen to them and do what they want him to do.

Our human condition is such that to be truly reformed is impossible without being, at the same time, truly reforming (*reformata est, semper reformanda est*). To be "reformed" requires

¹⁰ For an excellent presentation of what such an approach means for Christian higher education today, see Harry Fernhout, "All Things In Him. Christian Higher Education in a Modern/Postmodern World," Opening Address given at the International Symposium on Christian Higher Education, 1996, held to commemorate the Fiftieth Anniversary of Koinon University, pages 1-15.

¹¹ I Samuel 3: 9.

ongoing reformation in our everyday faith life, in our social and civic behavior, and in all our educational and academic activities, including in the disciplines of philosophy and theology. Genuine piety, or ‘religion’ is not confined to only a part of human existence, but is all-encompassing – as the late Dr. H. Evan Runner, professor of *reformational* philosophy at Calvin College – at the time Kun Sam Lee taught and was president of Kosin University – in Grand Rapids, expressed with the brief phrase he coined, “life is religion.”

The secret to such ongoing reformation is not academic excellence, nor someone’s age, nor a person’s ordained status, nor possession of great wealth or power. To graduates of Kosin University who are truly *reformed*, who have learned to live differently in a world filled with idols devoted to material goods, military power, mystical speculation, pragmatic convenience, scientific truth, or momentary pleasures – we pledge our support in their *reforming* endeavors. Minimally, this means we remember them in our prayers that they will not slacken in their zeal for the Lord and will continue to witness to those around them in this country and elsewhere in the world.

At what point can we say that Christian higher education is personally and institutionally successful? That all depends, of course, on what we mean by “successful.” In terms of the “great charter” (*magna carta*) of God’s kingdom, success often implies trouble and opposition from powers of darkness that become uncomfortable, and angry, when the light of integrity, honesty, justice, fairness, liberty, peace and joy is directed at them and reveals evil schemes and practices of fellow humans.

People whose hearts are evil-directed and violate God’s central love-command dislike “prophetic seers” who oppose greed, resist brutality, reject adultery, curtail idolatry, uncover

falsehood, or renounce anything else that corrupts society, undermines culture and ruins entire civilizations. Whether one is young or old, a Samuel or a Moses, a Jeremiah or a John on Patmos, a Daniel or a Noah, some form of opposition, persecution, boycott, interference, sidelining, or character assassination will be experienced somehow, everywhere, and in each period of history.

To see more clearly what “success” means for a higher education that is – in terms of the tripod of *proclamation, articulation, and implementation* – integrally Christian, a few brief remarks about Paul’s educational background, his becoming a citizen in God’s kingdom, and his view of the *magna carta* of that kingdom will be helpful.

Saul was born into a Jewish community in Tarsus, Asia Minor, and educated in a society permeated by Greek-Roman culture. At age fifteen, he moved from his hometown in Tarsus to Jerusalem, in order to study in the best school of Jewish higher education, presided over by Gamaliel. The last three years of his formal training at this renowned institution of higher education were very exciting and helpful, because during those years someone three years older than he, and from that tiny and infamous town of Nazareth, had caused considerable unrest for Saul’s professors and much discussion between him and his class mates.

By the time he graduated from this reputable and ‘successful’ school of the Pharisees, Saul had heard enough from his instructors and learned from his gifted fellow apprentice-Pharisees to draw the ‘logical’ conclusion that this “Jesus,” who dared to call himself “Christ,” was a fake and very dangerous, especially after his disciples, men and women, were spreading a rumor that he had risen from the dead, had poured out the Spirit and will return again.

The influence of this Jesus is detrimental to the Jewish faith! It must be stopped, nipped in the bud! But, then, on his way from Jerusalem to Damascus, in Syria, to imprison Jews who had become Christians, something totally unexpected happened to Saul. You know the rest of the story. Many Christians, also Reformed ones, believe the myth that quite soon after his conversion on the road to Damascus Paul became a missionary of the gospel.

The truth, however, is that Paul did not become a missionary until some *fifteen* years later, when he was about forty-five years old. His whole vision of who God is and his people are, what his covenant involves, his grace entails, how Christians must relate to one another, to Jews and to pagans, how they must view marriage, understand government, react to slavery and deal with idolatry – all of these things, and much more, he had to re-consider, re-envision, re-form.

Such a return to God, such re-formation, resulting from radical regeneration, requires much time, patience, humility, retraining, rediscovering and reorienting. During the first fifteen years after his ‘religious’ turn-around on the Damascus road, Paul experienced a drastic renewal in his outlook on life, history and the world. He moved from Damascus to Arabia to Jerusalem to Tarsus and to Antioch. Only then was he, in God’s eyes, ready to commence his missionary labors from Antioch, where Christians were first called “followers of the way,” for the next fifteen to twenty years.

In his first letter to the Christian community in the Greek city of Corinth, Paul aptly described the secret of the *Magna Carte* of God’s kingdom that is applicable also for us today wherever we live in the world:

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the

wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.” Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man’s strength.¹²

I can think of no better way to conclude this Memorial Lecture than to cite Isaiah 30:9-11 and 18-22. They describe eloquently and powerfully what “prophetic seers” were told then and have been told ever since, if they live as covenant-people also, and particularly, in the strongly opinionated world of higher education. In terms of the “tripod” of *proclamation, articulation, and implementation*, let us listen, be comforted, rejoice, and redouble our efforts to be *reformed* in a *reforming*, or *reformational*, way also as students, professors, administrators and supporters of Kosin University and Evangelia University, where Dr. Kun Sam Lee served for many years with great passion.

These are rebellious people, deceitful children,
children unwilling to listen to the Lord’s instruction.

They say to the seers,
“*See no more visions!*”
And to the prophets,
“*Give us no more visions of what is right!*
Tell us pleasant things, prophesy illusions.
Leave this way, get off this path,
and stop confronting us
with the Holy One of Israel!”

¹² I Corinthians 1:18-25. To emphasize the implications of this blueprint for everyday life of Christian then, as well as ours today, Paul adds: “Brothers [and sisters], think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; nor many were influential; not many of you were of noble birth. But God choose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God choose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He choose the lowly things of the world and the despised -- the things that are not -- to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God -- this is our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: ‘Let him who boasts boast in the Lord’.” (I Corinthians 1:26-31)

Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you;
he rises to show you compassion.
For the Lord is the God of justice.
Blessed are all who wait for him!

O people of Zion, who live in Jerusalem,
you will weep no more.
How gracious he will be when you cry for help!
As soon as he hears, he will answer you.

Although the Lord gives you the bread of adversity,
and the water of affliction,
your teachers will be hidden no more;
with your own eyes you will see them.

Whether you turn to the right or to the left,
your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying:
“This is the way, walk in it.”

Then you will defile your idols overlaid with silver
and your images covered with gold;
you will throw them away like menstrual cloth
and say to them, *“Away with you!”*¹³

Coram Deo!

Thank you.

¹³ Isaiah 30: 9-11, 18-22 (emphasis is mine); see verses 1-3 and 23-26 for the context of these two passages.