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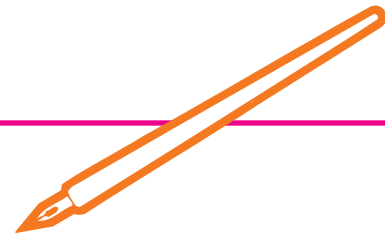


*Professors and graduates
Theological College
Hamilton, Ontario*

Numbers

10:1-10

By C. Van Dam



The miracle of the written Word and a new acquisition

The Word of God forms the core and foundation of all the work done at the Theological College. It is the ultimate source, norm and touchstone for everything taught.

As those living in the western world, we live in a day and age when Bibles are plentiful! One can hardly imagine life without them. It is, therefore, easy to take for granted the ready availability of Scripture in all kinds of languages and translations which we enjoy. But, have you ever stopped to think about the great miracle of God's preserving his word from the creation of this world? As one busy with the Old Testament, let me note a few things of this, the older part of the Bible.

From great antiquity, God had his Word committed to writing (e.g. Exod 34:27) and through the use of his people, the Israelites, He has made sure that this Word has come to us in an accurate and reliable form. To the Israelites were "entrusted the very words of God" (Rom 3:2). The languages in which we have received the Old Testament are Hebrew and Aramaic.

Codex Leningradensis

The oldest complete text of the Old Testament that is available today is the Leningrad Codex. It is this text that is printed as the standard text of the Old Testament and used in the study of this part of Holy Scripture. The Leningrad Codex is housed in the Russian National Library at St. Petersburg (formerly Leningrad). As the name "codex" indicates, this book was copied by hand from another copy of the text. Its colophon indicates that it dates from 1008 A.D. Recently this text has been reproduced in a beautiful facsimile edition.¹ It is a clear photographic reproduction of the entire text of the Old Testament, as well as other material associated with this codex. The library of our Theological Col-

lege is a proud owner of this magnificent volume. Let me mention some things about this text.

The codex indicates that this copy of the text originated in Cairo. From there it ended up in Damascus where it was sold in 1489. In the 1840s, Abraham Firkovitch, a zealous collector of Hebrew manuscripts, acquired this codex at an unknown location. Over the course of his travels, this Karaite Jew from Poland managed to assemble the world's largest

collections of Hebrew manuscripts. Both of these collections ended up in the Russian National Library.

The Leningrad Codex was quite a find and it still is a splendidly preserved text. Indeed, it has been described as being in almost mint condition, in spite of its being almost a thousand years old. Since this text was several hundred years older than the manuscripts used in preparing scholarly editions of the Hebrew Old Testament, it formed the basis for the new edition of the Hebrew Bible in 1935 and it has continued that function in subsequent editions of *Biblica hebraica*.

If you look at the illustration of a page of this codex (Gen 2:19b-3:18a), you will notice that the text was written in three columns. You will also notice that there is writing between and parallel with these columns, as well as on the top and bottom of the page. These are annotations (Masorah) which preserve all



A page from the Leningrad Codex containing Genesis 2:19b-3:18a

sorts of instruction and tradition about the text. Such information would include word-use statistics and how to pronounce the text. This data was important in the transmission of the text because the copyists sought to preserve the accuracy of the hand written text.

The marvel of the preserved Word

Of course the history of preserving the Old Testament text is a very long history. The last people responsible for

the text of the Old Testament before the coming of the printing press were the Masoretes. They worked from about 600-1000 AD. The Leningrad Codex is associated with the famous Ben Asher line of the Masoretes. The Codex informs us that Shemu'el ben Ya'akov had written and vocalized this codex and added the annotations from the corrected and clear texts made by the scholar Aharon ben Mosheh ben Asher. The fact that this connects this codex directly to the Ben Asher family makes it very valuable.

The accuracy of this codex and the text it represents has been amply demonstrated by the Biblical manuscripts found in Qumran near the Dead Sea earlier in this century. These Dead Sea Scrolls are about one thousand years older than the Leningrad Codex. One can only marvel at God's providential care in preserving his Word for his people!

It is tremendous to have such a valuable resource in the library of the Theological College. This is for all intents and purposes the original Old Testament text from which modern Bible translations are made. God has preserved his Word in a wonderful way so that we today can use it. Scripture is not just an interesting relic from the past. It is the living Word of God! At the Theological College we consider it a singular privilege to study and teach this Word in order to train preachers of the glad tidings of Jesus Christ!

The next time you read the Old Testament, think about the long history of this text and its accurate transmission. Savour each word and praise God for the opportunity of having and reading his Word!

¹The Leningrad Codex. A Facsimile Edition. Edited by David Noel Freedman et al. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans - Leiden: Brill, 1998. 

What's inside?

We are pleased to present to you our annual Theological College issue. Recently, four men graduated from the College – four men whom the Lord will use in his sovereign way and time for the work He is doing in the world. In these pages you will find Prof. Geertsema's speech he delivered at the College evening, the principal's report, the words spoken by the Women's Savings Action, and a College Corner. May the Lord bless our Theological College.

There are many colleges and seminaries which once were bulwarks of the Reformed faith but which now are hotbeds for liberalism. The science of higher criticism holds sway in the lecture theatre. Skepticism reigns. It is fashionable to deny the cardinal elements of the Christian faith. Men and women leaving such institutions have nothing to preach. We can be very thankful for our College where professors and students humbly submit to the word of God. On the College evening, Mr. Marc Jagt spoke on behalf of the students. He said that though the professors are all scholars in their fields of study, before the Word they are like children. That's the best compliment a student could pay his profs. We can be thankful for our professors, our College, our students. May God bless them richly in this new year of study. And may they always, in all their scholarly endeavours, continue to submit to the Word with childlike faith.

GvP



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By G. Wieske

Thanksgiving: An annual event or a daily calling?

Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus
1 Thessalonians 5:18

Thanksgiving falls in October. It is a special day set aside to reminisce about the past year. It affords an opportunity to all Canadians to recall and contemplate the blessings we enjoy while living in a free and prosperous country. Those blessings are many! Canada enjoys a standard of living that is hard to beat. We have a medical system that is second to none. We enjoy a social safety net that provides for almost any situation. We are spared from the ravages of war and famine and revolution that plague many other countries. Yes, there is much for which to be thankful! Very much! But do we also notice it? Can you tell that Canadians are a thankful people? Do I say too much, when I say that complaining has become a national pastime? No matter how well off people are, there is always something to wail about. And it is very infectious, too! It does not take much to join the fray. Why is that? It is because our North American society has completely lost the notion that we do not deserve any of God's good gifts. A generation has grown up imbued with rights: rights to have this and rights to have that. Many demand what they think should be theirs and sue or strike if they do not get it fast enough. Those who cater to those rights, those who try to please people's demands, they are praised.

God plays no role in the lives of millions. Man believes in himself. Technology and education, science and social security, they are the means which will provide for his needs. What a difference from the Bible! In scripture giving thanks is a religious matter! There thanksgiving is directed to God! It is not reserved for one day a year but it must be a daily occurrence. It is to be a way of life. This is not first of all because of prosperity but because of God's grace. That is the greatest blessing we enjoy. Also during this past year – God's wonderful grace in Jesus Christ! No matter how important those material benefits may be, they cannot be compared to the spiritual tokens of God's goodness.

Christians always have reason to be thankful. Even when their life is hemmed in by troubles; even when they battle sickness or loneliness or grief or whatever else. Take the church at Thessalonica for instance! They did not enjoy all those blessings we mentioned. Their faith in God brought them into conflict with their countrymen. They suffered much for the sake of the gospel (1 Thess 2:14; 2 Thess 1:6,7). And think of the apostle Paul himself! What did he not endure for the sake of Jesus Christ? Yet he writes, "Give thanks in all circumstances!" "In all circumstances? How is that possible?" we ask. How can you give thanks to God when you have just lost a loved one? When the icy chill of loneliness looms? When your child has just left the church, or when you are faced with an incurable illness? Can you still give thanks then? Does Paul not ask for the impossible? No, he does not! For Paul looks way beyond material blessings. Paul reminds his readers of their greatest blessing. They are to enjoy the love of God! In Christ they have the forgiveness of all their sins. They possess life eternal. Moreover, these blessings are theirs in prosperity and adversity. They do not depend on our outward circumstances but they belong to God's people by faith.

It is faith which makes all the difference! Faith allows Paul to write what he writes. And he does not write this as a suggestion but as a command. God commands his children to be thankful. It is his will that we show our gratitude, in all circumstances! Never mind what troubles we are facing right now. Can that be done? Can you command someone to be thankful? Must that not be left to our spontaneity? Does it not promote artificiality? No, it does not! For do not forget what Paul adds. He says, "This is God's will for you in Christ Jesus!" It is not a bare command, devoid of any love. It is not like an order given by a drill sergeant to his recruits: "Just do as I say or else!" That kind of command does not evoke a heartfelt response. That can

never produce a loving reaction. But God's will in Christ Jesus speaks of his mercy and grace! God's will in Christ Jesus tells us of his wonderful love for his children. It reminds us of what He did for our salvation. Sending his only beloved Son to the cross to rescue vile and dirty sinners like you and me.

When you let that sink in, when you see what Christ Jesus accomplished by his suffering and death and what God grants to everyone who comes to Him in humble faith, then you realize what Paul means. For what else can you do in the light of such grace? What else must you do to show your deep appreciation for such mercy? Let us never forget that the ultimate goal of salvation is the glory of God! That glory is enhanced by our thankfulness, both in word and deed. Let's be on the alert not to get infected by the general trend to complain.

Let's be afraid of demanding our so called human rights. The gospel of grace tells us that we have forfeited every right because of our sins. The only "right" we retain is to be deserving of God's wrath. But it doesn't stop there, thank God! For it hurries on to proclaim forgiveness and eternal life in Jesus Christ for all who believe. Against the background of such a gospel we say, "Lord take my life and let it be, always, ever-more for thee!" Does the rest then not matter? Doesn't it make any difference whether our life is free of troubles or burdened with problems or concerns? Of course it does! Yet never to the extent that we have no reason to give thanks anymore. That remains God's will in Christ Jesus for all of us. For that tells us that no adversity will be able to separate us from God's love. It is that truth that is the greatest reason to give thanks. In the power of God's Spirit. Not just once a year but every day of our life.

The Rev. G. Wieske is minister of the Word in the Canadian Reformed Church of Rockway, Ontario.



The perfection of Christ Jesus and our perfection

By J. Geertsema



Prof. J. Geertsema

Tonight! I take you through the majestic gospel of the Epistle to the Hebrews. This Epistle gives us God's revelation of his gift of salvation in his Son, Jesus Christ. Our guide will be the verb "to make perfect." This verb presents to us a central theme that opens up the entire message. The first section of this address contains a few general remarks about our Epistle, and a survey of the passages where this verb occurs. The second section deals with the meaning of this verb because interpreters have proposed different meanings. The third section presents our conclusion.

I.A General remarks

The Epistle to the Hebrews deals with God's speaking formerly to the fathers through the prophets and his speaking in the last of these days to us through his Son. The final revelation gives the real salvation, the former revelation presented what is preparatory and provisional, the shadow of the real things.

The first readers, called "Hebrews" in the superscript that was added later, were most likely Jewish Christians in Jerusalem and surrounding area. Some time in the past these readers had endured persecution (10:32-34; cf. 6:10).

Persecution no longer seems to be the main problem. The time of writing places us, most likely, in the Palestinian situation just around the Jewish revolt against Rome in 66 A.D. that led to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The problem facing the readers was probably pressure from their fellow Jews urging them to be loyal to the Jewish nation rather than to the church of this crucified Jesus. The Epistle's stress on the priesthood of Christ seems to suggest that the readers were also urged to return to the Old Testament as the Word of the God of their Fathers, who had given to his (Jewish) people the Mosaic laws with the temple worship and atonement for forgiveness of sins through the Levitical priests with their sacrifices.

The moral-ethical meaning as such does not fit Christ who was always without sin; and it does not fit the believers in Hebrews 10:14 either, for their perfection is a gift through Christ's sacrifice and not their own doing.

But whatever the exact situation was, the author comes to his Jewish Christian brothers and sisters with the urgent exhortation to hold fast to their confession concerning Christ Jesus, according to the apostolic preaching, and not to fall away from the faith. He underscores this appeal by painting before their eyes the majestic greatness of Christ Jesus, as Saviour, and the definitiveness of this salvation. He also warns: if you reject worshiping God through Christ Jesus, you are disobedient and have forfeited your salvation.

I.B Quick survey of the texts

Our starting point is 2:10. Here the verb "to make perfect" occurs for the first time. In the preceding verses the author has quoted Psalm 8 which speaks about man being crowned by God with the glory and honour of having dominion over God's creation. The author comments: We do not have this glorious crown yet ourselves. But we do see Christ crowned with it because He suffered death for everyone. Then, in verse 10 the author gives the reason. We read:

For it was fitting for God, for whom and through whom everything exists, that He, in bringing many sons to glory, should **make** the author of their salvation **perfect** through suffering.

This text says: making his Son perfect through suffering was a divine must for God.

The second text is 5:8-9. It leads us to the next step.

Although He was Son, He learned obedience from what He suffered and so, **having been made perfect**, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.

This text points to the fact of the Son's having been made perfect through suffering and its saving result.

The third text is 7:27b-28, the end of the chapter about Christ as the great Melchizedekian high priest over against the weak, sinful Levitical priests. It tells us that

the law appoints as high priests men who are weak, but the oath which came after the law [in Ps 110:4], appointed the Son who has been **made perfect for ever**.

After these three positive statements about the perfecting of the incarnate Son of God the true high priest, I mention the negative statements regarding the Old Testament Law which could not make the worshipers perfect. Hebrews 7:19 states:

For the Law made nothing perfect. Hebrews 9:9 confirms this more specifically, saying that the Old Testament animal sacrifices were not able to make the worshiper perfect in his conscience.

The third text, 10:1, repeats that the law with its animal sacrifices can never . . . make perfect those who draw near to worship.

We should add here 7:11, where not the verb but the noun is used. It says:

If this **making perfect** was through the levitical priesthood, . . . what need was there still for an other priest like Melchizedek to rise?

Of course the answer is: the levitical priest did not make perfect; therefore, there was such a need for an other priest of a different order.

The next positive text is 10:14, presenting the climactic result of Christ's perfection in the perfection of the believers:

. . . by one sacrifice he **has made perfect forever** those who are being made holy.

There are two more texts where the verb occurs. They flow from the last one, 10:14. First there is 11:40. It says that all the Old Testament believers, men and women of faith, of whom some are mentioned in Hebrews 11, did not receive what was promised:

because God had planned something better for us so that only together with us they would be made perfect.

This basically means that the Old Testament believers could also only be saved through the sacrifice of Christ Jesus.

The last occurrence is in 12:23 where we read about God's children in the new situation of the new covenant. Now that Christ has been made perfect and has made those who believe in Him perfect and is seated at God's right hand, now these believers have come and belong to "Mount Zion, the heavenly new Jerusalem, the city of the living God," with its angels, and with "the church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven," and with "God the Judge of all men" and with "Jesus the Mediator of a new covenant." In this heavenly Jerusalem are also

the spirits of righteous men made perfect.'

These spirits are the believers in Christ who died. When they came to faith in their life on earth, they were made perfect through Christ's sacrifice, so having access to God, and then they lived in faith by God's word, righteously.

Now, as spirits, they live with Christ in the presence of God.

Herewith we conclude our first section and come to our second point.

II. The Meaning of "making perfect."

We do two things here. We first look at the basic meaning of the verb and the adjective from which it is derived. Secondly, we deal with a number of different interpretations.

II.A The basic meaning

Many scholars begin their discussion of the term "perfection" with pointing to the basic idea of the Greek verb rendered by "making perfect." This basic idea is seen as making something complete, full, whole, bringing something to its end, to maturity, making that something completely answer to its purpose.

Making complete or full can be said with respect to a task, a product, a period of time, or one's own life time, so that it can mean either to grow up to maturity or to die. Making something complete or whole can be making something so that it is one complete whole that shows no defects or is lacking in nothing. So an Old Testament sacrificial animal had to be whole, without any defect.

**Perfection through suffering
is the basis for the
glorification, not the
glorification itself.**

Because of this broad and wide general basic idea, it is understandable that almost automatically questions are raised like "What kind of perfection is meant?", or "In which respect is there completion?" or "What purpose or goal is to be reached?" You will also understand that different interpretations have been proposed. I shall mention a few here, making use of the book of J.M. Scholer.² He first mentions three proposals which he rejects and then comes with his own, which cannot be maintained either.

II.B Different Interpretations.

Scholer lists the following:

- 1) the *moral-ethical* interpretation;
- 2) the *consecration* interpretation;
- 3) the *paideutic* interpretation; then he presents his own choice, namely,
- 4) the *glorification* interpretation; I also mention

- 5) the *vocational or qualification* interpretation and
- 6) the *sanctification* interpretation and, as the last and best one,
- 7) the *religious* interpretation.

1. The moral-ethical interpretation.

The basic idea of being perfect is here being morally completely good, so that one has little or no sin. This meaning is found in older, liberal and methodist traditions and the Holiness Movement. Since "making perfect" implies a growing process toward the state of being totally good, or a growing in moral character, most reject this meaning. Scholer says that "Christ was morally pure (perfect) from the beginning," and when 5:8 says that our Lord learned obedience, this does not mean that he was disobedient at some time. Christ was without sin always. Scholer's second ground for rejecting the moral interpretation is that the text does not say that Christ made Himself perfect but that God is here the subject. God made Him perfect. He sees here a parallel with 10:14 where it is said that Christ's sacrifice has made the believers perfect and not their own efforts, which also excludes a being morally perfect.³ The conclusion is that this moral-ethical meaning as such does not fit Christ who was always without sin; and it does not fit the believers in 10:14 either, for their perfection is a gift through Christ's sacrifice and not their own doing. This does not mean that a moral-ethical aspect is totally absent. The book of Job, for instance, when applying this term "perfect" to Job, and the Epistle of James clearly imply a being "whole" in relation to the neighbour as included in being "whole" in the relation with God. But the latter is the basic element.

2. The consecration interpretation.

This explains Christ's perfection as his consecration to the priesthood. It is done on the basis of an assumed analogy with the consecration of Aaron and his sons as priests for which the same verb was used in the Septuagint (LXX), the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. In Hebrew the expression is literally "make the hands full", namely, with an offering to be presented to the Lord. This full formulation "making the hands full" is seen as a technical term in the Old Testament for the consecration of a priest.⁴ On the basis of this LXX use of our verb, a number of scholars applied

this meaning to Christ. The fact that the text says that God perfected (consecrated) Him as priest through suffering has here this consequence that the consecration to the priesthood now is considered to have taken place *after* the sufferings on earth, when He entered heaven.

Scholer rejects this interpretation too. He does so on the following grounds:

- (1) The full LXX expression is [almost] only used in the Pentateuch and does not occur at all in Hebrews. Moreover, the consecration meaning does not fit in Hebrews. Christ is not consecrated into the priesthood through, and so after and on the basis of his sufferings. He was priest also in his sufferings, those sufferings being his sacrifice of obedience or his priestly task. Further, in Hebrews the meaning of this verb "to make perfect" is much more that of "to make complete" or "to bring to its goal."
- (2) In order to make the meaning "consecration" fit the context in its Hebrew occurrences, the proponents of this interpretation have to add elements which "approach or resemble more and more the formal usage" of the verb. Scholer gives several examples. Consecration is explained as "nearing God"; or as "that which creates the condition of 'standing before God'"; or as "qualifying" or "putting someone in the position in which he can come, or stand, before God." This latter point is a very important argument. These additional explanations come close to what I see as the meaning of our verb in Hebrews: presenting the qualifying condition in the religious sense of the word for standing in the presence of God.

The conclusion is that Christ did not become priest through, which implies after, his sufferings, since He was already priest when He suffered and so offered his Self-sacrifice to God. Therefore, this interpretation cannot be maintained either.

3. The paideutic interpretation.

This paideutic interpretation is taken over from the use of "making perfect" in Greek philosophical schools. Philosophical training and learning is there seen as making the student a perfect person, living a perfect life. In the light of the Bible it is obvious that this humanistic interpretation does not even need consideration in this context.

4. The glorification interpretation.

Scholer gives as basis for this interpretation the fact that 2:9 says that Christ was crowned with glory and honour because of his suffering of death, and that 2:10 speaks of Christ's being made perfect through suffering. Scholer sees these two statements as saying the same thing in a complementing parallel construction, so that "making perfect" is synonymous and identical with "being crowned with heavenly glory." He writes, "The position of glory at God's right hand clarifies the meaning of 'making perfect' when used of Christ." He adds, "Thus, for God to make Jesus 'perfect' was to 'crown Him with glory and honour', that is, to bring Him into his direct presence at his right hand." Later on he works this out further and writes, "to consider that God has led Jesus to the goal is therefore to understand his 'perfection' as his 'glorification' or entry into the heavenly holy of holies."

The term perfection or blamelessness indicates the condition people have to meet in order to be allowed to draw near to God and dwell in his holy presence.

Scholer sees the same stated in 5:9-10. He writes "The designation as a priest 'according to Melchizedek's order' occurred when he entered and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."⁵ In his elaboration, he states that the mention of perfection after the sufferings "suggests that the consequence of his death (i.e. suffering) was the simultaneous perfection or entry into God's presence and his designation as high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Coming to 10:14, where we read that believers have been made perfect once for all by the one sacrifice of Christ, Scholer writes that their having access to God must be seen as spiritual, as a matter of worship and prayer while they still are here on earth and not yet in heavenly glory. The full reality of their perfection-glorification is still future.⁶

We add here the remark that when 10:14 says that also the believers have been made perfect so that they now are perfect, Scholer and others who have the same view, are in trouble. On the basis of reality they explain: believers have not been glorified, that is, made



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perfect yet. However, the text says that they have been made perfect. The title of Scholer's book "Proleptic Priests" [priests in anticipation] expresses this difficulty. Here the meaning of the perfection of believers is no longer the same as the perfection of Christ. Having access in prayer to God's throne from the earth is not the same as being in God's presence in heaven. This change in meaning speaks against the glorification interpretation.

The basic argument from the text of Hebrews on which this glorification interpretation rests is the identification of "crowned with glory" in 2:9 with "making perfect" in 2:10. This identification is not necessary. There is a clear link between the two, but this connection can be explained better as basis and result: the perfection through suffering is the basis for the glorification, not the glorification itself (see below).

5. The vocational or qualificational interpretation.

Scholer discusses this as a form of the consecration interpretation, and therefore rejects it.⁷ I take it separately because it differs from consecration like preparation-to-become-qualified for an office differs from installation into that office. This vocational interpretation is presented by David Peterson, in his book *Hebrews and Perfection*. He rejects the consecration and (merely) glorification interpretations. The word "merely" is added here since

Peterson does include the glorification in the qualifying preparation of Christ for the exercise of the heavenly priesthood. Like Scholer, he views the suffering experience as God's way of preparing Christ for being a merciful high priest who can sympathize with the weaknesses of his brothers and sisters in their temptations since He Himself went through them.⁸ At the same time, the sufferings of Christ are preparation for the final act of obedience in his death-sacrifice at the cross, as the author presents it in 10:5-14. Peterson sees the preparation of Christ that qualifies Him for the office, on the one hand, in his suffering during his earthly life and, on the other hand, in his ascension to the heavenly throne, which is his glorification, according to the promising prophecy in Ps 110:4. This promise to the Son is that God appoints Him priest for ever, according to Melchizedek's order. "For ever" implies a heavenly priesthood. Peterson sees this aspect of Christ's priesthood clearly taught by the author of Hebrews in chapter 7. Peterson also describes the perfection of the believers as being qualified through Christ's acts (10:14).⁹ I can find myself to quite an extent in agreement with this qualification interpretation of Peterson, although I have difficulties with the glorification part. I would argue against this glorification part again with the same reason that the Lord's glorification is the result of the preparation unto becoming qualified through obedience to appear in God's presence. Moreover, the qualification interpretation has to be set within the framework of the religious interpretation, to be discussed later.

6. The sanctification interpretation.

There are scholars who identify "making perfect" and "sanctifying." Again, though there is a close link between the two, this does not justify their identification. It is true that 10:10 says that by the will of God "we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." This will was behind Christ's obedience in sacrificing Himself ("I have come to do Thy will"). It is further true that there is a parallel between this "made holy [sanctified] once for all through the sacrifice of the body of Christ" in verse 10 and the "made perfect once for all by the sacrifice of Christ" in verse 14. However a clear parallel does not imply identity. The basic meaning of holy is to be set

apart from the world of sin and belonging to God. This is first of all a place or position in the covenant. It is a being consecrated to God. H. Bavinck says, "The word holy is first of all used of all sorts of persons and things which have been separated [set apart] from the common use and have been placed in a special relation to God and his service."¹⁰ Just like we have to distinguish between "righteous" and "perfect", so we have to maintain the difference between "perfect" and "holy." Righteousness, holiness, and perfectness are closely related in meaning but indicate different aspects of our position in Christ before God. We may say that, in these three terms set beside each other, God presents to us a richer treasure of his revelation of Christ and our salvation through Him, then we would have in only one term. The three complement each other.

*God wanted to bring
many sons and daughters to
that state promised
in Psalm 8, the state of
being crowned with glory
and honour.*

7. The religious interpretation.

This religious interpretation means a being perfect, complete, whole, in the relation with God. We find this religious meaning a number of times in both the Old Testament and New Testament, though more with the adjective from which the verb is derived than with the verb itself. The Greek adjective has a very adequate equivalent in the Hebrew of the Old Testament. Explaining this Hebrew adjective for "perfect", B. Holwerda gives the following definition: it means "being innerly whole, not divided, not complicated, simple." According to Holwerda the sense is not so much moral or ethical but the word "has a very strong religious meaning, which it retains everywhere in Holy Scripture."¹¹

A few examples can show this. We take into account that our English Bibles often translate the Hebrew word not with "perfect" but with "blameless." I shall use both. In Genesis 6:9 Noah is called "righteous and perfect" (blameless); in Genesis 17:1 God makes his covenant with Abraham and says "Be perfect (blameless) before Me." In Job 1:1,8, and 2:3 Job is said to be "perfect (blameless) and upright"; and in 9:20 Job testi-

fies of himself that he is "righteous and perfect (blameless)." In Deuteronomy 18:13 God exhorts the people: "You shall be perfect (blameless) before Me." Important is further that the Hebrew adjective is used also for the animals which are sacrificed to the Lord: they have to be perfect, blameless, whole, without any defect (Lev 1:3,10, 3:1,6 etc. Compare here Heb 9:14 where it says that Christ offered Himself "unblemished" or "perfect" (blameless); the same adjective is used). In line with this, and significant, too, for our investigation, is Psalm 15:1-2. In verse 1, the question is asked, "LORD, who may dwell in your sanctuary?" And the answer is: "He whose walk is perfect (blameless), and who does what is righteous."

Our conclusion from this Old Testament use is that the term perfection or blamelessness indicates the condition people have to meet in order to be allowed to draw near to God and dwell in his holy presence, and that it is the condition animals have to meet in order to be used as sacrifice for the Lord.

As for the New Testament, here the word has the same meaning. Of special interest are Matthew 5:48, 19:21 and James 1:4.

In Matthew 5:48 the Lord tells his disciples that they have to be "perfect like their heavenly Father is perfect." This means that as God gives his good gifts of sun shine and rain (the foundation for building up one's life on earth) to those who serve Him and to those who do not, so his children, the believers in Christ must love and do good to their brothers and sisters and friends but also to their enemies and those who hurt them. In that way they are "whole", "not innerly divided", people of one piece. In Matthew 19:21 the Lord says to the rich young man who asked what he had to do to have eternal life and who said that he had kept the commandments, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come and follow Me." The man was still lacking in devotion to the Lord. He was still divided between God and his possessions. Doing away with them and helping the poor and following Christ would make his dedication to God and God's service complete, lacking in nothing, whole. In the same way James writes to his flock that they should rejoice in the trials they are going through because they strengthen faith and make it steadfast with the result (which is God's aim with

them) that they become “perfect and complete, lacking in nothing”, that is “whole” without defects, no longer innerly divided and unstable in faith (1:4,7-8). James’s message is here in short “through suffering to perfection” which is the same message as we have in 1 Peter 1:3-6 and Romans 5:1-5, as well as in Hebrews 12:4-11 where the author speaks of God’s fatherly discipline which, when received in faith, produces a “harvest of righteousness and peace.” Being righteous is very close in meaning to being perfect.

Our conclusion is that in the New Testament or covenant, belonging to God requires a life of full, complete, devotion to Him, with an undivided heart and lacking in nothing. It also teaches that God Himself works to that end in the life of the believers. Hebrews 12 says that God disciplines his children to build them up in their faith in a process of ongoing sanctification. In other words, the religious meaning of being “perfect” is very much present in both the Old and the New Testament. In a summarizing manner, we shall now apply this meaning to Hebrews and see that it clearly fits well in this Epistle.

III. Conclusion: The Religious Interpretation Applied in Hebrews to Us.

Here we are: sinners, people conceived and born in sin, lost, by nature children of wrath, condemnable and condemned in God’s judgment. However, God who created all things in the beginning through his eternal Son, did not want to leave his entire handiwork in that state of condemnation. He wanted to keep heaven and earth and renew his creation in a total, eternal, majestic renewal. In this renewal, He also wanted to bring man, that is, men and women, to their original destination of having dominion on earth over God’s creation. In other words, God wanted to bring many sons and daughters to that state promised in Psalm 8, the state of being crowned with glory and honour.

However, those many sons and daughters of God did not meet the condition of being perfect, without blemish, so that they were qualified to appear in God’s presence. Even God’s Old Testament people did not meet that condition. Sure, God had made his covenant with Israel. He had given them the administration of grace: priests and sacrifices for sin. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest could take one animal and put his hands on it, thereby load-

ing the sins of the people on it and send it away into the wilderness. And he could take the other animal and slaughter it and bring its blood into the Holy of Holies and sprinkle it on the mercy-seat. In a substitution ritual the animals could take the place of the people and lose their life so that the people could continue to live in covenant with God. But, really, this Old Testament temple ritual could be no more than shadow. It was not the real means of purification. Instead, it was a reminder of sin for the conscience of the worshipers, rather than a true cleansing from sins, from dead works. So, through the shadowy priests and sacrifices, the condition of perfection for coming into God’s presence could never be met. God had to provide a better way.

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In this context, it was proper for God to provide the true priest with his true sacrifice. It was proper for God to provide his Son and make Him perfect in the way of going through suffering, even unto death. That was the real effective substitutionary sacrifice (2:10). And God did what was proper for Him. He sent his Son. And in perfect willingness, the Son accepted this way of God for Him. He went through the sufferings, the temptations, in total, perfect, vicarious obedience for and in the place of his people. And in doing so, He proved Himself perfect to God. And through this proven perfection, He became the source of eternal salvation for God’s other sons and daughters. Having been made perfect, He ascended to the throne to continue his office there as Son and Priest (7:28).

Since Christ’s obedience in sacrificing Himself was vicarious obedience, He made at the same time, with that sacrifice, those other sons and daughters who believe in Him perfect with that perfection of his, as God’s pure gift of grace (10:14). We see here a clear parallel between the doctrine of God’s making (declaring) sinners righteous with the righteousness of Christ (justification) through the vicarious sacrifice of Christ in other

Epistles in the New Testament and this doctrine of God’s making sinners perfect with the perfectness of Christ through that same vicarious sacrifice.

So we see how rich we, believers, are with Christ. Clothed with the perfection of God’s Son, with his total, undivided, obedience, pure and complete and whole, we meet the condition for being allowed to draw near to God. We now can appear in God’s presence. That is why believers, when they die, can be taken up in the heavenly Jerusalem, in God’s presence. And that is also why here on earth they still go through a process of sanctification in which God through Christ leads them through the discipline of suffering and temptation towards more and more wholeness of faith in his service. Those who have been made fully perfect with the perfection of Christ are still sons and daughters in the process of being sanctified. But, great comfort, on this road God has given them their merciful and faithful High Priest in his mighty and glorious Son, the author and perfecter of faith through his Spirit and Word.

Indeed, how terrible it is to reject this Son and Priest. Rejecting Him means disobedience and losing not only the necessary requirements for access to God but also the access itself. Only wrath remains.

So let us hold fast the Apostle and High Priest of our confession to remain the household of God.

¹Prof. Geertsema delivered this address on the Twenty-Ninth Anniversary Meeting and the Twenty-Fourth Convocation of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches held on September 11, 1998. A fully annotated copy of this work will be published in *Koinonia*.

²John M. Scholer, *Proleptic Priests: Priesthood in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (JSNT Supplement Series 49; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 185-200.

³Scholer, *Proleptic Priests*, 187f.

⁴Examples are Exod 29:9, Lev 4:5, Num 3:3; even without “the hands” in Lev 21:10.

⁵*Proleptic Priests*, 84.

⁶Scholer, *Proleptic Priests*, 199.

⁷Scholer, *Proleptic Priests*, 193-194.

⁸Scholer, *Proleptic Priests*, 85, 89; David Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection: An Examination of the Concept of Perfection in the ‘Epistle to the Hebrews’* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) 63-66, 78, 193.

⁹Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 106-167.

¹⁰H. Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* (Kampen: Kok, 1928) II, 185.

¹¹B. Holwerda, *Dictaten, Deel I: Historia Revelationis Veterius Testamenti* (Kampen, 1954), 39-41.



By N.H. Gootjes

Principal's Report, 1998

Every year is a year of the grace of our Lord. This can also be said about the year that lies behind us. We are thankful to the Lord that He has given the strength to professors and students to study Reformed theology. We value the bond with the churches, as represented by our Board of Governors. And we are thankful for the prayerful support of the churches, both in Canada and the USA, and in Australia. We hope that under the blessing of the Lord the Theological College may be useful for the continuation of God's work in this world.

Every third year is a synod year for the Canadian Reformed Churches. Such years are important, not only for the churches themselves but also for their Theological College. Actually, thirty years ago Synod decided to establish the Theological College. Major policy decisions are made by synod, and this year was no exception. In this Principal's Report, we will present decisions of Synod Fergus, 1998, in several places, and think about the impact these will have on the College.

First of all we want to express our gratitude for the good relationship between Synod Fergus and the College of the churches. The faculty was received by Synod, both for an enjoyable and informal meal, and at an important and serious meeting. During this meeting it was decided to direct the Board to grant tenure to Dr. J. De Jong and Dr. N.H. Gootjes. The principal, on behalf of the Senate, expressed gratitude for this decision. He emphasized that in our post-modern, anti-dogmatic time the College should maintain its confessional stance.

New governors were appointed to replace governors who finished their term. Outgoing governor br. Karl Veldkamp served as chairman of the Finance and Property Committee, and the plans for the expansion of the College with a Library building were developed under his leadership. We thank him for the work he did for us. Of the ministers, Rev. C. Van Spronsen came to the end of his nine years' term. We thank him for his supervising work and encouraging



Left to right: Dr. C. Van Dam, Dr. N.H. Gootjes, Prof. J. Geertsema, Dr. J. de Jong.

words, and also for sending his son to the College! We hope to continue under a Board, with the new governors Rev. J. Moesker, Br. W. Oostdijk and Br. W. Smouter. Synod gave the governors important work to do. May the Lord grant them wisdom in fulfilling their mandate.

"We hope that under the blessing of the Lord the Theological College may be useful for the continuation of God's work in this world."

In this connection we should also mention another Synod, of the Free Reformed Churches in North America, held in May 1998. For over ten years, these churches sent their theological students to the College for theological training. Synod decided, however, that they ought to implement their own theological training for their students for the ministry. One of their students will complete his studies at the College, the other one will be transferred to another

seminary. From our side, we acknowledge their right to do so. At the same time, we question the necessity and regret this development.

Students

The number of students at the Theological College appears to remain stable over the years. Four students have successfully reached the finish line and will graduate tonight. Mr. Doug Vandeburgt has successfully passed his preparatory exam and is waiting for a call from the churches. Two other graduates have received preaching consent. Mr. Marc Jagt has been speaking an edifying word in the Canadian Reformed Church at Ottawa during the summer months, and is planning to make himself available for call. Mr. John Smith has enrolled at the University of Toronto and is doing Septuagint Studies. Mr. Richard Bultje will receive the Diploma of Theological Studies. He has accepted an appointment to co-ordinate an urban mission project in the greater Hamilton area.

Two students have left us, one discontinued his theological studies, the other was transferred to another seminary. Three new students were admitted,



Left to right: Mr. Richard Bultje, Mr. John Smith, Mr. Marc Jagt, Mr. Doug Vandeburgt.

Mr. Walter Richard Geurts, of the Canadian Reformed Church of Abbotsford, B.C.; Mr. Wade Van Bostelen, of Providence Canadian Reformed Church of Edmonton, Alberta, and Mr. Julius Marnix VanSpronsen of the Canadian Reformed Church of Surrey, B.C. Mr. Edwer Dethan could be readmitted after completing the TOEFL requirements.

Here we should mention a new program that has already affected some of our students and that undoubtedly will affect more: the Pastoral Proficiency Program. After having been prepared and adopted by the Senate and the Board of Governors, a proposal was presented to Synod Fergus to add a Pastoral Proficiency Program to the theological study at the College. It consists of special lectures and field training. The program would give students an introduction and an exposure to situations they may encounter in the ministry. Synod made a cautiously positive decision. It did not make this program mandatory but charged the College to proceed with the components of this program on a trial basis for three years.

As usual, the students are ahead of the game. Two have done an internship during the summer months. We are considering the first reactions to this program. We look forward to more responses from both the students and the churches so that we can evaluate whether it will facilitate their entry into the ministry.

The teaching and other work

Reporting on the work of the professors, we are always faced with a particular difficulty. Their main work is the

preparation and giving of lectures. Much time and effort goes into that, but what can I report about it? When I merely state here that the lectures were regularly given, this means that the College did fulfil its ministry. We thank our heavenly God and Father that He gave health and strength for doing our work to all of us.

There are, however, a number of special lectures to be mentioned.

Dr. F.G. Oosterhoff gave a series of lectures on Postmodernism as part of the Church History course. Her regular contributions to the lectures on church history are much appreciated.

Further, four special lectures were organized. Dr. J.P. Roberts of the Juan Calvino Seminary in Mexico City, gave a special lecture on Missions (Oct. 24, 1997) and Dr. N.D. Kloosterman, professor at Mid America Reformed Seminary, gave a lecture on 'Law and Gospel in Christian Ethics and Preaching' (Nov. 14, 1997). Dr. M. Helder spoke to the students about 'The Relationship of Science to the Christian Faith' (Feb. 12, 1998). Dr. J. Faught, a family physician, discussed with the students the relationship between medical care givers and pastors (April 7, 1998).

We can mention special activities of the teaching staff.

Dr. C. Van Dam visited the churches in British Columbia. He addressed the congregations on the topic: 'What is Worship? Some Biblical Principles of Public Worship.' For the office bearers conference in the Fraser Valley he gave a speech on 'Where is the Old Testament Deacon? Taking Care of the Poor then and now.' He published about 65

lexical articles in *The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*.¹

Prof. J. Geertsema spoke to the Office Bearers of Ontario on 'Pastoral Care for the Youth in a Postmodern Time' (Oct. 1997). He attended academic conferences at Queen's University (Kingston, Ontario) and one at McMaster University (Hamilton, Ontario). At the first conference the topics concentrated on the Pharisees, the papers at the other dealt with the New Testament parables.

Dr. J. De Jong published the book *Credo*.² It is a welcome addition which can be used for pre-confession classes. He attended a conference on Ph. Melancthon, at Calvin Theological Seminary (Grand Rapids) in October 1997.

Dr. J. Faber published an article on the theologian William Heyns.³ He and Dr. N.H. Gootjes attended the International Calvin Conference, held in Seoul, Korea, in August, 1998. At the Academic Conference organized to celebrate the opening of the new Seminary building of the Kosin churches, in Chon-An, Korea, Dr. Faber gave a lecture on Word and Spirit in Calvin.

Dr. Gootjes also attended the meeting of the I.C.R.C. 1997, in Seoul, Korea, and gave a lecture and a chapel address to the students of Kosin Seminary during that period. His lecture on the sacrament as sign and seal was published in *Radix*.⁴

The College Building

Turning to the College building and the Library, we mention the work done by the Women's Savings Action. This nation-wide organization provides us with the means to buy books and so to keep in contact with theological scholarship. We are very thankful for what all those local representatives and their national committee do. And please, continue!

We also may thankfully mention here the work done by Synod Fergus. Already for a number of years it was felt that the library facilities of the Theological College were reaching their capacity. Synod Abbotsford 1995 requested the Board of Governors to come with a detailed proposal for expansion. After much consideration and consultation, a proposal for the reconstruction of the existing building and the addition of a library building was presented to Synod Fergus. This Synod noted the fact that the plans were well received in the churches, and decided that the building

could go ahead, provided 80% of the money needed had been pledged.

The College community is very thankful for this decision. Tonight we stand at the beginning of a funding program for the building. We are convinced the College has a good place within the Canadian Reformed churches, and has proven its value by training most of their ministers. Its library is a very important tool for study. We need to stay in touch with the theological discussion world-wide, and to be rooted in the history of the church. A theology that has no interest in its past will not know in what direction it should go, and a theology that has no interest in the present will only repeat itself. Firmly anchored to its confessional basis, Reformed theology can interact with the voices that are heard today. For doing that we need a well equipped library. We hope and pray that the drive for the expansion

will enable professors, ministers and students to maintain and proclaim God's Word today.

This project will require the effort of many. We think of the local churches where the money is collected. With the support of all the churches, both here and in Australia, we hope to reach our goal. We think of the governors who have to supervise the execution of the plans. We think of our office staff, Catharine Mechelse and our librarian, Margaret VanderVelde. Much of the administration of the financial campaign will have to be done by Catharine, and the books, including the moving of our library, are the special responsibility, or headache, of Margaret. I hope that you two will be kept very busy with the preparation for the addition in the coming year. Br. and sr. Post will have to cope with more dust and dirt than


usual. In all, we are looking forward to an exciting year.

We know that all our effort will produce nothing without the blessing of the Lord. May He protect and guide us all in the coming year, so that all our work, in its own small way, may contribute to the continuation of God's work in this world.

¹W. Van Gemeren, ed. *The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (5 vols.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997).

²J. De Jong, *Credo: An Overview of the Church's Confession as Summarized in the Three Forms of Unity* (Winnipeg: Premier Publishing, 1997).

³J. Faber, 'William Heyns as Covenant Theologian' in W.H. Neuser et al. eds. *Calvin's Books* (Festschrift Peter De Klerk; Heerenveen: J.J. Groen en Zoon, 1997) 301-314.

⁴N.H. Gootjes, 'Teken en zegel' in *Radix* 24.1 (March 1998) 2-20. 



Dr. J. Visscher, Chairman of the Board of Governors.



Senate, governors and graduates.



Singing Ps. 134: "The Lord now bless you from above . . ." L-R: Mr. Richard Bultje, Mr. John Smith, Mr. Doug Vandeburgt, Mr. Mark Jagt.



Mr. Marc Jagt speaking on behalf of the graduating students.

Presentation of the Women's Savings Action

at the College Evening – September 11, 1998

Mr. President, Members of the Board and Faculty, Graduates, Brothers and Sisters

The annual gift of the Women's Savings Action for the library of the Theological College is a team effort. Being part of a team is always exciting. Anticipation fills the air. How will we do this time around? We would like to consider three aspects of this team effort.

1. the players
2. the game plan
3. the score

1. First of all, let me tell you who the players are. You are the players! You are the ones who every year again make it possible for us to make our annual pledge for the library of the Theological College. Some of you belong to small congregations; others are part of larger congregations. Some of you have given tins of change, others, dollar bills and still others have written cheques. Some of you live in Ontario and may even be able to make it to almost every College evening, but many of you live across this beautiful land and even beyond, even all the way in Australia! Some of you have been part of the Women's Savings Action since it was first established, others are first time donors.

Some of you have played a special role in our team effort, not only with a donation of money but also with a donation of time and energy as a representative or as part of her team to collect and count the donations. Some representatives are doing their work for the first time; others have many years of experience; some have even been involved from the very beginning.

Yes, there are many different players on the Women's Savings Action team. We each have a position on this team. We are all involved, some with more responsibility than others, but we cannot do it on our own. We are dependent on everyone doing their part. We may be separated by many miles, but one thing unites us all – enthusiasm for our

*Representatives
of the Women's
Saving Action,
Mrs. C. Zietsma,
Mrs. J. Van Dam
and
Mrs. L. Hofsink*



common goal. We are all dedicated to do our best. We are all united around the same game plan, the same goal. Our game plan is a very special one. What is our game plan?

Joanne Van Dam

2. Yes, we have a game plan! As women of the church we have been honoured to support and encourage the growth of the library for almost thirty years by giving an annual gift. This gift really is the main source of funds for the regular purchase of books and periodicals. As you can see, our goal to support the training for the ministry is very important. As committee we ask for your continued help in accomplishing this very important goal.

May I interrupt myself for a moment. For some days this past summer I was privileged to enjoy the grandeur and beauty of the Canadian Rockies. I was fascinated by the wide gravelly riverbeds with whole islands of purple-red fireweed growing on them. Willowy swamps and extensive gravel beds everywhere were evidence of where the river had flowed in the past. It was still the same river, but growth and erosion had changed its course. To me it was a powerful image. The Creator, our faith-

ful covenant God also engineers all the circumstances of the river of our personal and our church life. Trusting his wise leadership and looking to his gracious provision we can joyfully take up our task.

In their tasks tradesmen and professions alike realize the need to stay up to date. So too, our College library needs to be up to date and offer professors and students the latest information available for preparing lectures and writing papers. As women of the church we have been given this opportunity to support the growth of the library so that its users can show us treasures new and old from God's Word.

As Women's Savings Action we are excited that the plans for expansion are becoming more concrete. We are grateful to be able to help with the financing of this wonderful project – to provide facilities for a continually updated library. As Committee then, we encourage everyone to take a very active part in this team effort to reach this very important goal.

Liz Hofsink

3. So, what is our score? How did we do? Well, the Women's Savings Action is not a competition. (Not, as my

husband wanted me to say, like Mark Somebody breaking Roger Whoever's home run record.) No, we are all part of the same team; we are all winners. We always win when we give of our time, of our money and give cheerfully, so pleasing God.

Receiving the Women's Savings Action mail in our personal mail box is exciting – for me at least. We get a lot of mail at our house, a lot of it is junk mail, sometimes, we even have a little argument about who should pick up the mail (at our suburban superbox).

Of course, everyone always wants to know what was in the mail and when

it turns out to be another stack of Women's Savings Action envelopes only, collective groans can be heard, "Only Women's Savings Action stuff? Again?"

Well, if it wasn't for all those "agains" we would not be on the program tonight. Our team effort has paid off. Many varying amounts have once again added up to one large sum. During the past year we collected a total of \$28,030.55 including \$1,871.18 from Australia. Besides our regular amount for the purchase of books and periodicals, we have, over the last number of years, also been able to set aside \$80,000 for expansion,

some of which has already been transferred to the expansion fund.

We would like to end our presentation with a sincere thank you for your faithful support, for doing your part on the Women's Savings Action team. Thank you all for your enthusiasm and dedication. More than anyone, we thank our precious Lord and faithful Father for his abundant blessing. All glory be to him.

Mr. Principal, I would like to present you with a pledge for \$25,000 for the coming year.

Carla Zietsma 

COLLEGE CORNER

By N.H. Gootjes



College Evening



Mr. W. Smouter, governor, announcing the College expansion project.

It is a good custom to start off a new year at the Theological College with the College Evening. We all know, of course, that the College is supported by the churches with their interest, prayers and donations. On the occasion of the College Evening, however, this interest can be seen. We thank all those who came out to show their support. We can include, here, the letters that were received from far away places: in Canada (Taber Canadian Reformed Church), the Netherlands (the grandparents of Doug Vandeburgt) and Australia (The Free Reformed Church of Legana, Tasmania,

and the Deputies Training for the Ministry of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia).

The featured speaker was Prof. J. Geertsema. It is well known that he is making special study of the Epistle to the Hebrews. He published an article on the difficult text, Hebrews 2:13a.¹ This time he concentrated on the theme of perfection, which is a dominant theme in this epistle. In Hebrews 2:10 it says that God should make perfect Jesus Christ, the Author of our salvation. This statement is difficult to understand. How can Jesus Christ be made perfect? Was He not perfect all along? We hope that Prof. Geertsema will publish his speech in *Clarion*.

Another important part of the College Evening is the graduation. Three students received the Master of Divinity degree, and one student the Diploma of Theological Studies. We hope that these students may soon find their place in the churches. A new element at the College Evening was "a word of thanks" on behalf of the graduating students. Before these words of thanks were spoken, several humorous episodes of life at the College were presented.

I should also mention here the musical interlude. Rebecca and Richelle Kruisselbrink treated the audience to a

spirited performance of two variations on Bach's Inventions, on organ and piano.

Library

The library of the Theological College always has a special place on the program of the College Evening in the presentation of the Women's Savings Action. The national committee, consisting of Mrs. E. Hofsink, Mrs. J. Van Dam and Mrs. C. Zietsma, together presented the donations collected in churches in Canada, the USA and in Australia. They compared their work with a team which trains and works for the best results. The card I received said the following:

We hereby pledge \$25,000 – to the Library of the Theological College, for the year '98-'99, thankful that it will be used in God's service.

The whole college community is very grateful to all those who contributed so generously, to the local representatives who initiate the yearly collection, and to the three ladies who must spend many hours coordinating and supervising this work. If the whole Women's Savings Action is to be compared with a team sport, then these ladies are the coaches who set up and direct the game plan. A big THANK YOU! for all of you.

Our growing collection of books requires a larger library, with better facilities for storage and study. Synod Fergus, 1998 looked at the plans and agreed that an expansion of the library was required. It decided that a library building should be added to the existing facilities, provided the necessary funding is in place. Br. W. Smouter presented the outlines of financial action, and mentioned that a committee of representatives from different provinces would organize this funding program.

At the College, we are very excited about this development. We pray that the money may come in so that the plans can be realized.

Newcomers

Three students have been admitted to the theological studies at the College: Walter Geurts, Wade Van Bostelen and Julius Van Spronsen. Edwer Dethan could be readmitted after upgrading his knowledge of English. We are looking forward to teaching this Freshman Year of four students.

Although it is not that far yet, we hope to welcome yet another newcomer during this year. Prof. Geertsema is scheduled to have a sabbatical during the Spring semester of 1999. He hopes to use this time for study on a special project. I would not be surprised if this project has to do with the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Rev. G.H. Visscher, of the church of Burlington-Waterdown, has been asked to take over the New Testament lectures in the absence of Prof. Geertsema. We are grateful to the consistory




Richelle Kruisselbrink playing the grand piano.

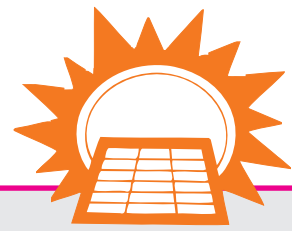


Rebecca Kruisselbrink playing the organ with sister Renee helping out with the stops.

of this church for giving permission to their minister to be freed from pastoral work in the congregation from December 1998 to May 1999.

'J. Geertsema, "Ik zal op Hem vertrouwen" in Hebreeën 2:13a', in *Een Sprekend Begin: Opstellen aangeboden aan Prof. Drs. H.M. Ohmann*, Kampen: Van den Berg, 1993. 





By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—"

Ephesians 2:8

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

When we were little babies, most of us were brought into church to be baptized. With that we became members by baptism of the church. As a result we belonged to that church. When we were old enough to be able to sit still for a while, our parents took us to church on Sundays. When we were older yet, they sent us to Catechism classes, and we learned from the minister what it means to be a member of the Canadian Reformed Church, and what we confess as members of the church. Then, when we were able to understand and remember what the church is all about, most of us professed our faith in a worship service, and with that we became confessing members of the church. It is something to be thankful for when young people receive the desire in their hearts to openly confess their faith. It is not their own doing; it is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Long before we were born, the Lord was already working on us. He gave us to our parents. Also our baptism was God's doing. That baptism is not something our parents, or the minister did; it was God's doing. He established a covenant with his people, and He wanted us to be one of them. Therefore He set us apart, and He showed that by placing the seal of baptism on our foreheads. From then on we were his forever.

Nothing that ever happened in our lives was as important as the baptism that we received when we were babies. We did not do anything to be baptized. We were helpless little babies. We cannot remember a thing of it. We did not choose it either. Nor did we deserve it, for we had never done anything in our life yet. But God chose us, out of grace. He mentioned us by name, and He accepted us as his children for the rest of our lives.

What do we do with that baptism? Do we think, "It does not count now anymore, for in the meantime we confessed our faith, and that is more important?" That is not true, for when someone comes to faith in the Lord at a later age, he/she does not just confess his/her faith, but he/she also receives the holy sign of baptism. Because that baptism is God's sign and seal to us that we belong to him. We carry that sign with us, even though from the outside nobody can see it. He opened his arms to us and, out of grace, accepted us in his care. It is *He* who established the covenant with us.

In every covenant, the members have to abide by the rules and the regulations; every member has the right to certain privileges, as long as he keeps the obligations. The Lord has made those obligations clear to us: we have to serve Him, and love Him, and keep his commandments. We all know that we are unable to keep those obligations. We confess that we are "conceived and born in sin", and that we are "inclined to all evil and to hate God and our neighbours." How then can we continue in that covenant, if we do not abide by the rules? Is the Lord going to break his covenant with us?

No, the Lord established his covenant with us, He will *never* break it. For He included his Son in it. The Son is our Saviour, He died for our sins, and through Him the Lord accepts us, in spite of our sins and shortcomings. Through Him all the privileges of the covenant: the promises of an everlasting future with Him, are there for us. As long as we go to Him and confess our sins, He is there for us and takes care of us.

So what else can we do than to sing and shout with joy? What else can we do than to go on our knees and thank Him? When through the work of the Holy Spirit all these things are established in our minds, we will be able to live a life of thankfulness. And although the water of our baptism has long been washed off our foreheads, it should still be visible on us that we belong to Him. It should show in the way we live, and behave ourselves. It also should show in the way we accept challenges that are placed on our way: when we have to deal with illnesses, handicaps, loneliness, poverty, disappointments, frustrations, or any other difficulties that the Lord places on our way. When we remember how great a privilege it is that the Lord made his covenant with us, and all the beautiful promises that are awaiting us as a result, then we can accept whatever comes to us here in this life. If we accept all our challenges with a believing heart, we may even show others the way to Him.

We thank the Lord for the covenant which He established with Abraham, and which He continued with Abraham's descendants all through the ages. We thank the Lord that He chose us to be members of that covenant. We thank the Lord that He gave us his Son, Who makes it possible for us to live up to the obligations so that we may look for Him.

*He is the Lord, our God unfailing,
His judgments everywhere prevailing.
He will remember and uphold
His covenant made in days of old.
The steadfast words He did command
A thousand generations stand.*

Psalms 105:3

Birthdays in November:

3: Wilma Van Drongelen

306-33375 Mayfair Ave., Abbotsford BC, V2S 1P4

Wilma is going to be 41 this year. Happy Birthday, Wilma!

Until next month,

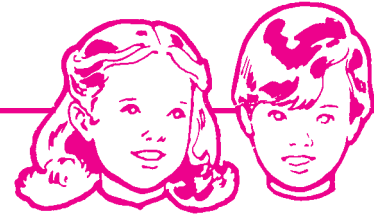
Mrs.R.Ravensbergen

7462 Reg.Rd. 20, RR #1, Smithville, ON L0R 2A0

e-mail: RWRavens@netcom.ca

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty

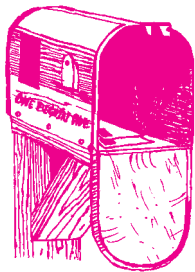


Dear Busy Beavers

How are you enjoying school again? Are you all enjoying new teachers, possibly new friends, maybe even a new school? I know that you will all do a great job at school, because you know that you have to use the talents which God has given you to the best of your ability. Make sure you work hard and get good marks during this year.

To those who wish to become Busy Beavers, please write me a letter asking to join the Club. Include in your letter how old you are and when your birthday is. And I also have to have your address to be able to send you a membership card. I'm waiting patiently to hear from you.

Love from Aunt Betty



FROM THE MAILBOX

Thank you to *Ashley Schutten* for your letter and picture of your new pool table. I hope that you look after your baby brother for your Mom, since she must be quite busy. And having a new pool must be lots of fun too. Would you like to become a Busy Beaver, Ashley? If you do, you'll have to write to me and tell me your address, because

you didn't do that with this letter, and I need to send you a Membership Card. Bye for now.

Thanks also to *Jessica Bartels* for your letter. You have a nice big family, don't you? Where do you fit into the picture? I'm glad that you enjoy doing the puzzles that are put into Our Little Magazine. Why don't you send me something to put into it next time, Jessica? Would you also like to become a Busy Beaver? But you have to send me your address so that I can send you a Membership Card too. Till next time.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Suzanne DeHaas*. Thank you for your letter. You must have a pretty busy life what with being 10 and having two nephews and another one coming. Don't you think they are a lot of fun? When I first became an aunt, I was just older than you. And you must have a great time with all your animals – bunnies, a lamb, chickens, fish, a dog and a cat. They must keep you very busy, because, I guess, you have to look after them. Write again, won't you, Suzanne?

Thank you to *Cassandra Vandenbos* for your letter and puzzle. Don't you think it is exciting that your Grandpa and Grandma have gone to Australia? Do you hope that one day you can also go to Australia to visit your cousins? I'm glad you get lots of tomatoes off your cherry tomato plant; they're really delicious, aren't they? Bye for now, Cassandra.

Suzanne also put a text on her letter for me:

In all your ways, acknowledge Him and He will make straight your paths. Proverbs 3:6

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

3	Richelle Kruisselbrink	20	Leo Knol
4	Laura Kanis	25	Colette Vandenbos
8	Marja Vandekamp	27	Suzanna Vegter
10	Florence Bouma	28	Michael Janssens
10	Nelene Brouwer	29	Michelle Dekker
13	Joel Jelsma		

UNSCRAMBLE THE NAMES

By Busy Beaver *Cassandra Vandenbos*

- PEETR _____
 SEJSU _____
 AHS HA _____
 EAUMSL _____
 AIASC _____
 JCOBA _____
 AMJES _____
 HNAHNA _____

THE LORD JESUS AT THE CENTRE OF THINGS

Fill in the words with the clues to find a title given the LORD Jesus Christ. The dashes and boxes show the number of letters in each answer-word. The boxes will make up the answer. Use the King James Version Bible.

- 'Woe unto thee,! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida!'
 _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
- '... and when he had scourged Jesus he him to be crucified.'
 _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
- 'Is a brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed?'
 _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
- 'I am the of life.'
 _ _ _ _ _
- '... for I am and lowly in heart.'
 _ _ _ _
- '... be ye therefore wise as serpents, and as doves.'
 _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
- 'Be ye, therefore, even as your Father which is in heaven is'
 _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
- 'But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed among the wheat.'
 _ _ _ _ _ _ _