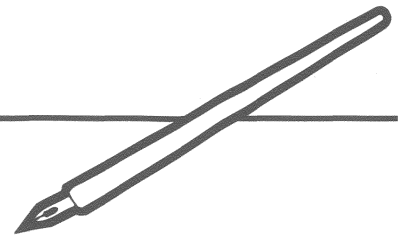


Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

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The College

This issue of our magazine will present a report of the College Evening, together with the Principal's Report and the inaugural address of Dr. J. DeJong. When the official part of the evening was over and we could talk with each other during the "coffee-social," I heard from several brothers and sisters that they found it a nice evening. Some had not attended the College Evening before and said that they would certainly attend again the next time. It was good to see many people there and to hear such remarks. The College is the College of the churches, this means, of all of us. I would like to elaborate on this point.

The bond between church and theological training for the ministry is not something unique for our churches. The Christian Reformed Church has its Calvin Seminary in Grand Rapids. The Protestant Reformed Churches have their own training in the same city. These are churches of the Reformed stock. We see the same with non-Reformed churches. In Toronto, for instance, seven theological colleges, although organized under the umbrella of the Toronto School of Theology, are all church-colleges. Three are Roman Catholic, two Anglican, one is Presbyterian and one is of the United Church. They train ministers, first of all, for their own church communion.

The roots of this unity of church and theological training can be seen in the history. I restrict myself now to the Netherlands. After the Reformation in the sixteenth century, the training for the ministry took place within the framework of the university. At that time, the Reformed churches were the officially recognized state church. There was unity of faith between church and state, and between church and university. Later, under the influence of the Enlightenment, the Reformed churches turned completely liberal. A secession took place in 1834. Immediately the churches of the Secession worked hard to get their own training schools for their ministers. First there were local schools, but in 1854 the theological school in Kampen was set up. From the very beginning the effort was made, to have and maintain high academic standards. The same happened after the Liberation in 1944: the liberated Reformed Churches set up their own training for the ministry. And they maintained the high academic standards.

We see two aspects in this brief historical outline. The first one is that of the unity between church and training. The second is the recognition of the need of high academic standards for this training. At the College we stand in this very same tradition. The training for the ministry in our churches is at the College of the churches. For entering the College the requirement is that students must have a Bachelor of Arts degree or its equivalent.

It can be clear why there is the requirement of an academic training, if possible. Medical doctors, lawyers, and other leaders in a nation are required to have a proper academic training that is fitting for their work and position. Ministers of God's Word, too, have a leading position. They are required to proclaim God's Word in a proper, understandable, edifying manner. They are to understand also what is going on. It is their task to lead a congregation in the ways of God's Word in a contemporary situation. But this contemporary situation is, at the same time, connected with the past. The study of history and philosophy is for the understanding of the own time of great help.

As said, it is the calling of ministers of God's Word to preach that Word to God's people. This Word has been re-

vealed to us in the Hebrew (and, for a small part, Aramaic) and the Greek languages. In order to be able to study and understand these languages one has to have an academic training or its equivalent. This is the normal route. Therefore, in our situation in which this is possible, the churches have determined in decisions of their general synods, that a Bachelor of Arts degree or its equivalent is a necessary requirement for entering the College. It was determined also that such a Bachelor of Arts degree should contain courses in English, as well as in history and philosophy, besides the training in the biblical languages and in Latin, which has been the language of the church for many centuries.

It can be clear that this maintaining of high academic standards for the study at the College is not a goal in itself. The goal is that the College with its theological training may be of better service to the churches in their calling to preserve the truth of God, the truth of the gospel. Herewith I come back to the principle, not just the custom, that the churches have their own seminary for the training of their ministers. This is to be seen as the fulfillment of the charge which Paul gave to Timothy and which would remain in force throughout the generations of Christ's church.

Paul exhorted Timothy: "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). First of all, there is the basis of God's grace in Christ. Timothy as office bearer and leader of the church has to be strong in God's grace in Christ for the sake of the church. The same counts for the office bearers with him and after him. For the church itself has to remain strong in this grace in Christ. This can only be achieved when office bearers and church abide by the gospel as it is revealed to the apostles and handed over by them as the apostolic tradition. For this reason Timothy must entrust what he heard from Paul to faithful men who are able to teach others also. In that way the knowledge of the apostolic tradition will continue to be the possession of the church throughout the generations. And the result will be that the church in its generations will remain strong in the grace of God which is in Christ.

When the apostle Paul gives this task to Timothy who is his fellow-office bearer, we can conclude that the handing over of the apostolic tradition is an official task in and for the church. The churches have the task to preserve the truth throughout the generations. This is why we do not leave the training of ministers in the hands of a board that consists of a number of interested individual Christians who may very well belong to different churches. No, through the grace and blessing of the LORD, the churches, united in the same faith, having the same confession, and therefore living together in the same federation, have their own College in order to fulfill, as much as they can, the charge Paul gave to Timothy in the text mentioned above.

And it is our prayer that the LORD may bless this training, so that it may provide the churches with ministers who have had the same instruction in the same apostolic truth which is summarized in the Three Forms of Unity. It is further our prayer that the College will serve as means to keep the churches strong in the grace of God in Christ Jesus, that is, in the unity of the true faith, that is in the apostolic tradition. C



The Seventeenth Convocation and the Twenty-Second Anniversary Meeting

On Friday, September 6, 1991, the Theological College held its twenty-second anniversary meeting and its seventeenth convocation. An anniversary meeting of the College, especially when combined with the graduation of some of its students, is an annual event. It is this for the Board of Governors with its two committees, the Academic Committee and the Finance and Property Committee, and for the Faculty and the students, as well as for delegates of the Women's Saving Action. It is an event, last but not least, for the churches which support the College. Quite a number of the members were present again.

After singing and prayer, in his opening word, the chairman of the Board of Governors, Rev. Cl. Stam, made a comparison between the previous College Evening and the present one. Last year could be characterized with the word "transition." One new professor began his teaching in January 1990. Another one started in the Fall of that year. This present year can be characterized with the word *consolidation*. Last year's new situation is not new anymore. Things are falling into place. Rev. Stam read congratulatory letters from the Providence Canadian Reformed Church at Edmonton (Rev. R. Aasman) and from the Free Reformed Church at Kelmscott, Australia (Rev. C. Bosch), as well as from the deputies for the training for the ministry of our sister churches in Australia. We are thankful for the cooperation and support that is coming from the Australian sister churches.

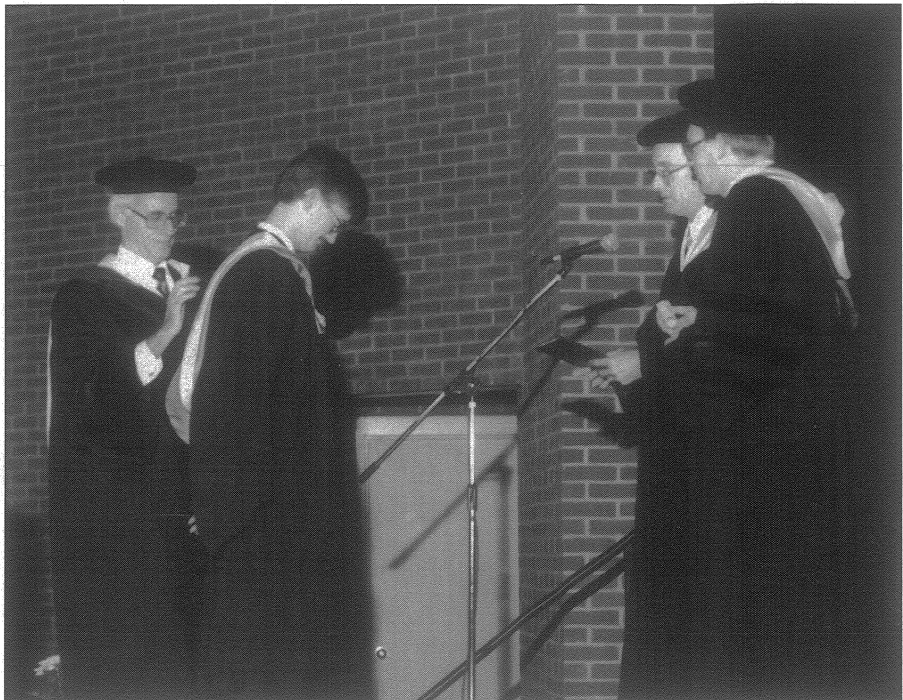
The Principal's Report of Dr. C. Van Dam, as well as the inaugural speech of Dr. J. DeJong were presented. They were followed by the conferring of the degree of Master of Divinity to the three graduating students, Cornelis (Ken) Herfst (of the Free Reformed Church at Hamilton), of Wilhelmus (Bill) M. Wielenga, and of R. Dean Anderson (of the Reformed Church at New Zealand) the latter in *absentia*, since he was called

back to New Zealand to serve the church at Hamilton, down south, as vicar.

Between all these points of the program Psalms were sung. After the graduation ceremony a musical interlude was presented by the choir "Voice of Praise" of the Niagara peninsula. Under the enthusiast direction of br. VanderBruggen, they sang two selections by Felix

could the College begin without it? Many special study books cost from fifty to one hundred dollars or even more, particularly those who come from Europe. Therefore, we thank all the sisters in our churches who collected the coins and bills and cheques for this labour of love.

The presentation itself was done somewhat differently. In previous years



L to r: Prof. J. Geertsema, Mr. W.M. Wielenga, Prof. Dr. C. Van Dam, Prof. Dr. N.H. Gootjes

Mendelssohn, "For His is the Sea" and "He that shall endure to the end."

The presentation of a gift of twenty thousand dollars from the Women's Saving Action was next. The College community is very thankful for this annual donation. Just as in the old country, this action is of vital importance for the library, and thus for the College. What

only the president of the Women's Saving Action took care of this annual event. This time Mrs. J. Mulder, the president, was escorted by the secretary, Mrs. J. Van Dam, and the treasurer, Mrs. C. Zietsma. Besides, the gift was presented to the Principal of the College in a poetic form. Taking turns, the three ladies said the following:

Mr. President, members of the Board
and Faculty,
Brothers and sisters here present. Listen
to this rhyme!
It is not very long, so don't worry.
We are only asking a few minutes of your
time.

On this festive College Evening,
A glance over by-gone years we cast,
While together we are reminiscing
About our Savings Action's past.

More than twenty years ago some ladies
came together
To start a Theological College Library
Fund.
Although they were not sure at all
whether
It would indeed get safely off the ground.

But, lo and behold, sisters of each con-
gregation
In North and South and East and West,
Pledged their full and hearty coopera-
tion,
Which certainly put the founders' worry
to rest.

Blue labeled tins appeared everywhere,
Throughout the country, oh so many!
And our sisters willingly took care
Of collecting each precious penny.

In 1970 we presented our first donation.
Two thousand dollars, at that time a sub-
stantial amount.
The College community expressed their
great appreciation.
In us, women, true helpmates they
found!

From that time onward the library began
to grow,
With monies each year we did save and
collect.
Books, magazines, more than you ever
will know
About any and every theological sub-
ject.

When a new building had to be bought,
A desperate call came from our brothers,
poor men.
"We are short of money," they said,
"please help us out!"
If we had not saved so faithfully, what
would they have done?

Since videos, projectors and computers
Have become so valuable for teaching
and for learning,
We purchased them for students and
professors.
With joy and gratitude their hearts were
burning.



Mrs. C. Zietsma, Mrs. J. Van Dam, Mrs. J. Mulder

Sometimes the question is asked:
"Should we continue?"
"Is there of buying books never an end?"
In response we would like to assure
you
That money for our library will always be
well-spent.

Although books have become very ex-
pensive,
The library should be kept up-to-date
and expand.
Enabling students and teachers to study
extensive
And helping them the Word of God to un-
derstand.

We, as your representatives, have no
fear
Only use your gifts when and where
necessary
For this purpose we meet once a year
With the Committee of the College li-
brary.

As your committee we discuss every cur-
rent affair
To keep things running smoothly for ev-
eryone's sake.
As chairperson, the responsibility I bear,
Is to supply my co-members with coffee
and cake.

A secretary's duty is to write letters and
answer questions,
Keeping contact with the members of our
society.

If therefore you have any complaints or
suggestions,
Just send a friendly note to me.

As your treasurer I am in charge of the
money affairs.
Truly a serious and difficult occupation!
However, it has not yet given me any
grey hairs
Thanks to your generosity and coopera-
tion.

Due to our reps, upon whose service we
depend;
Due to those who collect from door to
door,
And to those who many an evening on
counting spend,
We saved this 27,000 dollars, even a lit-
tle bit more.

Above all we thank the Lord who has
enabled us
To do this work for our Theological Col-
lege here.
And we pray that He will continue to
give us
His guidance and help in the coming
year.

Mr. Principal, the moment has come fi-
nally
To present you with a 20,000 dollar
cheque you here see,
Accompanied with the wish of the Wom-
en's Savings Action Society:
May our Father in heaven bless the stu-
dents and faculty!

Coming to the end of the evening, we sang two stanzas of Psalm 119. A collection for educational aids for the College was held. The College received \$1,662.20. For this support also we are very grateful. In a future "College Corner" the principal hopes to disclose what was done with this money. Rev. B.J. Berends of Smithers, member of the

Board of Governors, closed the meeting with a fitting word and with thanksgiving and prayer.

Thus another year of study was officially brought to a close with the graduation of three students, and, at the same time, a new year was started. May the LORD bless the churches and the College for the glory of His Name in the continu-

ing and increasing recognition of His kingship in the obedience of faith of His people to His revealed will. May He, for that purpose, give us our daily bread, and forgive us our shortcomings and sins, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one. For our God is a great King. His glorious kingdom is for ever. C

Principal's Report

By C. Van Dam

Let us recall the highlights of the past academic year and so see again the many blessings which the Lord has given to us.

Open House and College Evening

On the afternoon of September 7, 1990, the Theological College hosted an open house which was well attended. In the evening we had our Twenty-First Anniversary Meeting. This evening signalled the completion of the transition that started a year earlier. Dr. N.H. Gootjes delivered his inaugural address on "Can God be Angry?" and Dr. J. De Jong could be installed as Professor of Ecclesiology and Diaconology.

Students

Three new full-time students were enrolled last September, all from Canadian Reformed congregations: John B. Challies, B.A., of Ancaster, ON; Mark J. Hoogerdijk, B.A., of Coaldale, AB; and John D. Louwerse, B.A., of Chilliwack, BC. The total number studying at the College was thus thirteen.

All the freshmen successfully completed their first year. We are also happy to announce that three students are graduating this year: R. Dean Anderson, Jr., who has started a yearlong vicariate in the Reformed Church of New Zealand, at Hamilton, New Zealand; Cornelis (Ken) Herfst, who has accepted a call by the Vineland Free Reformed Church for mission work in Cubulco, Guatemala; and Wilhelmus M. Wielenga, who has accepted a call in the American Reformed Church at Lynden in the state of Washington.


Professors and Guests

Dr. Gootjes, who had already been teaching in the second Semester in

1990, could now begin his first full year of lectures in September of this past year at which time Dr. J. De Jong could start his work as Professor for the first time. We are grateful that in this way the transition has been completed and all the vacancies at our College filled. A note of thanksgiving can also be raised with respect to a third professor. On May 13, 1991, Professor J. Geertsema had his studies in Toronto crowned with the degree of Master of Theology from Wycliffe College and the University of Toronto.

This event was witnessed by members of the Senate and we rejoice with our colleague and his wife that this milestone could be reached.

From the teaching professors, let us now go to the emeritus Professor of New Testament, Prof. L. Selles who celebrated his fiftieth anniversary as ministers of the divine Word on April 20. This memorable event was appropriately celebrated with an open house sponsored by the Board of Governors. May the Lord our God continue to sustain and encourage



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CLARION
41 Amberly Boulevard
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our colleague in the work that he still loves to do.

During the past academic year we had guests who could share their knowledge and expertise with us.

On December 4, 1990, the Rev. H. Versteeg, accompanied by Mr. J. Boot of Toronto, gave the College community firsthand information of the needs and opportunities of the mission field in Irian Jaya. The presentation was effectively illustrated with video and discussion ensued.

On April 9, 1991, Dr. J.W. Wevers, emeritus professor at the University of Toronto and an editor for the *Septuaginta-Unternehmen* of the Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, delivered a special lecture on the Greek translation of Exodus. The following day, Dr. R. Ganz of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America at Ottawa and a former psychologist and student of Dr. J. Adams, delivered an afternoon lecture on "Nouthetic Counselling." Both of these lectures were also followed by discussion.

Visits of a different nature took place when the grade 2 and 3 class of the Timothy School in Hamilton and the grade 4 class of the John Calvin School in Smithville had class trips to the College on respectively November 19 and 26, 1990, and June 5, 1991. We hope that we will be able to see some of them again!

Extra-Curricular Activities

At the time of the last College evening, Dr. and Mrs. Faber were in Australia. During the months of Septem-



A beautiful, "timely" donation



Board of Trustees

Standing l-r: Mr. A.L. VanderHout, Rev. C. Van Spronsen, Rev. B.J. Berends, Mr. A. Van Egmond, Mr. C. Veldkamp, Rev. J. van Rietschoten, Mr. H. Buist; sitting l-r: Rev. M. Vander Wel, Rev. Cl. Stam, Mr. C. Heeringa, Rev. P. Kingma

ber, October and the first part of November, our emeritus professor of Dogmatics visited all the sister churches in that vast country and strengthened the ties between Hamilton and them. We greatly appreciate the support that the Australian churches give our College and are happy that they too may share in the fruits by having graduates from Hamilton minister in their midst. The Fabers also visited New Zealand from where our student Dean Anderson originates. Dr. and Mrs. Faber regret that they once again are not with us, for now Dr. Faber is in the Netherlands on the invitation of the Board of Governors of the Theological University of Kampen to teach dogmatics in the fall term while Prof. B. Kamphuis is on a special study leave. They do send their greetings.

The year 1990 was a year in which the work of Dr. K. Schilder was commemorated in gratitude to God for this gift to His church. The Theological College organized three evening lectures in the Rehoboth Canadian Reformed Church building in Burlington during the last three Thursdays of November, 1990. Dr. J. De Jong spoke on "Schilder and Revelation," Dr. N.H. Gootjes on "Schilder and Culture," and Dr. J. Faber on "Schilder: His Life and Work." These evenings were well attended. On December 12, the Theological University of our sister churches in Kampen organized a Schilder Symposium. Dr. J. Faber participated as co-referent dealing with a paper by Prof. B. Kamphuis on Schilder's view of history and Dr. J. De Jong functioned as co-referent to Dr.

W.G. de Vries who had written a paper on Schilder's relationship to the Reformed confession.

On February 16, 1991, Dr. J. De Jong conducted a workshop on liturgy for the Elders' Conference of Classis Niagara and Hamilton of the Christian Reformed Church. Dr. J. Faber participated in the Eighth Colloquium on Calvin and Calvin Studies held in Grand Rapids on May 8 and 9, 1991, and presided over a session in which Dr. W. van't Spijker spoke on the Kingdom of Christ in Bucer and Calvin.

This past year saw the release of Prof. L. Selles' revision of the second volume of his much appreciated outlines on Revelation. Some of the addresses which Dr. J. Faber delivered in Australia were published in that country under the title *Lectures on the Church* (1990). Dr. N.H. Gootjes published "De Structuur van Bavinck's Gereformeerde Dogmatiek" in *Radix* 16:3 (1990). In other news pertaining to publishing, it can be mentioned that a publication committee, composed of the faculty along with a representative of the Property and Finance Committee, was formally constituted with the primary aim of publishing scholarly writings of the Senate which may not be attractive for a commercial publisher.

In the context of mentioning activities outside the immediate responsibility of teaching, it should also be noted here that this past year was unique in the history of the Theological College. Because of the great shortage of ministers in Ontario, every teaching professor served as counsellor of a congregation. Because



Staff and graduates

Prof. Dr. N.H. Gootjes, Prof. Dr. C. Van Dam, Prof. J. Geertsema, Prof. Dr. J. De Jong, Mr. W.M. Wielenga, Mr. K. Herfst

the professors have been set apart for teaching and serving the federation of churches in general, we hope that this unusual situation will not last too long. Indeed, with Burlington-East's recently receiving a minister, this state of affairs has already improved.

The Library

Once again we would like to start by noting with gratitude the vital work that the Women's Savings Action does for the College Library. We received \$20,000 from them, that is, from all the sisters across this large country and from the American congregations. The money received was spent on acquiring the necessary tools in the form of books and journals. Among our acquisitions of the past year we can mention the special purchases of a number of works of early Jewish exegesis, many New Testament studies in the Supplements to Novum Testamentum series, the original text of Melancthon's works and the third edition of *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, an important German reference work.

We are also very grateful for the gifts that come spontaneously from within the churches. These come in the form of books which have all been publicly acknowledged in *Clarion* and in the form of monetary donations which have been promptly receipted where possible.

During this past year we were able to continue to appreciate the much valued labours of our Associate Librarian, Ms. Mirian Van Til, our Library Technician, Catherine Mechelse and our dedicated

volunteers, Mrs. Marsha Ostermeier and Mrs. Allison Schutten. These volunteers freely give of their time and talents and can be counted on to do a wide variety of work in our library.

The task of reclassification and computerization of our holdings continues steadily. Because of computer technology, we are now able to keep an accurate account of all records more easily. Our library now contains approximately 20,000 volumes and we currently subscribe to 137 periodicals and journals.

Students and Support

As announced last year, the Faber-Holwerda Bursary is now functioning. Thankful use has been made of it. Since that time, the College has received an-

other unsolicited bursary for the support of needy students who are entering the ministry. This bursary comes from the Christian Disciple Fund of which the Rev. J. Porter, a retired minister in the United Church, is the contact person. We officially acknowledge his presence here tonight with gratitude.

Although the following does not belong to the report of the year past, it has become clear that you who support this College with your prayers and gifts are interested in knowing whether new students are entering the College. Two new students have been officially admitted, namely Johan Plug of our sister church in Albany, West Australia and Joe Poppe, of the Canadian Reformed Church at Guelph, ON. The total number of students for this year is twelve.

Physical Facilities

The Property and Finance Committee of the Board of Governors were also able to continue the important work entrusted to them. With gratitude we can here report that the College has received a new furnace, a fresh coat of paint on window frames and doors, and a beautiful new sign which is in keeping with the beautiful facilities we may enjoy.

Conclusion

We are very thankful to the Lord our God that during the past year the work at the College could continue unhindered. Both staff and students could work in good health, and the governors could quietly but effectively do their work both in the academic and the financial areas that have been entrusted to them. We are unworthy of the many mercies of our God. May He enlighten us with His Holy Spirit and be pleased to continue to use the College in His service. C

CHURCH NEWS



NEW ADDRESS:

Rev. G. Nederveen
3089 Woodward Avenue
Burlington, ON L7N 2M3
Phone: (416) 681-9837

ADDRESS CHANGE:

Dr. J. De Jong
74 Rymal Road East
Hamilton, ON L9B 1C1

CALLED AND ACCEPTED
To Smithville, ON

Rev. J. DeGelder
of Groningen Oost,
the Netherlands

The Impact of New Trends in Biblical Interpretation on Preaching

By J. De Jong

Text of the inaugural address given at the Convocation of the Theological College, September 6, 1991. My thanks to my colleague J. Geertsema for many helpful suggestions and comments which he gave to the first draft of this speech.

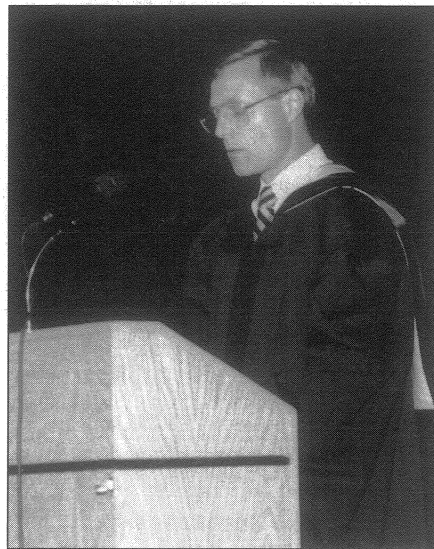
Mr. President of the Board of Governors, members of the Board of Governors, Mr. Principal and members of the Senate, brothers and sisters, honoured guests:

I have chosen to give my inaugural address in the area of preaching, in the subject called homiletics. The preaching of the gospel represents the end-focus and overall goal of the work at the Theological College. Homiletics brings together all the disciplines of the theological curriculum, and is concerned with the practical application of these disciplines in sermon preparation.

Closely connected with the field of homiletics is the science of hermeneutics, that is, the study of the interpretation of the Scriptures. A text must be properly interpreted before it can be preached. Hermeneutics deals with the rules and methods of the interpretation of Scripture. In homiletics we are also concerned that a text is interpreted in the correct way. That is a basic prerequisite for an effective sermon.

The last few decades have witnessed the rise of a new approach to Biblical interpretation which goes by the name of "the new hermeneutic." The father of this school of thought is the German theologian Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976), whose thought largely occupied the theological world in the first part of the twentieth Century. There were some students in his own school, however, who were dissatisfied with his approach. They felt that it was too man-centered. So they claimed to go back to the text. These students, in particular G. Ebeling (Zurich) and E. Fuchs (Marburg), are the leaders of the new trend in Biblical in-

terpretation. Their call to return to the text sounds quite promising, but if we examine it in closer detail, we notice that it is actually quite hollow.



Prof. Dr. J. De Jong addressing the audience

Our purpose this evening is not to engage in a lengthy description of the thought of this school. Rather, we have chosen to take one text, Mark 2:1-12, and see how it is treated in the older Bultmann school, in the school of the new hermeneutic, and then how it ought to be treated from a Reformed standpoint. Hopefully this will help to show you the marked differences between the modern approaches and the Reformed approach. Once we take note of these differences we will also touch on elements that we can learn from these new trends.

Bultmann's approach

Rudolf Bultmann is primarily known for the way in which he used the philosophy of existentialism to interpret the Bible. This philosophy is one which puts man, the human self, in the center. It is

concerned with explaining the human situation in a dark world. It describes man's situation as one of anxiety and fear, and in this situation of anxiety and fear man must dare to make decisions concerning his future. Man is overcome by the fragility and questionableness of his existence. Bultmann attempts to give this philosophy a Christian colour by suggesting that men can and do turn to the Bible to find the answer to their questions, so that they can make decisions through faith in God's future for them.

However, the texts of the Bible are, in Bultmann's view, too antiquated to speak directly and authoritatively to modern man. The texts are the product of writers who had a primitive view of the world, and who readily accepted the workings of supernatural powers in their world. Modern man, the man of science, can no longer accept these antiquated images. According to Bultmann, the person schooled in modern science cannot accept the working of miracles or the impact of angels and demons on the affairs of daily life. The miracle stories, and the stories about angels and demons are myths belonging to a primitive view of the world. Modern man thinks strictly in terms of natural cause and effect. Hence the Bible must be demythologized. That is, to reach the message of Scripture, one must peel away all the mythological references and elements, and so uncover the kernel to the text. So one treats the Bible like a grand wedding present: you must take away the wrapping, and then you find the real message.

Bultmann is also not concerned about whether anything described in the texts really happened. The point for him is: what does the text say with regard to human existence? In his sermons one invariably comes to that point of transition revolving around the question of anxiety. For example, in a sermon on Acts 17:22-32 he says that the altar to the unknown God built by the Greeks reflected the anxiety of the people at

that time. And then he makes the transition to our day when he says:

"In all this, have we been speaking of a remote past, which may be of interest to us but which fundamentally no longer concerns us? Or *have we been speaking essentially of ourselves also?*" (emphasis. Bultmann).¹

Let us now take Mark 2:1-12, the account of the healing of the paralyzed man, and see what Bultmann does with this text. Bultmann says that this is an old miracle story which the early church added to the message about Jesus. For him, the miracle did not really happen. Bultmann insists that "belief in the miracle stories is not in fact the essence of the Christian faith."² The paralyzed man was, however, a participant in the miraculous action of God, and this story is given to us in order to enable us to understand what this means today. The element about the forgiveness of sins in the account is less essential, since it was added later, when the church wanted to vindicate its power of absolution. Yet in the text we notice that there was a fundamental change in understanding on the part of the paralyzed man. Jesus addressed him with regard to his basic need, and helped him to have faith with regard to his deepest anxieties.

One readily sees that in Bultmann the question of the accuracy of historicity of the account in Mark 2 is not important at all. Everything for him hinges on the question in what way the text testifies to man being aided in his deepest anxieties.

The newer approach

The newer trend in Biblical interpretation, arising in Bultmann's school, forms at the same time a reaction to Bultmann. The new interpreters' critique of Bultmann was that he puts man and his concerns in the center. According to them, it is the human self, and Bultmann's view of the self which determines his view of the text. The subject—man—determines the object—the text of Scripture. They also disputed Bultmann's claim that one cannot really say anything about what actually happened or what was said by Jesus. You must allow for the truth and authenticity of some of the words or actions of Jesus.

Now this sounds attractive, and from a Reformed point of view we might consider it to be worth pursuing. For we are in favour of a return from the person to the text. And we also defend the historicity and authenticity of the events recorded in the texts. Yet a closer look at this newer trend will prove to be disappointing. For Bultmann's essential position is retained. That is this: there is a huge cultural gap between *then* and

now. The text belongs to another more primitive world. And the frame of reference in which the text is interpreted today is radically different from the one in which the text first addressed its hearers. You have your own world, the text has its world. You cannot climb into the world of the text, for that is impossible. You cannot disband yourself of your own preconceived presuppositions when you approach the text.

How is one to approach the text? He is not to take the events described in the text as genuine or real. The inspiration of the text has, in the view of this school, nothing to do with its historical accuracy or reliability. The text is very much a human text. But it shows the mark of the divine. One can only ask one question: what were the circumstances that led to the words of this text? What situation brought about the words of this text and what situation brought them to be understood?

You will notice here a shift of emphasis from man's essential anxiety to his linguisticity; that is, there is a shift of focus from man's capacity to decide to his capacity to receive and transmit speech. The accent falls not on the essential weakness and questionableness of his existence but on his weakness and fallenness with respect to his ability to receive and impart speech. For in this view, man is a prisoner of his own language. Left on his own, man's speech is mere talk that makes him go around in circles, without bringing him further. It takes a special kind of language, a special kind of life-creating word to free man from his own limited perspectives and his own limited world of thought.

So in preparing to preach on a text the minister must ask: what made this text happen? What brought this text to

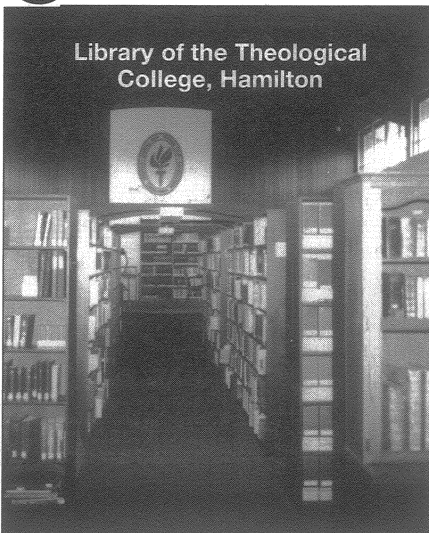
speech? What allowed the spoken words to be understood? In all this, he looks not so much to the words as he does to the happening, the total life-changing event which took place through the spoken word. He must listen to the text so that the "speech event" which he is investigating in the text can happen again to him, and through him and his sermon to others. The sermon must be structured to create the situation in which the text can be spoken again. In the sermon, the text must happen again. The sermon is not the *exposition* of the text, but the *execution* of the text.

You will notice that this "speech event" refers to a very special kind of language, that is, language which, in being understood, changes a person at the root of his being. As an example, we can take the language that a young man uses when he expresses his love to his girlfriend, or fiancée. When those words are spoken in the right situation, there is a new bonding which takes shape. Here speaking and hearing constitute an event; here communication happens! In the same way, during the sermon, we must open ourselves to the situation in which the text happens again. Then we are not interpreting the text, but the text interprets us, it changes and explains our world.

To really understand the words of a text anew does not require being a believer. Jesus spoke primarily to those who were not believers. What it does require is a certain empathy on the part of the subject with the words spoken. The word spoken must appeal to the experience of the subject, his life-situation. Empathy or a common understanding is created when the one hearing the words geared to his experience grasps them in their meaning, and lets himself be carried by the words to a point beyond his own existing horizon. First there is a fusion of horizons, and then the text truly addresses him *anew*, in a new situation. So the sermon must work with the basic sphere of experience of the listener, and create the situation in which the text can address him in a new "speech event."

Let us again turn to Mark 2:1-12 and see how the new interpreters deal with this text. For Ebeling the key to this account is not the part about the forgiveness of sins. For him, the miracle itself is not the essential point either. Rather, the key element for him is the *faith* of the paralytic. Jesus saw his faith! This man yielded himself to a situation in which he could understand the words of Jesus, and identify with them. Ebeling then compares this passage to many others in which it is made clear that this faith was born through the contact with

OUR COVER



Jesus, through hearing Him speak. Jesus' presence evokes faith. But this is not, according to Ebeling, faith *in* Jesus, but the faith *of* Jesus. The faith of Jesus arises in the heart of the one who truly hears His word. For this person hears a message in the words of Jesus which strikes him to the root of his existence. He then voluntarily aligns himself with the historical Jesus. He resolves to live the way Jesus lived, that is to deny the self and live for others. So the paralyzed man is judged acceptable by Jesus because he imitates Jesus' faith. And the account of the healing is a description of the life-changing experience which he shared. Jesus shares His faith with this man, a faith marked by His absolute trust in God.

If we compare this position with that of Bultmann we notice that there is really only a marginal shift of emphasis. Bultmann accented the human self, and man's anxiety; Ebeling accents man's experience, and his listening attitude. For Bultmann Jesus' presence provides

the answer to the question concerning man's existence; for Ebeling Jesus' presence and speech provides the Word which, in the act of hearing it, gives understanding and so liberates man from a prison of meaningless words.

Evaluation

If we now then examine the newer trends in Biblical interpretation, we can only conclude that these trends do not help us to understand the text at all. Although they claim to represent a return to the Word, they only take us a step further away from the Word. For although there is a new interest in the historical Jesus because God speaks through Him, there is no acceptance of the historicity of the gospel accounts. And although there is a new emphasis on the text and the word, it is not an emphasis on the written text, but on the word as an event which must happen again and again. Not the contents of the text are important, but an existential theory concerning understanding predominates. And ultimately

the center of thought here still lies in human experience.

What is the impact of these trends on preaching? The basic impact is to silence the true message of the text! In the school of Bultmann you can only say that something happened in the presence of Jesus. But you cannot say exactly what happened. In the school of Ebeling and Fuchs you can only say something was heard in the presence of Jesus, but you cannot say exactly what was heard. The end result is the same. That something happened, or that a word was spoken—this is all you can say. The emphasis falls only on the fact that someone—in this case the paralyzed man—was affected in the presence of Jesus. The result is a hollow gospel, with no hope and no comfort.

¹R. Bultmann, *This World and the Beyond (Marburg Sermons)*, E.T. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1960, p. 12.

²*Ibid*, p. 157, (sermon on Luke 14:16-24, June 22, 1941).



REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR

By G.Ph. van Popta

“More and More”

Were you ever stuck at a stop light in a car you couldn't get out of neutral? You can rev the engine, thus making a great deal of noise and attracting a lot of attention, but without being able to put the car into gear, you won't move ahead a bit.

In the same way, believers sometimes give a lot of evidence of activity without moving forward in godliness and holiness. They go to church, they pray before and after meals, and they might even go to Young People's Society. The engines are being revved, there is activity and noise, but if you look and listen carefully, you find out that there is no movement. There is no growth in godliness.

How can this be? Is it normal to be stuck at the same (low) level of Christian living? Should we perhaps be thankful if we just manage to hold on to our present position and wait for God to perfect us on the last day? Is it really reasonable in this sinful world to expect to make headway against remaining sin in our lives?

Is a breakthrough to a new level of godly living really to be expected?

To answer these questions, we can consider a phrase which occurs 7 times in our Heidelberg Catechism, namely, the phrase “more and more.” You can find it in Lord's Days 26, 27, 30, 33, 44 (2x) and 48. In each case, this phrase refers to growth in Christian life! There may be and must be a steady progress in faith and godliness. More and more we are to become dead to sin and lead a holy and blameless life (Lord's Day 26). Through the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, we are to be united “more and more” to Christ through the Holy Spirit who lives both in Christ and in us (Lord's Day 27). Who may come to the Lord's Supper? Those who desire “more and more” to strengthen their faith and amend their life (Lord's Day 30).

In the Lord's Day about conversion (33), we confess that the dying of the old nature means that “more and more” we hate sin and flee from it. Then, in An-

swer 115, we learn that God wants the Law preached in the Church so that we might “more eagerly” seek forgiveness and that we might pray for the Holy Spirit that He may “more and more” renew us after God's image. Finally, in Lord's Day 48 we pray: So rule us by Thy Word and Spirit that “more and more” we submit to Thee.

Clearly, our Catechism has a very dynamic view of the Christian life. It is a life in which believers make real headway. There is acceleration and intensification of faith and godliness. We need to get more excited about this great work of renewal which God is doing in us. In a way, we could say that it is a real adventure to be a Christian! Slowly but surely, the Holy Spirit is reconstructing us to be something completely new. You might think of putting a sign on your back reading “under construction.”

What is the goal of the work of the Holy Spirit in you? It is that you become like your Great Saviour, the Lord Jesus

Christ. In Romans 8:29, the apostle states that God predestined His Church “to be conformed to the image of His Son.” Christ is the new and perfect Man, but as such, He is the first of many brothers and sisters. There will be many more like Jesus Christ, indeed, a whole family of perfectly righteous, glorified believers.

Of course, we will never be like Christ in His divine nature. Jesus is God. We are men and women and so we will remain to all eternity—creatures, not God! But yet, in Jesus Christ, we see perfect humanity. He is the true image of God. In Him, we see righteousness and holiness. We see complete obedience. We see humanity as God intended it from the beginning.

Thus, when we in faith see Jesus in the Gospel as perfect man, we are seeing our own future! When He appears we shall be like Him (1 John 3:2). But not only are we seeing our future, we are also seeing our present. We are not yet like Jesus. But we are *becoming* like Jesus. This is the meaning of the “more and more” of the Catechism.

A very important verse of the Bible in this regard is found in 2 Cor. 3:18. There Paul states that as we gaze upon Jesus through faith in the Gospel, “we are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another.” The meaning is unmistakable: there is a progressive transformation of our character into a Christ-like shape! Little by little, the image of God, defaced by sin, will be repaired. Step by step, God will cause His glory to shine in us. And Paul completes the thought by saying that this carving, chiseling, crafting work in us is done by the Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of Christ.

This brings us to an important matter. The work of ongoing sanctification is God’s work! We can only grow in godliness because God makes us grow. As Paul prays in 1 Thess. 5:23: “May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly.” And sanctification is also Christ’s work. He is a complete Saviour. Not only does He free us from the guilt of our sin (justification), but He also saves us progressively from the power and pollution of sin (sanctification). Another way to say this is that there is not only a work of Christ *for you* (He died for you as your substitute on the cross), but there is also a work of Christ *in you*. Does Christ not dwell in us (Eph. 3:17)? Yes, by faith he does and He dwells there with a view to making us like Himself!

Thus, we have to consciously recognize our complete dependence on God for ongoing growth in godliness. What renews us is faith in God (see Article 24 of the Belgic Confession). How can faith renew us? It can renew us because it ties us

to Jesus Christ, in whom is all power for sanctification. In ourselves, we can do nothing. In Christ, we can do everything.

Growth in godliness, therefore, rests on growth in faith. And how does faith grow? The answer is: through the Word! By reading, studying and meditating on the promises of the Word, our faith is increased. The Holy Spirit works through

Daily renewal with growth in godliness is the birthright of every Christian! You only need to claim that promise in prayer. God, who is faithful, who keeps all of His promises, will work in your heart by the Holy Spirit, to bind you to Christ. More and more you will know the nearness of God in a sanctified life. As you are more tightly bound to Christ

HYMN 37:3

*Led by the Holy Spirit,
Our flesh we crucify;
In Him shall we find freedom
As unto sin we die.
O Spirit, by Thy power
Our faithfulness increase.
Reap Thou in us Thy harvest
Of love and joy and peace.*

the Word to bind us ever more closely to our faithful Saviour, Jesus Christ. Therefore, we must become God’s partners in our own sanctification by loving the Bible. This means going to Church with a heart that has been prepared by prayer to receive the Word. It means reading the Bible regularly, every day of your life. Do you do that?

And growth in faith also depends on a regular prayer life. God promises us so much. For instance, in our baptism, God the Holy Spirit promises that “He will dwell in us and make us living members of Christ, imparting to us what we have in Christ, namely the cleansing from our sins and the *daily renewal* of our lives, till we shall finally be presented without blemish among the assembly of God’s elect in life eternal” (*Form for Baptism of Infants*).

Do you claim that promise regularly in your private prayers? After all, we also confess in Lord’s Day 45 that God will give His grace and Holy Spirit only to those who constantly and with heartfelt longing ask Him for these gifts!

(grafted to Him) you will also more richly and regularly bear fruit for God.

We can grow in godliness. That is God’s desire and command for us. But we can achieve this goal only if we shake off our sluggish sleepiness and work in the power of God for better things. We have to put the car of our Christian life into gear by regular Bible reading, church attendance and personal prayer.

Lastly, no matter how much progress we do make by God’s grace, we will not arrive at perfection in this life. Despite our best efforts, a survey of each day’s labour will bring to our lips a confession of sin. Nothing we do will be completely unstained by sin! No praise will be perfect, no obedience total. As long as we live, there will be a struggle between the flesh (our old nature) and the Spirit. And that makes us long all the more for the day of Christ, when the slow progress of this life will be suddenly surpassed by the glorious promotion to the life of heaven—with Christ, like Christ, forever.



The Conversation Continued

By J. Geertsema

(In the previous issue Rev. Jelle Tuininga of Lethbridge and I continued our conversation. His letter to me was published in its entirety. It has eight points. I dealt with the first three. To make it easier for the readers, the points 4 to 8 of colleague Tuininga are printed here again.)

4. The same is true with the true/false distinction. That is not quite as simple and black and white as many Can. Ref. people would like to make it. I would distinguish between an unfaithful church and a false church. I call the CRC an unfaithful church, but I would hesitate to apply the label "false" there immediately. One could say that the marks of a true church are more or less present in some church communions. No church has those marks in perfection, and some have lost them altogether. But it's not always easy to say when and where a once-faithful church becomes false. Here a quotation from a certain James M. Wilson is helpful:

"Her (the churches) constitution, as it lies in the Word of God, is perfect; but defects still exist in the best churches. And it is far from easy – is it possible? – to prepare a minute statement of the marks of a true church, which will render easy the task of deciding in every case, absolutely and at once, whether a society can be reckoned a true church or not. And yet, every intelligent Christian admits that a church, once genuine in its character, may become completely apostate. To draw the line and say, just here it ought to be abandoned, is not easy. The truth is, all questions of this sort must, as they occur, be left for decision, under the guidance of general principles, 1...to the enlightened judgment, pure hearts, and honest purposes of the faithful in Christ."

James M. Wilson

In the final analysis, of course, one must judge each local congregation by itself. It is possible that there are true, faithful congregations within a largely apostate federation. It's ultimately the local congregation that counts, even though we may not absolve ourselves of corporate responsibility.

5. The Can. Ref. Churches must realize that they are not the only option for concerned CRC members. There are also the Free Reformed and OCRC federations. They may legitimately claim the title of true church too. And what about the Prot. Ref.? Though I have some difficulties with some of their teachings, I certainly would not dare to classify them as false churches.

With just goes to show again that we must not be too quick with our labels.

6. The "details" (6 points) of my first letter were mentioned only as examples of something (an attitude) that is rather general and widespread in the Can. Ref. Churches. This kind of mentality has been (is?) fostered among the Can. Ref. people, also from the pulpit. I have correspondence from Can. Ref. consistories where they refuse to call us brothers, even though they will not deny that we are Christians. How is that possible? It is this mentality that must be addressed. It is too easy to say that this is not the official teaching of the Can. Ref. Churches. That may be true. But one runs into it time and again. A recent decision of a Can. Ref. synod with respect to the Rev. De Bruin did nothing to discourage this kind of thinking. I think it is time that a Can. Ref. Synod speaks forthrightly on this matter of ecclesiology, and clears up major misunderstandings. It is a plain fact that many members (ministers?) of the Can. Ref. Churches misinterpret Arts. 27-29 of the Belgic Confession. For many of them the "one catholic or universal Church" of Art. 27 is identical with the Can. Ref. federation. I've heard that said to me more than once. Surely a misinterpretation of such major proportions ought to be addressed and cleared up once for all. The sooner the better. In this connection I would like to urge the reading of Dr. Faber's book on the church, and also two excellent books by the late Prof. C. Veenhof: *Om Kerk Te Blijven* and *Volk Van God*. The reading of these books among Can. Ref. people could be a great blessing. It is a fact that the disciples have often gone much beyond the master (Schilder) in their thinking about the church.

The above explains what I meant by "coming half way." I did not mean to imply any compromise at all. I only mean that some issues must be dealt with and cleared up.

7. With respect to a member leaving a Can. Ref. congregation for another (non-Can. Ref.), it is one thing to say: He (she) has left the church of Christ at this place. But to say he (she) has left the church of Christ is altogether something else. That means the person is no longer a Christian, no longer a member of the body of Christ. Do you dare to say that? I certainly don't.

8. Finally, I think Geertsema's reference to Rev. 18:4 is illegitimate. That refers to Babylon, the city of this world, not to the church = cf. further Isa. 52:11; Jer. 50:8; 51:6,9,45.

J. Tuininga

Response

Ad 4) Rev. Tuininga stressed in the previous point that we have to apply to the church too what we confess about believers: no one is perfect and even the most holy ones have only a small beginning of the new obedience (cf. Lord's Day 44). In the present point my colleague says that we have to keep this confession in mind also with respect to the application of the confessional distinction between true and false church. Rev. Tuininga wants to distinguish between an unfaithful and a false church; and underlines his argument with "a quotation from a certain James M. Wilson." And here also he speaks of a "more or less."

First of all, I agree with Tuininga that a true church can become false, and that where once faithfulness was found unfaithfulness took its place. However, the application of the reality of a general sinfulness of people and the "more or less" notion employed for the terms "true" and "false" undermine the simple and straightforward manner of speaking of our confession. It says, "We believe (!) that we ought to discern diligently and very carefully from the Word of God what is the true Church, for all sects which are in the world today claim for themselves the name of Church" (Art. 29 B.C.).

This "we believe" means: we learn from God's Word and speak according to it. Therefore, for the distinction "true" and "false" we have to go to God's Word. Now the point is that we do not find a direct linking of the terms "true" and "false" with the word "church" in Scripture. These terms do occur in both the Old and the New Testament in connection with prophecy. In Jer. 5:31, Ezek. 13:19, we read about prophets who prophesy falsely. In Matt. 24:24 Christ warns against "false Christs and false prophets." Peter also writes about "false prophets" in Israel and "false teachers" who will arise in the church (2 Pet. 2:1).

These are only a few examples. However, from here we can see the meaning of the terms "true" and "false." A

false teaching is a teaching which objectively deviates from the true prophecy. So, a true church teaches what God's Word teaches, while a false church teaches what is in conflict with that Word of God. We do not speak here about a weakness in teaching, but about a determined, maintained teaching that deviates from the Scriptures. Our confession circumscribes this false church as a church which "assigns more authority to itself and its ordinances than to the Word of God. It does not want to submit to the yoke of Christ."

Herewith we do not deny that in a false church there can still be found remnants of the church. I may refer the reader here to Calvin's *Institutes* book IV,2,4. When we, therefore, speak of a false church as a church which deviates from God's Word and maintains such deviations, this does not mean that we deny that there can still be many true believers in such a church. Calvin speaks here of a calling for such believers to leave the false church and join the true church (*Institutes*, IV,2,10). We confess the same in Art. 28 B.C., saying that believers ought not to withdraw from the church of Christ or be content to be by themselves, but that they are obliged "to join it and unite with it, maintaining the unity of the Church."

These words imply the recognition that there are true believers who belong to the church of Christ but are not united with her and, in that way, do not maintain the unity of the church. However, we must not just reckon with the fact that many believers may be members of a false church. We must also reckon with the intense seriousness of the fact that a false church with its teachings that deviate from the Word of God leads many, many people away from the Lord and His Word.

Therefore, we must not weaken our confessional language by speaking of a "more or less" or by pointing to a general sinfulness that cleaves to all of us. If a person steals, he is plainly a thief and not more or less a thief. If a church, in its pronouncements and decisions, deviates from God's Word and teaches such deviations, and if that church refuses to listen to those who admonish it for its deviation but maintains its "false teaching," such a church teaches a lie, which Scripture calls falsehood.

Tuininga remarks that it is "ultimately the local congregation that counts, even though we may not absolve ourselves of corporate responsibility." In my first response I have stated that it is pos-

sible, indeed, that there can be a local church that holds on to God's Word and fights for the truth in the midst of a federation that deviates. However, in line with what is said above, the point is, if such a congregation stays in a deviating federation, is such a local church obedient to the Word of Christ and in agreement with the Reformed confession when it stays where it is? Is such a congregation obedient when it stays in a church fellowship where both truth and lies, false prophecy, is propagated and where lie and truth exist side by side, officially? Such cannot be called obedience. That is the point.

Ad 5) Rev. Tuininga tells us that we "must realize that [we] are not the only option for concerned CRC members." Dear brother Tuininga, do you so little understand us? Is church unity a matter of options? Unity of all true believers, and therefore also of truly faithful Reformed churches, is for us not a matter of options, but a matter of obedience to the church-gathering Christ. If it was a matter of options, of choice, it would be a lot easier to act as the Free Reformed do: just try hard to maintain our own special character (whatever that may be) and accept for practical reasons the pluriformity of the church. Then, for our own nice and undisturbed life, continue to exist beside each other until the Lord comes back. Obeying Christ in seeking unity as we confess is much harder, but not an option.

Ad 6) The "details" were examples of our refusal to call others brothers. You want us to address this mentality. However, there is another side to this point. It is the easiness with which, in all kinds of churches, practically everybody is called brother. And the question of the unity of the church around the same table and in the same federation is ignored. Why should we not address that mentality at the same time? Who in the Roman Catholic church is my brother? The pope? Someone who is truly a believer there and rejects the Roman false teachings? But I know no one. Is he my brother who persists in rejecting God's Word on a number of points and who thus lives in disobedience? Christ said (Luke 8:21) "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the Word of God and do it." It appears that Christ excluded those who disobeyed His call and teaching. Is not the easiness with which this word "brother" is used part of a false ecumenism in which the norms of God's Word are ignored and rejected?

If for me the "one holy catholic or universal Church" of Art. 27 B.C. is found in the Canadian Reformed Churches, is this wrong? You describe our view as one of a restrictive identity. I reject such a restrictive identity. And as far as I know, we as churches do. If I say: John is the baker, this is a characterization. It does not mean that John is the absolute only baker. If I say: the Canadian Reformed Churches are that one catholic or universal church, this does not mean that this one catholic and universal church of Christ does not exist anywhere else, as per restrictive definition. No, it is meant as a characterization. We believe to be the "one catholic or universal church." Or would you say that there are two or three or more different "catholic or universal" churches of Christ? I was not aware of it.

I hope that here we do clear things up. In the early fifties, our people tried to find this very same catholic or universal church in the CRC. However, the CRC did not want to be that church for us. We could be members of the CRC, but we had to keep our mouth shut about the un-catholic and un-apostolic and un-scriptural decisions in Holland, in 1944. We were welcome as members of the CRC if we were willing to swallow via the CRC in North America what we had rejected as in conflict with Scripture and confession in the Netherlands. For via the CRC we would be compelled to be one with the synodical Reformed Churches which had denied that character of the church as catholic or universal. Such a compulsory unity via the back door with a church that had shown itself false in its pronouncements and actions was correctly considered disobedience to the Lord of the church. Sorry, brother Tuininga, but un-catholic behaviour was not on our side. And the consequences of this un-catholic behaviour you are confronted with today.

Ad 7) This issue was one in the context of discipline. I would rather not discuss this further. Does it really matter if I perhaps would have given a different formulation?

Ad 8) We deal here with an exegetical point. Rev. 18:4 says, "Come out of her my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues, for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities." This "her" refers to Babylon, the great city, which is presented as the great harlot in the chapters 17 and 18. There are two different explanations. The one says that harlot Babylon is "the city of the world." This interpretation is based on

texts as provided by colleague Tuininga. The other explanation views Babylon as the unfaithful, apostate or false church at that point in time, namely, Jerusalem. Basis for this interpretation is the fact that Babylon is called "the great city" which expression is also found in ch. 11:8 where it says about the two witnesses of Christ that "their dead bodies will lie in the street of the *great city* which is allegorically called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified." The

Lord was crucified in Jerusalem, which had turned into a "synagogue of Satan."

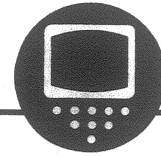
For further arguments in favour of this latter interpretation I may refer to the *Outlines* on the book of Revelation by Prof. L. Selles and published by our Inter-League Publication Board in London.

May our conversation not be the last one. You sent me a copy of one of your recent church bulletins which shows that you are involved, with your consistory and congregation, in a struggle of

liberation "from apostacy" (this is a quotation). You see this as an act of obedience to the Word of the Lord. May the Lord give you and your consistory and congregation wisdom and strength on this way, and the firmness of faith that you may abide in the grace of God which is in Christ Jesus. And may this obedience to our Lord in the unity of the true faith, as we confess this in the Reformed Confession, bring us together.

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PRESS RELEASE



Classis Ontario South, Attercliffe, September 11 and 12, 1991

Art. 1. Opening.

On behalf of the convening church at Ancaster, br. W. Smouter calls the meeting to order and opens it in a proper Christian manner. Everyone is welcomed, also various guests. A special welcome is extended to Rev. T. Hoogsteen (of Brantford, ON) who is present for his preparatory examination. Also welcomed are Rev. M. Pollock and Mr. David Stephens of Denver who are present as observers.

Art. 2. Credentials.

The credentials are checked by the convening church and are found to be in good order. All churches are lawfully represented; the church at Blue Bell by only one delegate. Classis is constituted. Moderamen: Rev. B.R. Hofford (chairman), Rev. Cl. Stam (vice-chairman), Rev. D.G.J. Agema (clerk).

The chairman mentions some memorabilia: the expected arrival of Rev. G.A. Snip and family, the call extended to Rev. J. de Gelder by the church at Smithville, and the return of Rev. W. Boessenkool to South Africa. The vacant churches are duly remembered and encouraged.

Art. 3. Agenda.

An updated provisional agenda is handed out. An appeal from two members of the Watford church and a letter from the consistory at Watford concerning this appeal are added to the agenda. The agenda is adopted.

It is noted that there are instructions from the churches at Blue Bell, Lincoln, Rockway and Grand Rapids.

It is decided that Rev. M. Pollock and elder B. Stephens (of the "Christ American Reformed Church" at Denver, CO) be seated as observers.

Art. 4. Report Committee re: Examination Rev. T. Hoogsteen.

The report from the committee ad hoc appointed by the June 1991 Classis (consisting of Rev. D.G.J. Agema, Dr. J. Faber and Br. W. Bartels) re: the examination of Rev. T. Hoogsteen, formerly of the Christian Reformed Church at Brantford, is received and read. A letter from Rev. Hoogsteen regarding a point in the report is read and noted. It is decided upon recommendation of this committee that the preparatory examination can take place. The committee is thanked for its work.

Art. 5. Preparatory Examination Rev. T. Hoogsteen.

The official documents pertaining to the examination are noted. All required

documents are present. The examination can proceed.

Rev. Hoogsteen presents a sermon proposal on 1 Peter 1:22-2:3. In closed session Classis discusses this proposal. It is decided that the examination may continue. Rev. Hoogsteen is informed of this decision.

Rev. J. van Rietschoten examines in the exegesis of the Old Testament (1 Kings 12:25-2:3).

Rev. B.R. Hofford examines in the exegesis of the New Testament (Romans 14).

Rev. Cl. Stam examines in the doctrine and confessions of the church.

In closed session the examination is discussed and evaluated. Classis decides to declare Rev. T. Hoogsteen eligible for call in the Canadian/American Re-



formed Churches, and, seeing his prior ordination into the ministry, to grant him the right to proclaim the Word of God and administer the sacraments for the period of one year.

Rev. Hoogsteen is informed of this decision and congratulated with it. Rev. Hoogsteen indicates his acceptance of the Three Forms of Unity. He thanks Classis for the manner in which he was received. Classis sings Psalm 146:2, 3, after which Rev. J. van Rietschoten leads in thanksgiving and prayer. Classis receives the opportunity to congratulate Rev. and Mrs. T. Hoogsteen.

Address Rev. T. Hoogsteen:
6 Hidden Court,
Brantford, ON N3R 6P4
Telephone (519) 756-8707

Art. 6. Question Period ad Art. 44 C.O.

All the churches are asked the required questions.

The churches at Chatham and Lincoln ask advice in matters of discipline. Advice is given.

The church at Lincoln asks whether the colloquium of Rev. G.A. Snip, soon to arrive in Beamsville, can take place at a classis contracta. Classis decides that a colloquium is too important for a classis contracta. Classis advises the church at Lincoln that they may request that the next Classis be convened earlier, if necessary (as per regulations 3b).

The church at Rockway asks advice in a matter of discipline. Advice is given. The church at Rockway also has an instruction asking Classis not to deal with the request of the "Christ American Reformed Church" at Denver to be admitted to the federation of Canadian Reformed Churches because the churches have not had time to study this request. This instruction is not followed.

Art. 7. Request "Christ American Reformed Church" at Denver.

A request from the "Christ American Reformed Church" at Denver, Colorado (USA) is read. This church seeks to be affiliated with the Canadian Reformed Churches and asks the help of Classis concerning the manner in which this must be done.

Since the church at Grand Rapids, as church for the "Ministry at Large" project and address church for the USA, has written a letter with extensive documentation in support of this request, Classis declares this request to be admissible.

The following decision is taken:

Classis decides to express its gratitude for this request and appoints a committee with the following mandate:

1. To visit the Christ American Reformed Church at Denver, to prepare a comprehensive report for the churches regarding the legitimacy and viability of this request, also in consultation with the Deputies for contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

2. To consult with the sister churches in Classis Alberta/Manitoba regarding the proper geographical processing of this request.

3. To report to the churches six weeks before the March 1992 Classis.

Grounds

1. Since the Orthodox Presbyterian Church is implicated in the request of the Christ American Reformed Church, the Deputies for Contact with the OPC should be contacted.

2. Since the churches in Alberta/Manitoba have regular contact with the OPC Presbytery of the Dakotas (to which the Denver area belongs), they should be contacted with respect to which Classis should receive the Christ American Reformed Church.

Art. 8 Adjournment and reopening.

Due to the late hour, Classis is adjourned until the next day, September 12, at 9:30 a.m.

On Thursday, September 12, at the set time, Rev. B.R. Hofford calls the meeting to order and opens it in a proper fashion. Roll call shows that all the churches are lawfully represented, some by alternates.

Art. 9 Address Rev. M. Pollock.

The chairman, Rev. B.R. Hofford, gives the Rev. M. Pollock, pastor of the Christ American Reformed Church at Denver, the opportunity to speak a few words to Classis. Rev. Pollock confirms the desire and determination of his congregation to pursue affiliation with the Canadian Reformed Churches in the way decided by the churches. He thanks the brothers for their fellowship and expresses his anticipation of receiving the committee appointed by Classis.

In response, the chairman offers words of hope and encouragement to the office-bearers and members of the Christ American Reformed Church at Denver.

Art. 10 Appeals.

The appeal of two members of the church at Watford against actions of the consistory of the church at Watford is read. This appeal is declared admissible. The letter of the church at Watford regarding this appeal is also read.

Classis breaks to study this appeal. The appeal is discussed. Classis decides not to accede to this appeal.

Art. 11 Reports.

a) the church at Chatham presents a report of the Fund for Needy Students with a proposal re: the assessment for 1992. Classis decides to set the amount at \$12.00 per communicant member.

b) the church at Ancaster reports on the Fund for Needy Churches. The churches at Laurel MD and Blue Bell PA have requested support for 1992. The assessment for 1992 is set at \$26.00 per communicant member. It is noted that the books of the Committee for the Fund for Needy Churches has been audited for the period of January 1990-May 1991.

Art. 12 Appointments.

a) regarding the next Classis: convening church, Attercliffe; hosting church, Hamilton; date, December 11, 1991; proposed moderamen, Rev. K.A. Kok (chairman), Rev. D.G.J. Agema (vice-chairman), Rev. B.R. Hofford (clerk).

b) delegates for Regional Synod, November 13, 1991:

ministers: Rev. D.G.J. Agema, Rev. B.R. Hofford, Rev. K.A. Kok and Rev. J. van Rietschoten (alternate: Rev. D. Moes).

elders: K. Linde, J. Oosterhoff, W. Smouter and A. Witten (alternates: A. van Pijkeren, M. Hofsink, C. van Anel and M. vanden Bos, in that order).

c) committee for contact with the Christ American Reformed Church at Denver: Rev. B.R. Hofford and Rev. J. van Rietschoten.

Art. 13 Personal Question Period.

A question is asked re: the time span required before a second call can be extended to a minister. Classis advises that no particular period of time has been set.

A question is asked re: the closing date for matters for the agenda of Classis. The existing rule is maintained.

A question is asked about the use of the funds of the "Ministry at Large" project of the church at Grand Rapids. It is answered that this fund does not fall under the jurisdiction of Classis.

Art. 13 Censure.

Censure ad Article 44 C.O. is exercised.

Art. 14 Acts and Press Release.

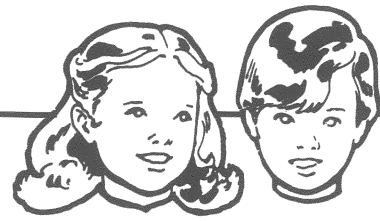
The Acts are read and adopted. The Press Release is read and approved.

Art. 15 Closing.

After the meeting has praised the Lord and given thanks, Classis is closed.

For Classis Ontario-South,
Cl. Stam, Vice-Chairman e.t.





Dear Busy Beavers,

How do you like Busy Beaver Ruby Knol's "Thanksgiving" picture?

The big grin shows that the girl is pretty happy, don't you think? And no wonder!

She's got sunshine, apples, flowers and grass all around her! No wonder she looks happy — and thankful.

Now, close your eyes and put *yourself* in the picture.

What would *you* put around *yourself*?

What are you thankful for?

Of course, at Thanksgiving *we* are thankful for the harvest—the good things the Lord made to grow in the fields, the orchards, and the gardens.

But we give thanks, *too*, for *all* the blessings the Lord gives us every day again.

"Happy Thanksgiving," Busy Beavers.

"Let's be thankful every day."

Now, look at Ruby's Picture *again* and put *yourself* in the picture!



FOR YOU TO COLOUR

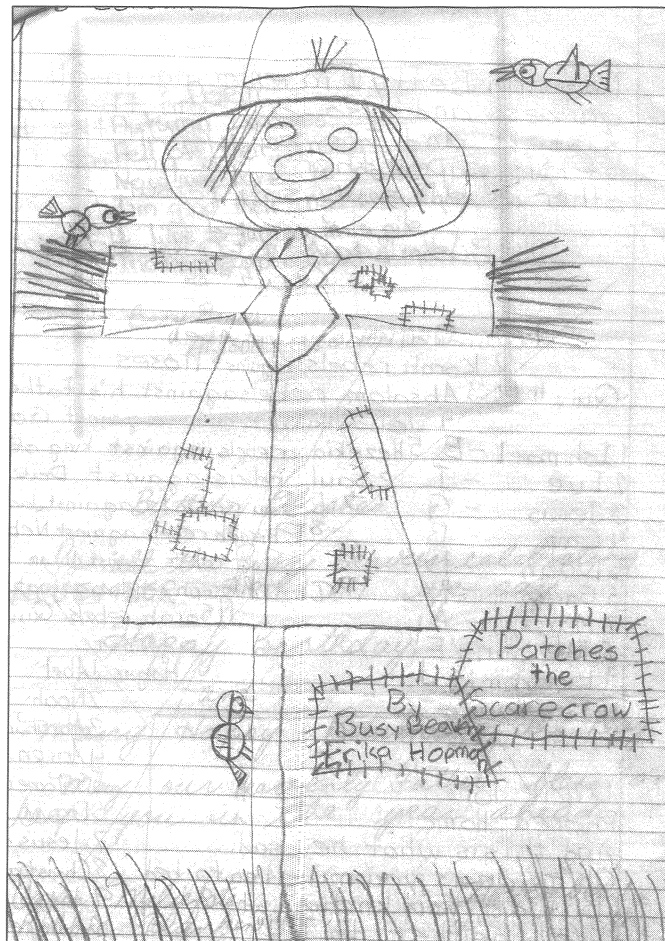
Patches the Scarecrow

from Busy Beaver Erica Hopman

Quiz Time!

Thanksgiving in the Psalms

1. O give _____ to the Lord, for He is _____, for His _____ love _____ for ever. Ps. 136:1
2. I will give to the Lord with my whole _____... Ps. 111:1
3. We give thanks to Thee, O God; we give _____; we _____ on Thy name and recount thy wondrous _____. Ps. 75:1
4. O come, let us _____ to the Lord. Let us come into His _____ with _____. Ps. 95:1,2
5. Enter His gates with _____, and His courts with _____! Give thanks to Him, _____ His Name! Ps. 100:4
6. Sing to the Lord with _____; make _____ to our God upon the lyre! Ps. 147:7
7. Let them thank the Lord for His _____, for His _____ works to the sons of men! Ps. 107:8 (also vv. 15, 22, 31)
8. It is _____ to give thanks to the Lord... Ps. 92:1
9. I will offer to Thee the _____ of _____ and call on the _____ of the Lord. Ps. 116:17
10. _____ in the Lord, O you righteous, and give _____ to His holy _____! Ps. 97:12





POEM

Autumn Leaves
Fell of their Trees
Now we have to rake
I'm glad they're not snowflakes
I like to jump in a pile
That's heaped about a mile!

Busy Beaver *Alison Veenendaal*

How is your pet bird doing, *Erica Hopman*? Thank you for your picture. Keep up the good work, Erica. Bye for now.

Thank you for the puzzles, *John Witten*. I see you have been very busy. So what are you and your friends doing at recess, John?

I'm glad you like your new home, *Ruby Knol*. Is your new barn all finished? Are your grandparents still visiting? Thank you for all the "goodies" you sent to share with the Busy Beavers, Ruby.

Hello, *Diana Flokstra*. I see you are a good puzzler and a neat letter writer! Keep up the good work! Bye for now, Diana.

That was an excellent idea you had, *David Burger*. And you put lots of work into it! Good for you. Pretty soon we'll get the Busy Beavers to try it, too, all right?

Yes, I believe you had a good holiday, *Alison Veenendaal*! You sure did a lot of traveling and saw lots of family! And I see you were busy puzzling. Thank you for the poem, Alison. Keep up the good work!

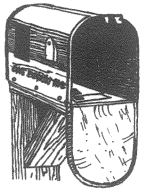
I think the Busy Beavers will enjoy your picture, *David Aikema*. Congratulations on your reading club prize! I think you have a great idea for more puppets! I'm curious to hear how you are coming along!

Hello, *Lisa Burger*. It was good to hear from you again. Thank you for your picture. Thank you, too, for the puzzle. I think the Busy Beavers will enjoy it! Write again soon, Lisa.

Thank you for a *big* letter, *Vickie Aikema*. I see you have been very busy! Good for you! Keep up the good work. Bye for now, Vickie.

And "bye" for now to you all, Busy Beavers.

Love,
Aunt Betty



FROM THE MAILBOX

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Jason Vandeburgt*. We are happy to have you join us. And I see you are a real Busy Beaver already sharing your picture. So did you get to do lots of haying this year, Jason?

I see you had a great summer, *Peter Vanderzwaag*. Do you have friends close by for after school fun? And have you read any good books lately?

Hello, *Jaclyn DeHaas*. It was good to hear from you again. How was your summer? You were glad to see your school friends again, Jaclyn?

Thank you for the puzzle, *Esther Hordyk*. I think the Busy Beavers will enjoy doing it. Keep up the good work!

I see you have been very busy, *Tesha Hopman*. I know the Busy Beavers will enjoy your puzzles. How do you feel about being back in school, Tesha? Write back soon!

With joy and thankfulness to the Lord our Saviour, we may announce the birth of our first child, a son

STEPHEN ALBERT

Born August 30, 1991

Everett and Lynne DeJong
(nee Vanderwoude)

293 West 2nd Street
Hamilton, ON L9C 3G8

We thank the Lord who has blessed our family with the birth of a son and brother

GARRET JOE

Gerry and Marry van Dijk
*Tera, Linnet, Marla,
Jolene, Shelley*

September 19, 1991

Box 823
Carman, MB R0G 0J0

With thankfulness to our heavenly Father for His precious gift we announce the birth of our first child, a daughter

MELISSA DANIELLE

Born September 19, 1991

Gerald and Wendy Oosterhoff

RR 6
Dunnville, ON N1A 2W5

Lo sons are a heritage from the LORD. Psalm 127:3a

With praise to the Lord who made all things well, we announce the birth of

ALLAN JAMES

Little brother for *William, Rebecca, Shawna, Jessica.*

Alan and Debbie Bethlehem
(nee Buist)

RR 1
Dunnville, ON N1A 2W1

The Lord has richly blessed us with another son. We joyfully announce the birth of

PETER ALEX

on August 9, 1991.

A brother for *David, Theodore, Allan, William, Alisa, Celia, Edward and Irene*

Bill and Grietje Gortemaker

Box 35, Group 606, SS 6
Winnipeg MB R2C 2Z3

Love bears all things, love hopes all things, love endures all things, love never fails. 1 Corinthians 13

With thanks to our faithful Father, we wish to announce our engagement.

WILMA HUTTEMA

and

WALTER TOGERETZ

September 17, 1991

5388 Blackburn Road
Sardis BC V2R 1B3