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# Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE



*The Theological College Evening 2003*

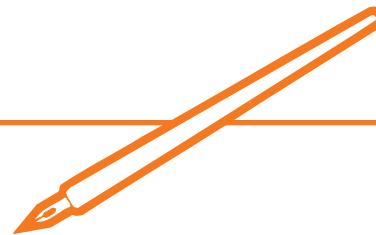
## INSIDE:

- *“Liberation” in the Dutch Sister Churches*
- *“Gratitude is the right kind of attitude”*
- *Prayer: the Chief Exercise of Faith*





By N.H. Gootjes



## “Liberation” in the Dutch Sister Churches

### An appeal

The message I received among my email messages was printed in huge bold letters: **Schism in Liberated Churches.**<sup>1</sup> These so called “Liberated Churches” are our sister churches in The Netherlands, the *Gereformeerde (Vrijgemaakte)* churches. This federation of churches is much larger than our churches in Canada. According to their 2003 Yearbook, the confessing members number 78,405, and the total membership stands at 126,453. In comparison, those who have “liberated” themselves recently are a very small minority: in all about thirty persons met separately. However, we should not ignore this development because of the small number of people who started it. It would not be right to judge this movement by its numbers. Important are the issues which led to this new liberation.

*In 2003, the term “Liberation” is used again.*

This separation from the Reformed Churches is caused by the decisions made by Synod Zuidhorn 2002. And by calling it a “Liberation,” those who initiated this movement emphasize that their action is a parallel to the Liberation of 1944. This Liberation was an important event in the history of the Reformed churches in The Netherlands, when Reformed people refused to believe and obey a number of synodical decisions made between 1942 and 1944, particularly those dealing with covenant and election. In 2003, the term “Liberation” is used again. By choosing to use this name, the intention of this movement is clearly expressed: The churches in 1944 had to liberate themselves from being forced to accept synodical statements. In a similar way, the Reformed churches in 2003 have to liberate themselves from the decisions of Synod 2002.

When we look up what these issues were in 1944, we find that a number of important issues go together. According to the official *Act of Liberation*, the Reformed people in The Netherlands identified two main issues they rejected:

- they liberated themselves from the doctrinal statements concerning presumed regeneration, as determined by Synod;
- they liberated themselves from the decision of Synod to suspend and even depose from office many ministers and elders, who disagreed with those doctrinal statements.<sup>2</sup>

Two things came together in this statement. First, Synod required all members to believe and preach a doctrinal statement on regeneration and baptism which had no basis in Scripture; second, Synod required that the ministers and elders who did not submit to this, would be put out of their office. The question is now whether the situation caused by Synod 2002 can be compared to the situation of 1944?

### The complaints

The reason for the call of liberation in 2003 was the fact that the consistory of a local church (Berkel - Rodenrijs) had ratified the decisions made by the Synod Zuidhorn 2002. In the opinion of those who seceded, the consistory should have rejected several unscriptural decisions. When the consistory instead accepted these decisions, the church had become a pluralistic church. And with “pluralistic” they mean that the church allows false teaching. The church had allowed both the truth and the lie to be taught in the churches. Consistory, by adopting the decisions of Synod, would make the lie as legitimate in the church as the truth.

Several issues are mentioned in support of this claim. First of all, a brother in the church who worked on the Lord’s Day, was elected in the office of elder. Protesting with the consistory did not help; the brother was ordained in his office. Another issue concerned the songs to be sung in the worship service. Synod had allowed hymns from hymnal which had its origin in other churches for use during the worship. In the opinion of the complainants, these hymns deviate from the Word of God. And a third issue is that the Synod had allowed local churches to pursue further unity with two other federations of churches, the *Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerk* and the *Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerk*.

*The question is, however, whether these concrete instances warrant the judgment that our Dutch sister churches can no longer be seen as churches of Jesus Christ.*

On the basis of these objections, the statement draws the conclusion that the Reformed Churches (liberated) are no longer unified in the truth. These churches have become a church in which truth and lie have equal rights. And those who signed the document no longer want to be responsible

for these sins. They seek renewal, another liberation from synodical decisions.

There is no doubt that these concerns have to do with weighty issues. Already in the New Testament, the first day of the week received a special place. The same New Testament speaks of songs of the church, characterizing them as "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" (Eph 5:19). And it is true that the unity in the churches should be a unity based on agreement in the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints (Eph 4:3-6). The question is, however, whether these concrete instances warrant the judgment that our Dutch sister churches can no longer be seen as churches of Jesus Christ.

In the statements I read, I could not find anyone dealing with the confessional position of the Reformed churches on the Lord's Day. Only one of our confessions discusses this, the Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day 38. However, in the material I saw, I could not find a reference to this Lord's Day in order to prove that the condemned position went against our confessional position. It should also be noted that the General Synod has appointed a study committee to investigate how to maintain the fourth commandment today.

Concerning the many hymns, it is true that the hymnal has its origin from outside the Reformed churches. The point, however, is the content. I read that objections have been raised against about 100 of the 117 hymns. In defence of this hymnal it was remarked that the critics interpreted the texts unfavourably, looking for discrepancies with Scripture. However, when these songs are read properly, they contain nothing which is contrary to God's Word. From here, it cannot be judged which position is correct; further study is needed, and will no doubt be made.

## What's inside?

Early this past summer we started to hear about a group of church members who "liberated" themselves from one of our sister churches in The Netherlands. At first glance, it sounded like a parallel situation to the Liberation of 1944. Dr. N.H. Gootjes analyzes what is happening in this specific situation and he draws some important conclusions.

In this issue we have a number of articles dealing with the convocation and opening of our Theological College in Hamilton for a new season of study. It is clear that the Lord has blessed the College with a diversity of students. You will also read about the serious illness of Dr. J. DeJong. May the Lord be with Dr. DeJong, his family and the College community.

We confess in the Heidelberg Catechism that prayer is the most important part of the thankfulness which God requires of us. Rev. T. Lodder examines the exercise of prayer in the light of John Calvin's teachings.

We have the continuation and conclusion of Reuben Bredenhof's article on "Religious Toleration." We have a press release of Classis Ontario West where we read that student David de Boer was declared eligible for call. Finally, we have our regular columns, *Treasures New and Old* and *Ray of Sunshine*.

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Concerning the attempts for union with two other federations, the first consideration is that unity among the true believers is an important issue which deserves our support in work and prayer. It will require much discussion, thought and prayer. In these discussions, the doctrinal basis of the churches will be a crucial issue. Do all parties concerned believe the Scriptures as the word of God, and do they all maintain the same confessions in which the main doctrines of Scripture are summarized? Every generation and every church in every continent knows the temptations to make the gospel easy and smooth, and we have to learn time and again that we should not be wiser than God whose wisdom is deep and whose judgments are unsearchable (Rom 11:33).

*There is a great difference between the causes for the Liberation of 1944 and the unrest in 2003. The movement today cannot be compared to the Liberation.*

The daily struggle to believe and live according to God's word goes on in The Netherlands, as well as in Canada. We all have to watch out for being weak in our faith and slack in our life. And we have to work and pray that we may be faithful, both in The Netherlands and in Canada.

#### Another liberation?

The question, however, is whether a new liberation is warranted at this point. That has not been demonstrated in the material I have seen. Think of article 29 of the Belgic Confession where several valid reasons for separating are listed. Can we say that the churches in The Netherlands have assigned to themselves more authority than the Word of God? Can we say that they do not administer the sacraments as Christ has commanded them? Do our sister

churches persecute those who live holy lives according to the word of God, and who rebuke them for their sins?

At the beginning of this article, the *Act of Liberation* was mentioned. This movement calls itself a new Liberation. But it has not been proven that the decision of Synod forced the church people to submit themselves to false doctrine and to a distorted celebration of the sacraments. Nor have we seen that wrong decisions by Synod were enforced with church discipline and deposition of ministers. There is a great difference between the causes for the Liberation of 1944 and the unrest in 2003. The movement today cannot be compared to the Liberation.

This does not mean that there are no concerns about the Dutch churches. Our own Synod Neerlandia 2001 adopted a lengthy statement, in which several concerns were mentioned.<sup>3</sup> That is proper. As churches, we can and should encourage one another to maintain the complete doctrine of God's Word without weakening it.

Let us continue to praise God for the great works He did and does in this world. Let us pray that the Lord be gracious to the Reformed churches, both in The Netherlands and in Canada. And let us follow the Spirit as He leads us in continued obedience to his holy will.

<sup>1</sup> The article originally appeared in the *Reformatisch Dagblad*, September 5, 2003. On the same day, the *Nederlands Dagblad* published a similar article entitled: *Oproep tot Vrijmaking in Berkel en Rodenrijs*.

<sup>2</sup> C. Van Dam (ed.) *The Liberation: Causes and Consequences* (Winnipeg: Premier Publishing, 1995); for the summary, see 74.

<sup>3</sup> *Acts General Synod Neerlandia, Alberta 2001*, 91-95, see esp. 95.



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By W.B. Slomp

## “Gratitude is the right kind of attitude”

Psalm 100

At this time of the year we celebrate Thanksgiving. But, what exactly do we give thanks for? You may say, that is obvious, we give thanks for the crop; we give thanks for the fact that the Lord God has provided for us for another year. None of us in the past year had to go hungry. None of us had to go without proper shelter or clothing.

And indeed, that is true. Those are the things we give thanks for. But if that is all we give thanks for then we are not any different from the rest of the world. For that is what many in the world around us give thanks for as well.

But there is a lot more to thanksgiving. Psalm 100 shows that. This psalm shows that thanksgiving is a way of life for the believer. Gratitude is an attitude. It is the right kind of attitude over against God.

This psalm begins by stating, “Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth!” You can liken this first verse to a single trumpet blast that calls the worshippers of the Lord together from all the corners of the land. It is a call to worship.

This psalm, of course, was written at the time of the Old Testament. At that time there were no churches. The central place of worship was in Jerusalem. That is where the temple was. People would come from all over Israel at certain times of the year to worship there and to bring sacrifices. There were many types of sacrifices that the people made. One of the sacrifices they would make would be a thank or a peace offering.

In the heading of the psalm it says that it is a psalm for giving thanks. It

uses the Hebrew word *shalom*. This word is still used by the Jews as a word of greeting. It is a wish of well-being, good health, peace.

The thank offering is a gift to the glory of God and for the good health of the donor. It was the only sacrifice in which also the donor could share. All the other sacrifices were either completely burned up, or partially meant for the consumption by only the priests and Levites. The thank offering was a celebration of sharing with the Lord.

*Psalm 100 shows that thanksgiving is a way of life for the believer.*

You could, so to speak, eat a meal together with the Lord your God. You could go to the temple of the Lord, and there, in God’s presence and among God’s people, enjoy the meal. You could even ask others to join you in the enjoyment of the meal if there was enough to go around. And so the thank offering foreshadowed the New Testament practice of the Lord’s Supper.

But now, how do you come before the Lord? For it is quite something that you are able to do so. He is the almighty Creator. And we have rebelled against Him. We have sinned against Him. We do so every day of our lives.

And yet, as the psalm says in verse three, “we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.” That also applies to us to-

day. God has not rejected us. No, He made us his own. He takes care of us like a shepherd takes care of his flock.

For that reason the psalmist tells us that we are to come before Him with joy and gladness: “Worship the Lord with gladness.” “Come before him with joyful songs.” Indeed, to come into the presence of the Lord is something to be very happy about. It is something to sing about; to shout aloud from happiness.

But what now is the greatest joy for a believer? Our greatest enjoyment is in the Lord our God. Indeed, without Him all the other joys that this life can bring have no meaning at all.

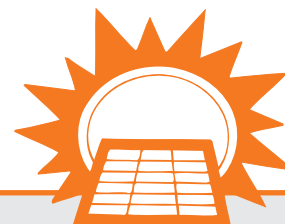
This is much more meaningful for us now. Because of God’s beloved Son we are assured that we have the forgiveness of sins. Blood has been shed, also for us. It has been sprinkled on the mercy seat. It has been done once for all by God’s own beloved Son on our behalf.

If we believe in Him and humble ourselves before Him, we may know that He does not only give us the forgiveness of sins, but that He also takes care of us, like a shepherd takes care of his flock. We are his sheep. He gives us food to eat and fresh water to drink. But much more important than that, He gives us eternal food and drink.



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By Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman

*“He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.”*  
Ephesians 4:23

### Dear Brothers and Sisters:

The law was given to God’s people in Israel very soon after they were freed from the land of Egypt. They who were once slaves are now free and have a secure future. The Lord gives them and us as well a command. Having made clear that He is the One who brought them from the house of bondage, He now commands; “Do not steal.” We are now a free people to whom much has been given.

Today as God’s people we have everything in Christ. Our Father let his only Son become utterly poor so that we may become rich in God. He died for our sins to give us the richest blessing of all, namely: eternal life. Yet every Sunday we hear the commandment, “You shall not steal.” We need that constant reminder to live upright before our God.

To call a person “rich in God” is beautiful. When we are rich in God our hearts should reflect this as well. We should not rely on earthly treasures on this earth, but always focus on what lies ahead. As Christians we do not need to worry about our future. Our Saviour who died for our sins will also take care of all our material needs. Just as He feeds the birds outside, He will no doubt take care of us. But sometimes we have to remind ourselves to share our blessings with those who are less fortunate. We have received so much that we must be willing to share and not always be on the taking end. To take everything for yourself means you strive for this earth, but to receive is to reach up with open, empty hands in order to be filled by God. Taking is putting your life in your own hands; receiving is laying your life in God’s hands.

It is so easy to be caught up in materialism. It is all around us. It is so often the more we have, the more we want. It is all out there for us and that is why materialism is so attractive. We need to place ourselves in God’s hands. He takes care of us every day and in Him we are rich. We do not need to be anxious or burdened by financial troubles. By listening to God’s Word, it then becomes easier to obey this commandment. Then we will promote our neighbour’s good whenever we can and not always seek our own interests. We have to work faithfully and not steal from God and our neighbour.

The mentality of this world to take and keep should not overpower us. We should be filled with all the blessings of God and so give accordingly. We should constantly be thinking, look at what all the blessings God has given me. Above all, He has given me the greatest spiritual blessing of all times, the kingdom of God.

Let us continue to strive to obey all the commandments of God, also when God instructs us not to steal. We have more than the entire world has to offer. Let us always receive and give and share everything in gratitude to God!

*He keeps an oath that may bring pain,  
And takes no interest for his lending;  
He will not, moved by thought of gain,  
Against the innocent complain.  
He will firmly stand through time unending.*

Psalm 15:3

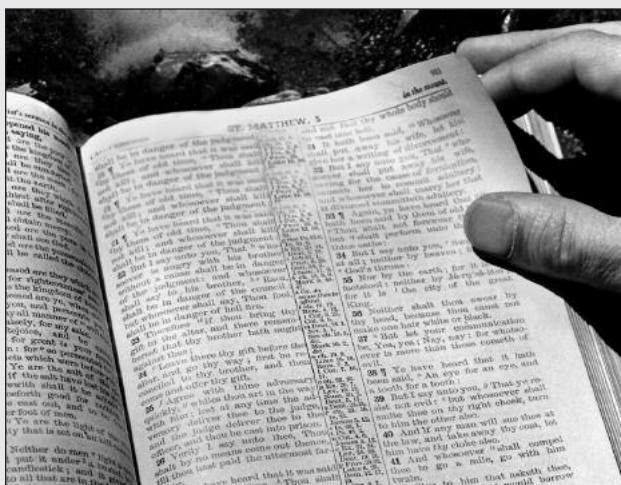
### Birthdays in November:

**3: WILMA VAN DRONGELEN will be 46**  
306 - 33375 Mayfair Avenue  
Abbotsford, BC V2S 1P4

Congratulations Wilma, with your birthday. May you have an enjoyable day together with your family and friends. May our heavenly Father continue to be your Guide and Hope in this new year. Till next month,

Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman

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# Prayer: the Chief Exercise of Faith

By Theo Lodder

## The exercise of prayer

Prayer is one of the exercises of our Christian life that requires more discipline, perhaps, than any other exercise of faith. We confess that “prayer is the most important part of the thankfulness that God requires of us.”<sup>1</sup> John Calvin called it “the chief exercise of faith.” It is hardly surprising, then, that prayer occupies one of the longest chapters in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

*We dig up by prayer the treasures that were pointed out by the Lord’s gospel, and which our faith has gazed upon.*  
– John Calvin

## Pastor John Calvin

Anyone who needs convincing that Calvin had ordinary believers and their daily struggles in mind when he wrote the *Institutes* needs only to turn to his section on prayer in chapter twenty of Book 3 (3.20). The *Institutes* actually brim over with evidence that John Calvin was first of all a pastor who had a deep love for the sheep of Christ’s flock. To give you a taste, I would like to share with you some of the more striking rules and elements of prayer that he lists. I hope, of course, that you will pick up Calvin’s *Institutes* someday soon, and mine for yourself the rich and beautiful biblical truths that John Calvin, by God’s grace, helped the church rediscover.<sup>2</sup>

## A compiled guide to prayer

- We need to rid ourselves of all cares that make our minds wander when we pray (3.20.4).
- The more difficult we find it to concentrate the more we have to work at it (3.20.5).

- Lifting hands in prayer helps us lift our souls on high (3.20.5; 3.20.16).
- We should not ask any more than God allows (3.20.5).
- Although the Spirit helps us to pray, this is not said “in order that we, favouring our own slothfulness, may give over the function of prayer to the Spirit of God, and vegetate in that carelessness to which we are all too prone” (3.20.5).
- Prayer requires meditation about what we are going to ask (3.20.6).
- We must pray at all times, also when grain and wine abound (3.20.7).
- Prayer demands repentance (3.20.7).
- We must come to the Lord humbly. Daniel’s prayer is a beautiful model of that (Dan 9.18,19),<sup>3</sup> and is a wonderful example also for congregational prayer (3.20.8).
- Faith must be our guide when we pray (3.20.11).
- Christ intercedes for us when we pray. Calvin provides this quotation from Ambrose: “He is our mouth, through which we speak to the Father; he is our eye, through which we see the Father; he is our right hand, through which we offer ourselves to the Father. Unless he intercedes, there is no intercourse with God either for us or for all the saints” (3.20.21).

## Prayer like digging for a treasure

Calvin compares the exercise of prayer to digging for a treasure: “[W]e dig up by prayer the treasures that were pointed out by the Lord’s gospel, and which our faith has gazed upon.” (3.20.2) Neglecting prayer is as foolish as ignoring a treasure that we’ve discovered. “To know God as the master and bestower of all good things, who invites us to request them of him, and still not to go to him and not ask of him – this would be of as little profit as for a man to neglect a treasure, buried and hidden in the earth, after it had been pointed out to him” (3.20.1).

## Public prayer

Calvin also helps us to think properly about public prayer. It can be abused through pompous show (3.20.29), but is nonetheless required. The Lord even called his temple, the place of public worship, “the house of prayer” (Isa 56:7; Matt 21:13). Bringing specific requests to the Lord, related to specific needs in the world, the world-wide church, and the local church, also belongs in public worship, where the needs and joys of particular



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\* \* \*

Classis Central Ontario of  
September 19, 2003 has declared  
eligible for call,

**Candidate S. Carl Van Dam**  
642 Ramsgate Drive  
Burlington, ON L7N 2Y1  
905-634-0593

\* \* \*

Called by the churches of  
Rockway, Ontario and Grassie,  
Ontario:

**Candidate S. Carl Van Dam**

members or families in the congregation should also be remembered before the Lord.<sup>4</sup> Having a designated section on the liturgy sheet or in the church bulletin would assist the congregation in establishing their family and personal prayers as an extension of public prayer in church.

*The generosity of God is necessary no less for the rich than for the poor; for with full cellars and storehouses, men would faint with thirst and hunger unless they enjoyed their bread through his grace.*

– John Calvin

### Praying from the heart

Unless our prayers come from the heart, they are an offence to God. “[T]hey arouse his wrath against us if they come only from the tip of the lips and from the throat, seeing that this is to abuse his most holy name and to hold his majesty in derision” (3.20.31).

### The rich must pray for God’s provision, too

“[The] generosity of God is necessary no less for the rich than for the poor; for with full cellars and storehouses, men would faint with thirst and

hunger unless they enjoyed their bread through his grace” (3.20.44).

### Prayer at regular times

It is ironic that in a culture so bound by the clock, prayer is less and less regular. Calvin maintains that we “should set apart certain hours for this exercise. . . : when we arise in the morning, before we begin daily work, when we sit down to a meal, when by God’s blessing we have eaten, when we are getting ready to retire” (3.20.50). We need to learn and maintain this practice, without falling into barren routine or superstition (3.20.50).

### Praying without giving up

Where can one find a Christian who has never grown weary of praying? Calvin reminds us how “in the Psalms we can often see that David and other believers, when they are almost worn out with praying and seem to have beaten the air with their prayers as if pouring forth words to a deaf God, still do not cease to pray (Ps 22.2)” (3.20.51). Always pray then, child of God, and don’t give up.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 45.

<sup>2</sup> John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Trans. Ford Lewis Battles, The Library of Christian Classics, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960) vol. 20 & 21. There is also an abridged edition available, edited by Donald K. McKim (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).


<sup>3</sup> “Give ear, O God, and hear; open your eyes and see the need of the church that

bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your church and your people bear your Name.” (Adapted from Daniel 9:18,19)

*Give ear, O God, and hear; open your eyes and see the need of the church that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your church and your people bear your Name.*

– Adapted from Daniel 9:18, 19

<sup>4</sup> “Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn” (Rom 12:15).

<sup>5</sup> “Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.” (Luke 18:1) 

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# Religious Toleration (Part 2)

By Reuben Bredenhof

## Martin Luther

Like his spiritual “great-grandfather” Augustine, Martin Luther’s view on religious toleration underwent change on account of the conflict of his time. In the opinion of many historians of religious toleration, Luther alone among the Reformers deserves credit for articulating principles of religious liberty. In 1521 he stated, “No man can or ought to be forced to believe, but everyone should be instructed in the gospel and admonished to believe, though he is left free to obey or not.” Luther wrote in *On the Bondage of the Will* concerning the Roman multiplication of doctrines and rites, “Consciences must not be ensnared by false laws, and thereby tormented for sins where according to God’s will there is no sin. Consciences are bound by God’s law alone.” Luther was also aware of the Roman Catholics’ fear as they regarded the Reformation movement gaining steam, and he was rightly concerned that Roman Catholic princes might begin persecutions. He observed: “Heresy . . . is something spiritual. One cannot strike it with iron, nor burn it with fire.” Accordingly, Luther insisted that the ecclesiastical matters not be addressed by the government.

Where Tertullian had quoted Christ’s words, “Compel them to come in,” Luther (as many others did) referred to the parable of the tares, speaking of those dissenting or unbelieving elements within church or society as the tares which cannot be separated from the wheat in this life: “See, then, what mad folk we have so long been, who have wished to force the Turk to the faith with the sword, the heretic with fire, and the Jews with death, to root out the tares with our own power, as if we were the people who could rule over hearts and spirits and make them religious and good, which God’s Word alone must do.”

Though Luther first leaned in the direction of tolerance, by 1530 a great change in his viewpoints, occasioned by radicals and revolutionists, had taken place and he was endorsing the death penalty for offences against both the civil and ecclesiastical order. He would not coerce faith, nor would he suppress an incorrect opinion, but blasphemy and rebellion were certainly to be punished. This change in his viewpoint was caused in part by the rise of the heretical and revolutionary Anabaptists. The Peasants’ War of 1525,

*Religious liberty could not mean a license to overturn the established societal order.*

where social and religious revolution coincided, partly moved Luther to approve of the suppression of such rebellion. Religious radicalism had convinced Luther that only drastic measures, as exercised by the state, could preserve the church.



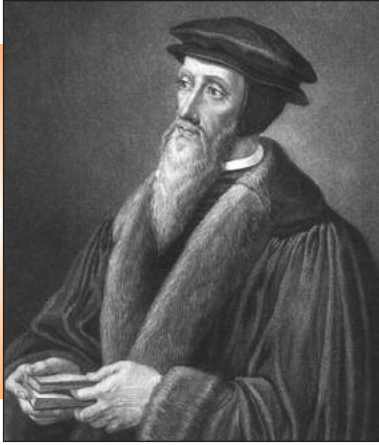
Martin Luther

Luther was moved to defend the right of princes to oppose anything that threatened their authority as given by God. Religious liberty could not mean a license to overturn the established societal order. He wrote to the Duke of Saxony, “It will lie heavy on your conscience if you tolerate the Catholic worship, for no secular prince can permit his subjects to be divided by the preaching of opposite doctrines.” With a concern for not only the public peace but also the church’s well being, Luther insisted that the work of reformation not be undone by various ignorant and radical groups. Though some bemoan Luther’s change towards a greater role for the magistrates in religious suppression, this development in Luther is understandable in light of his time. He considered that such dangerous groups as the Anabaptists ought not to be tolerated for the good of both society and church.

Luther’s legacy – with respect to the entire Reformation, but also with respect to religious toleration – is his insistence on a return to the norms of Scripture as solely binding. The conscience of individual man was free from the Roman Catholic bonds of human rules, freed to submit to God’s Word. With this Scriptural perspective on the goal and qualification of toleration, we make a great advance towards a proper understanding of religious toleration.

## John Calvin

It is said that by the time John Calvin entered the Reformation fray, the lines had been so distinctly drawn that there was no chance for him to go through a “more tolerant” period as Luther had. By historians Calvin is typically counted as the most intolerant of the Reformers. With often harsh language, he is relegated to the ranks of megalomaniacs and pessimists: “If Calvin ever wrote anything in favour of religious liberty, it was a typographic error.”<sup>1</sup>



John Calvin

Calvin's attitude towards government lies close to the heart of his understanding of religious toleration. The order of society, as upheld by a God-fearing magistrate, was considered a God-given blessing. The magistrates ought to maintain both tables of God's law; not only should they promote peace, order and justice, but they also should take care that the external aspects of the worship of God be upheld and that the proper doctrine of the church be defended. Church and state had their own domains; they could not be separated but had to work cooperation and mutual support in order to promote the kingdom of Christ on earth.

Calvin desired a city that was ordered by the Scriptures, and so it said that Geneva became *une ville église*, a city that was a church. In this city the application of his *Institutes* was worked out, as a demonstration of the ordering benefits of the Scriptures. Especially in the Genevan situation his view of government was coupled with his strong insistence on the church's role in exercising church discipline, maintaining the holy communion of believers.

The Old Testament theocracy was regarded by Calvin as an important model for his own notion of a Christian State. He thought it was the task of the church authorities, as it was in the Old Testament, to detect, convict and reprimand heretics and stubborn sinners, while the Christian magistrates were to execute Christian censure, even as far as meting out capital punishment: "God makes plain that the false prophet is to be stoned without mercy." Allowing a heretic to spread his errors was similar to allowing a cad to broadcast the plague.

It was the honour of the sovereign God that Calvin sought to defend in his denunciations of heresy. He did not restrict punishment to the political revolutionaries, for God was always concerned with truth, not only when subversive to the social order. "To insult God is worse than to strangle an innocent man or to poison a guest." Not that God required human vindication, but He was pleased to work through humans who defended his Name.

We cannot be content with the caricature of Calvin as a dour and merciless tyrant. In the same line of Luther, he strove to follow in all things the norms of Scripture. Calvin had an opportunity that Luther did not: pursuing the application of God's Word on a "large" scale in Geneva, where this desire to follow the Scriptures was evident. The line between church and political bodies was blurred with Calvin,

*Calvin desired a city that was ordered by the Scriptures, and so it said that Geneva became une ville église, a city that was a church.*

and on this point he can be criticized. While he vigorously defended the "sum of faith," allowing no deletion from the teachings of Scripture, Calvin's desire to preserve the truth, even by conflict, did not exclude dealing with ignorance and weakness gently and kindly, and in a spirit of charity.

### Michael Servetus

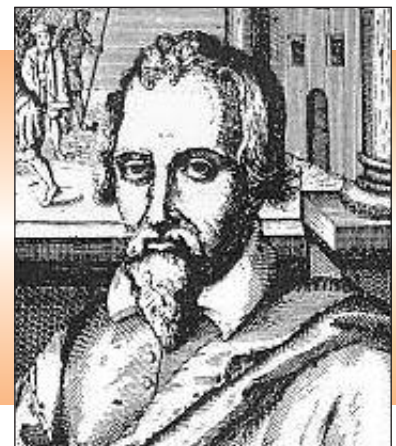
The infamous occasion of the burning of the Spanish physician Michael Servetus at the stake in Geneva in some ways serves as an embodiment of the controversy over toleration that raged in the Reformation period. That the execution took place in the centre of the John Calvin's Geneva, that his views stood diametrically opposed to the teaching of Scripture, that he was wanted for punishment by both Roman Catholics and Protestants, and that his death clearly fired up the discussion of religious toleration, has resulted in his case becoming something of the *cause célèbre* for the matter of religious freedom.

Though Servetus was interested in the study of the Bible, and though he was acquainted with several of the Re-

formers, he held views on the Trinity that were contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture. He expressed his theological leanings in a 1531 publication which he distributed widely, to strong opposition. In this book he rejected the "philosophical construct" that was the Trinity. Later he advocated Arian and Anabaptist views.

Servetus was arrested near Lyons, but escaped the Roman Catholic judges of the Inquisition. He made his way to Geneva, though Calvin had forewarned him of the peril he would face in the city. He was discovered, and the magistrates wanted no heretic to undermine the stability of Geneva, so Servetus underwent a trial, was found guilty, and was sentenced to death by fire. Though Calvin asked that a quicker form of execution be used, he maintained that Servetus was deserving of death. Servetus begged for mercy, but would not recant his position. News of the execution of Servetus was roundly approved in both Protestant and Roman Catholic circles. It is outside of the bounds of these articles to delve more deeply into this often-debated incident of Servetus' execution, yet it is fitting to briefly note this incident, for it highlights yet again a key element of our study: the intersection of the role of church and the state. Nothing could be permitted to damage the stability of Geneva, especially a heresy as fundamental as that of denying the Trinity.

The lengths to which the persecution of Michael Servetus went, even to the stake in Geneva, has long been a blot upon the name of Calvin. Though the period of the Reformation (on both principal sides) saw many such acts of violence against heretics and others who were outside the majority religion in a



Michael Servetus

given country, especially the case of Servetus has gained for Calvin and Protestants a negative notoriety: "It is the one error of his life which has given occasion to his enemies and the adversaries of the Protestant faith to blaspheme."<sup>2</sup>

Though the killing of a person for his beliefs cannot be condoned, neither can Calvin be simply vilified for this act of religious intolerance. Though they were sometimes in error, we must consider that Calvin and his Genevan compatriots genuinely sought to live in freedom according to the Word of God.

### Sebastian Castellio

The humanist Sebastian Castellio made a breach with his friend Calvin over his heretical views of the Scriptures. His major contribution to the toleration debate of the sixteenth century was the book "Whether Heretics are to be Persecuted?" about half a year after the execution of Servetus.

In this work, Castellio not only states his own opinions on the matter, but presents those of several early Christian (e.g., Lactantius, Jerome) and contemporary authors (e.g., Erasmus, the early Luther). In addition to the many citations, Castellio proffered scriptural texts in his aim to restore religious peace by persuasion. In his book he was guided by the chief concern that "human beings should never be killed on account of their religious opinions." He did allow for state-exacted penalties on those who blasphemed or were extremely heretical, but yet he considered force to be an inappropriate weapon for defending the truth: "To kill a man is not to defend a doctrine, but to kill a man." Castellio pointed out that for many years, men had debated the teachings of Scripture: predestination, heaven and hell, Christ and the Trinity – no agreement had been reached, and none probably could be, for truth was difficult to find. Castellio wondered whether we really know who the true heretics are, and viewed disputes over "truth" as unnecessary; these disputes do not make men better, for what is needed is a carrying of the spirit and love of Christ into daily lives. He mourned the fact that the reformers who had just freed themselves from the darkness of the Roman Catholic Church and the Inquisition should so readily enter the darkness of intolerance again. Castellio's book cemented his reputation as a leading figure in the movement for religious toleration.



Sebastian Castellio

Castellio's "question" as to whether heretics were to be persecuted was answered definitively by Theodore Beza. Calvin delegated Beza to reply to it, which he did in September 1554 with "A Little Book on the Duty of Civil Magistrates to Punish Heretics." Beza claimed that religious toleration was impossible for one who accepted the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. As Castellio had wondered about the certainty of some fundamental doctrines, Beza protested that if we reject the Bible as God's Word we are left with nothing on which to build the religious faith that is so vital to moral restraint, social order and civilization. Beza proceeded out of a central sixteenth century concept: the civil magistrate was to be concerned with the morals of his people,

*There can be the exalting of man to a position of autonomy, and there can also be the confusion of the spheres of the state and church.*

and so must protect true religion: "It is the truest charity to protect a flock of sheep from a marauding wolf, not to leave them defenceless." According to Beza it could not be denied that heresy's effect upon the moral life of a community is as harmful as other crimes like murder and theft. To the objection that one cannot compel men to faith, but can only persuade and convince, Beza replied that penalties for heresy are not designed to compel, but to prevent others from being led astray. There were also objections to executing heretics on the grounds that there is then no chance for repentance, but Beza reiterated that

the church's first duty is to the sheep and their well-being.

Castellio's work on religious toleration is often regarded as the central product of the debate on this matter in the Reformation period. Subsequently he was regularly cited with approval by liberals and humanists, or he was cited by Reformed and Roman Catholic theologians with a notation of Beza's repudiation. Castellio's defence of religious toleration is at best misguided; he belittled the clarity of the Scriptures, while exalting reason in his arguments. Castellio's statements that condemn the killing of a person for his beliefs might sound welcome in our ears, but he too advocated a toleration that was not properly based on Scripture. Beza's reply was also typical of the period, rightly emphasizing the importance of guarding the church against heresy, but wrongly applying punishments that belong to the civil realm.

### Revisiting toleration

The contemporary infatuation with toleration has seen the concept transform into a nebulous idea that somehow articulates all that is good and defensible in our society. In particular, the toleration of different religious views in a multicultural society has formed an important part of the contemporary cultural mantra. This religious liberty is an aspect of the principle of liberty of the conscience, and is a liberty entrenched in the modern understanding of human rights; it has been codified in the 1948 adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others in public or private to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance." This right is based on the conception of man as "human being," but problems arise with it, for what is lacking is an undergirding theory of human nature – many interest groups will have differing understandings of "humanity" and of "conscience," and of what actually ought to comprise mankind's individual rights. Where then is our solution to the matter of religious toleration to be found?

We have seen in our historical survey that two extremes often arise: there can be the exalting of man to a position of autonomy, and there can also be the confusion of the spheres of the



state and church, when religious belief is coerced or subjected to an authority higher than the Scriptures. Indeed, a Christian or even non-Christian government cannot be negligent in seeking to promote the Christian faith. Belgic Confession article 36 on the civil government is illuminating: “. . . their task of restraining and sustaining is not limited to the public order but includes the protection of the church and its ministry in order that the kingdom of Christ may come, the Word of the gospel may be preached everywhere, and God may be honoured and served by everyone, as He requires in his Word.”

Concentrating on our contemporary situation and on how religious toleration is to be properly viewed and practised in a society that constantly claims to endorse this very idea, we must be clear on what religious toleration truly is, according to the spirit of the Scriptures.

It is consistent with Scripture to promote a qualified religious toleration – namely, a religious freedom or liberty. The Scriptures emphasize an individual’s responsibility before God in repentance, faith, and service (e.g., Ezekiel 18). Nowhere do we read of forced conversions – even if such a thing were possible, in light of Christ’s words in John 3:8-9, “The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.” Humans must be “free,” free in order to make a personal choice for the gospel.

The separation of church and state must also be considered when looking for a proper understanding of religious toleration. This separation does not mean that the church can have nothing to say to the ruling authorities on matters of governing, but that their respective roles must be understood and respected. We do not live in a theocracy as in the days of Israel; contemporary secular governments bear the sword (Romans 13:1-5), but not in matters that pertain to the church.

All heresy and false religion – and here we affirm our hearty agreement with the reformers – must be firmly opposed and refuted, but not with violence: neither “compelling to come in,” nor violently expelling from the fold. In this age of the Holy Spirit, we must maintain the spiritual means of persuading through the preaching of the Word and the exercise of church discipline.

Thankfully, Christian churches in many countries have been given freedom of religion. Many Christians today are given the freedom to worship and assemble – but when they exit their church buildings and preach God’s Word to the world in mission or evangelism or as it pertains to social and ethical matters, they are often viewed as intolerant, for Christians speak the Word of God with all of its authority and absoluteness. It seems that anything in society can be tolerated except what is perceived to be Christian “intolerance.”

***The paradox of the Reformation is that the church was freed to submit again to the Word of God – true freedom indeed!***

We must recognize that in some respects “intolerance” cannot be avoided. The Word of God speaks in absolutes, stating sharp contrasts between truth and falsehood: there is only one God (Deut 6:4), there is only one way of salvation and one Saviour (1 Cor 8:5-6), there is one law to follow for all of life (Matt 22:37-40), there is no one who is righteous (Rom 3:10), and there is only one of two end results for mankind – salvation and eternal life, or damnation and eternal death (Dan 12:2).

Christians ought to patiently forbear with other religions (and false churches), but not absolutely, for our forbearance and toleration must have purpose. We are blessed with the only true religion and way of salvation, and we now have time to make this way known – we cannot force people to confess Jesus Christ as Saviour, nor can we revile or physically assault those who reject Him for other beliefs or no religion at all. We tolerate, because at this time God “tolerates,” wanting “all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:4). We tolerate in patience, working to persuade and make known the Gospel, because for the moment God “is patient . . . not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Pet 3:9). We tolerate in order that the Word may be heard and believed by more people, that the full measure of the harvest may be gathered in – only then will the tares be separated from the wheat. And we need not recoil at the contemporary “toleration”

mantra, for to a degree it has given the church an increased opportunity to spread the gospel.

At the same time, we must reject all false tolerance. It is a humanist tolerance that rules the day and one that is grounded in man as the measure of all things. Today man thinks he cannot be sure of the truth of the Word of God (or any truth), and that man cannot insist on one way or another to his fellow man. This humanist tolerance “frees” man from all admonitions to return to the truth and from all judgment of his belief and practice.

The Reformation freed the people from the yoke of the Roman Church, and by God’s grace put the Scriptures back in their hands. There was a regaining of freedom with Luther and Calvin and the other reformers, but it was not unlimited – the Scriptures were the basis and norm of that liberty. The paradox of the Reformation is that the church was freed to submit again to the Word of God – true freedom indeed!

<sup>1</sup> Sebastian Castellio [attributed to]. *Concerning Heretics: Whether they are to be persecuted and how they are to be treated. A collection of the opinions of learned men both ancient and modern.* Roland Bainton, tr., ed. (New York, NY: Octagon Books, 1965), p. 74.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Martyn Baird, *Theodore Beza: The Counsellor of the French Revolution* (New York, NY: Burt Franklin, 1899; 1970 reprint), p. 53.

See also:

a) Roland Bainton, *The Travail of Religious Liberty* (Westminster Press, 1951; Hamden, CT: W.L. Jenkins, The Shoe String Press, 1971 reprint).

b) Graham Keith, “Issues in Religious Toleration from the Reformation to the Present Day.” *The Evangelical Quarterly* 66 (1994), number 4: 307-329.

c) Paul Woolley, “Calvin and Toleration.” In *The Heritage of John Calvin*. John Bratt, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1973), pp. 137-157.

d) Stefan Zweig, *The Right to Heresy: Castellio against Calvin*. Eden and Cedar Paul, trs. (New York, NY: The Viking Press, 1936).



*Reuben Bredenhof is beginning his final year at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches.*



## Principal's Report 2003

With thankfulness to our faithful covenant God, we can look back on another academic year. He has been with us in all circumstances, both joyous and sorrowful, and we know He will continue to provide in the challenges facing us in future.

### College evening 2002

Last year, on September 6, the newly appointed Prof. G. H. Visscher delivered an address on the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matt 25) entitled: "So What does Separate the Sheep from the Goats?" We could also witness the conferral of the degree of Master of Divinity on Mr. Edwer Dethan, who now heads to Timor as missionary called by the Canadian Reformed Church in Smithville, Ontario, Mr. Walter Geurts, who is assisting Rev. J. D. Louwse in Fergus this fall, and Mr. Julius Van Spronsen who now labours as minister of the Word in Smithers, B.C.

### Students

Tonight we may witness the graduation of Mr. David De Boer and we can welcome nine new students to the Theological College. Those admitted to the M. Div. program are: Mr. David De Jong, son of Prof. and Mrs. J. De Jong; Rev. Patrick Jok Ding Wic from Khartoum, Sudan; and Rev. Dmitri Kiselev from St. Petersburg, Russia, and Mr. Jim Witteveen from Abbotsford, B.C. Those admitted to the Diploma of Theological Studies program are: Miss Lorian Van Popta who hails from Coal-dale, Alberta, and Miss Maple Zeng, a Chinese student who comes to us from the Fraser Valley. Furthermore, as special students we welcome Rev. Jea-Man Choi and Mr. June Kwon, who both come from Korea and Miss Helen 't Hart from Hamilton as a part-time student. Students previously enrolled are: one in the Diploma program, three sophomores, one junior and four seniors. The seniors hope to graduate this coming spring. The total number of students thus stands at nineteen.

### The academic year

This past academic year started off with a most noteworthy event. The day after the College evening, a special symposium was held at the Theological College on the occasion of the recent retirement of Professor J. Geertsema as Professor of New Testament. Dr. R. Faber, son-in-law of the honoured professor, did an excellent job in organizing this successful conference. Under the theme "New Testament Studies and the Reformed Faith," five scholars provided much food for thought and discussion. A detailed report of this conference was published in *Clarion*.

From time to time we had the opportunity during the academic year to engage special guest speakers. On Friday, September 27 the College community was treated to a special lecture by Rev. H. Uittenbosch, a thirty-seven year veteran of ministering to those who work on boats and cruise ships. His presentation outlined the challenges of this difficult ministry but also underlined the unique opportunities that exist to bring the true gospel to those who work on the seas.

On October 29, we were privileged to hear a lecture by Dr. David Schuringa of Crossroads Bible Institute in Grand

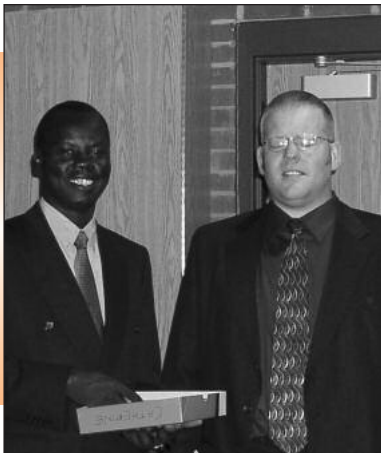
Rapids on hearing the Word in a visual age and on November 8, Rev. Victor Atallah told us about the beautiful work of the Middle East Reformed Fellowship in spreading the gospel in word and deed in the Arab world.

Another special and much appreciated special lecture was held before the Junior Old Testament class. On March 25, 2003, Dr. Al Wolters of Redeemer University College lectured on interpreting the Old Testament, using as an example, the visions of Zechariah 1-6.

With respect to the lectures, this past academic year saw an historical first. For the first time two doctoral candidates who had graduated from the Theological College were able to give a lecture at the College. Both were delivered to the Junior Old Testament class, be it in different courses. Mr. John Smith, who is writing a dissertation at the University of Toronto, spoke on February 28 on the Book of Psalms in light of the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament which is quoted in the New Testament and on March 28, Mr. S. Carl Van Dam, who is writing a dissertation for the Theological University in Kampen, The Netherlands, spoke about some perspectives on Zechariah 11:4-17. These lectures were also much enjoyed.



Governors, Senate and David de Boer



Patrick Wic and Jim Witteveen

### Faculty, lecture tours, and publications

We are very thankful that all the professors could complete their work at the College this past academic year. However, as you know, it has not been an easy year, especially for Dr. J. De Jong who increasingly struggled with short term memory loss. The College community sorrows greatly in this unexpected turn of events which we cannot fully comprehend. We commend our brother and his family to the unfailing love and grace of our sovereign God and Father. These are very trying times, especially for Mrs. De Jong. Let us all continue to remember the De Jong family in prayer.

We are very grateful for the willingness of capable ministers in the area, as well as their consistories, to accept our request to teach a course in Dr. De Jong's departments for this coming academic year. We look forward to working together with Rev. J. De Gelder, Rev. W. Den Hollander, Rev. G. Nederveen, D. Min., Rev. Cl. Stam, Th. Drs., Rev. G.P. Van Popta, Rev. J. Van Woudenberg, Rev. H. Versteeg, and Rev. J. Visscher, D. Min. May the Lord bless our labours and may He continue to surround and encourage Professor and Mrs. De Jong and the family with his grace and mercy in Christ.

Several of the professors went on lecturing tours during the past year. Prof. G. H. Visscher, Professor of New Testament, visited all the churches in British Columbia on behalf of the Theological College and spoke at various places on "The Purpose of Romans: The Unity of God's People."

Prof. J. Geertsema, emeritus Professor of New Testament, travelled to

South Africa. From April 2 to June 3 he taught approximately ten ministerial students for the *Vrije Gereformeerde Kerken* in South Africa. He also visited the churches. It is wonderful that Professor Geertsema was able to make himself available for this work for our sister churches in that vast country down under.

During the last two weeks of August, Prof. N.H. Gootjes travelled to Brazil and taught dogmatics to ministerial students on our mission field in the Recife area. It is a tremendous blessing when opportunities like this can be utilized for the sake of Christ's church.

Two professors also attended scholarly conferences this past year. Both Professors C. Van Dam and G.H. Visscher attended meetings of the Evangelical Theological Society, Institute for Biblical Research, and Society of Biblical Literature meetings in Toronto in November 2002.

Professors De Jong, Gootjes and Van Dam were also involved in synodical committee work. Another area that professors are busy with is in studying and preparing material for publication. This often is most visible in *Clarion*, but also in other ways contributions are made to the wider community during this past year. Dr. Gootjes published an article entitled: "The Earliest Report on the Author of the Belgic Confession (1561)" in the journal *Dutch Review of Church History* (Volume 82:1, 2002). Dr. Van Dam published three articles in T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker, eds., *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2003) and edited *Tinkering with Creation? The Promise and Perils of Genetic Engineering* (Publication 4 of the Burlington Reformed Study Centre, Winnipeg: Premier, 2002). Prof. G.H. Visscher continued his Ph.D. studies at McMaster University.

### Foreign student bursary

A most exciting development of this past year was the establishing of the Foreign Student Bursary Fund. From time to time the Theological College receives serious applications from the developing world for admission to our degree program. One of the obstacles that is often encountered is the necessary financial means for qualified students to actually come into Canada to study here. To help overcome this hurdle the Board of Governors has established the Foreign Student Bursary Fund. This fund is

designed to help competent students who on graduation will return to their country of origin.

We are thrilled about the possibilities of this fund. The Lord willing, it will eventually allow us to equip men to preach the full gospel of salvation to other countries, countries where there is often a great hunger for the true proclamation of our Saviour. This year, and the Lord willing for the next four years, we are privileged to have in our midst a brother from southern Sudan, Rev. Patrick Ding, who is in the M. Div. program. Since all money for this Fund needs to be raised outside the operating budget, the organizing committee wanted to give us all an opportunity to give to this worthy cause and so the offering tonight is designated for this fund.

### Library

Under the capable direction of our Librarian, Miss Margaret Van der Velde, the library continues to serve the needs of both students and staff, as well as the wider community from time to time. This past year Miss Van der Velde was able to attend the annual Conference of the Canadian Library Association in Toronto in June, 2003.

It is with profound gratitude that we also here mention the faithful support given by the Women's Savings Action and all those who heed their call for support. Their fundraising makes the library what it is and we are deeply grateful for all those ladies who diligently collect the funds in their home churches. Thank you very much!

We also owe a great debt of gratitude to our faithful volunteers, especially this past year Mrs. Dinie Gootjes, Mrs.



David de Boer



Allison Schutten, and Mrs. Hermina Vanderbruggen. Of course we must not overlook the ordering work that Miss Catharine Mechelse does for the library. It is one of the many roles she plays and we appreciate her labours.

Although not directly related to the library, we can also mention here that our librarian maintains the Theological College website. You may want to check that out some time.

### Board of governors

While the academic work in the College goes on, much work also happens in the background, particularly by the Board of Governors. Their multifaceted role includes one committee which is streamlining all the regulations governing this college into a more accessible form for use by governors and staff alike. We express our great appreciation for the work the Governors

do. With a view to the General Synod scheduled for early next year, I would like, on behalf of the senate, to express our thanks especially to the retiring governors, Rev. R. Aasman, Mr. M. Kampen, and Mr. J. VanderWoude, for all their labours.

### Pastoral Training Program

The Pastoral Training Program continues to be appreciated both by the students and the churches. We value very much the support the churches give in implementing this program which is under the capable direction of Rev. J. De Gelder. This past summer two students were involved: Mr. Reuben Bredenhof was in Guelph, Ontario and Mr. Ian Wildeboer in Langley, B.C. Other phases of the Pastoral Training Program are implemented during the school year in neighbouring churches. The opportunities presented

by these churches and their councils to our students is much valued.

### In closing

We are very grateful for the continuing support of and interest in the College exhibited in so many ways by the supporting community of churches, both in North America as well as in Australia. This is of great encouragement to us and we treasure your continued prayers and support for the year ahead and for the special circumstance we find ourselves in. May the Lord our God continue to use the Theological College for the glory of his holy and wondrous Name.



*Dr. C. Van Dam is principal and professor of Old Testament at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Hamilton, Ontario.*  
cvandam@canrc.org

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# Presentation of the Women's Savings Action at the College Evening

## September 5, 2003

### Mr. President, Members of the Board and Faculty, Graduate, Brothers and Sisters:

Students and faculty eagerly browse the "New Books" section in the library where recently acquired books are displayed. These books have been purchased with funds provided by the Women's Savings Action. We thought – wouldn't it be nice if you could also see those books. After all, those books were bought with your donations. Well, we considered bringing all those books on the stage in boxes or on library carts. But that would really be rather awkward. Then we thought, maybe we could take digital pictures of the books and do a power point presentation, but to be honest we are not all that technically inclined, so that idea was also discarded.

We finally decided to ask the librarian to print up a list of books and Margaret Vandervelde very kindly complied with our request. As you can see, it is quite a list. Twenty-seven pages in all. \$27,000 buys a lot of books. And the College does need a lot of books to stay up to date. Many subject areas need to be covered, such as biblical study, dogmatics, ethics, church history, and so on. And so on the list you will find a book dealing with Zephaniah's oracles against the nations, a new commentary on 2 Corinthians, a study on Paul, Thessalonica and early Christianity (one of many books coming out on Paul and his social context), an historical atlas of Christianity, a new publication reviewing Canadians and their religious life, a study of the faith and fortunes of the Huguenots, a book about the urban face of mission, a

study of covenant and eschatology, a number of titles on worship. I could go on and on. But, don't worry, I won't go through the whole list. By now, you get the point. Your money has once again been put to good use!

We consider it a real privilege that as women of the church we may also do our part to assist the training of the ministry in such an important way. During this past year a total of \$30,064.74 was collected. Our heartfelt gratitude to all of you for your donations and your hours spent collecting and counting. Above all, we thank the Lord for once again blessing our work so abundantly. Mr. Principal, it gives us great pleasure to present you with a pledge of \$27,000 for the coming year.

*Dinie Gootjes  
Allison Schutten  
Hermine Vanderbruggen*



## Press Release of the Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches held on September 4, 2003

### Opening

Rev. R. Aasman opened the meeting with the reading of Jeremiah 23:1-8 and led in prayer. All governors were present, as well as the principal of the College, Dr. C. Van Dam.

### Election of officers

The present executive was re-appointed, consisting of Rev. R. Aasman as chairman of the board, Rev. B. J. Berends as vice-chairman, Rev. R.A. Schouten as secretary and brother W. Oostdyk as treasurer.

### Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of January 23, 2003 were adopted.

### Agenda

The Agenda was established after adding a few matters to the provisional agenda.

### Report of the Academic Committee

The Academic Committee, which met earlier on this day to scrutinize and discuss a number of reports (on Visits to lectures, by the Senate, Principal, Registrar and on the Pastoral Training Program), announced that it would make the necessary comments and recommendations on these reports as they appeared on the adopted Agenda.

### Report of Finance and Property Committee

A report was presented on the financial affairs and property of the Theological College. Financial statements and a budget for 2004 were discussed and approved. The Lord enabled the five members to meet six times over the past year. The meetings were also attended by the principal, Dr. C. Van Dam, in keeping with the authorization Act.

It was decided to increase the assessment per communicant member to \$66. The tuition fees for the aca-

demical year 2003-2004 remain at \$1800.00 per year.

Special mention was made of the ongoing commitment and dedication displayed by Ms Catharine Mechelse as the College's Administrative Assistant and by Ms Margaret VanderVelde as the College's Librarian.

The Finance and Property Committee concluded its report as follows: "With thankfulness and in humility we render all honour and glory to Christ, the Head of the Church, who again was pleased to enable the entire College community to work for the benefit of our congregations, especially in Canada, the United States, Australia, and abroad in the mission fields."

### Report on visit to the lectures

The Revs. R. Aasman and R. Schouten attended the lectures delivered on January 22 and 23, 2003. Their extensive report was received with thankfulness to the Lord because the visiting governors were able to conclude that the courses prescribed in the College Handbook are being taught in a Scriptural, Reformed and academically responsible manner, and thus proved to be truly beneficial for the training of future ministers of the Word of God.

### Report of the Senate

With gratitude to the Lord the Board of Governors received the Senate's report on their course work and activities during the year 2002-2003. It was able to observe that the professors have been very busy and that they have acquitted themselves very well of the task with which the churches have charged them. The Board joins in with the concluding sentence of this Senate's report: "May the Lord our God continue to use the Theological College for the glory of his holy and wondrous Name."

### Principal's report

The principal's report (which would be read at the Convocation and published in *Clarion*) was read and approved.

### Upcoming vacancy in the departments of Diaconology and Ecclesiology

With sadness the Board of Governors had to conclude that Dr. J. DeJong is no longer able to continue as professor at our College due to his serious illness, which especially involves the loss of short-term memory. It instructs the Senate to come with nominations for his replacement, a professor able to teach all the subjects or a professor and one or more lecturers to assist him.

### Registrar's report

The registrar, Dr. N.H. Gootjes, reported that two new students were enrolled in the Freshman Year in September, 2002, **Hendrik Thomas Alkema** and **Richard Edward Horlings**. Two Korean students were admitted as well: **Hyuk-Ki Kim** and **Kuyng-Min Kim**.

**Dong-Woo Oh** was enrolled in his Sophomore Year. Other returning students were **Reuben Bredenhof**, **Albert Gootjes**, **Pila Njuka** and **Ian Wildeboer**, who were enrolled in their Junior Year, while **David De Boer** was enrolled in the Senior Year of the Master of Divinity program. **Kristen Alkema** (nee Kottelenberg) continued her study for the Diploma of Theological Studies.

As new students the following were admitted: **David Neil DeJong** (from the Canadian Reformed Church at Hamilton, Ont.), **Patrick Jok Ding Wic** (from the Presbyterian Church of the Sudan), **Dmitri Kiselev** (from the Presbyterian Church at St. Petersburg), and **Jim Witteveen** (from the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford, B.C.).

These new students were enrolled in the Freshman Year of the Master of Divinity Program upon the favourable outcome of the interviews taken from them by a professor and governor.

The Board also decided to admit as auditors **Jea-Man Choi** (who has a M. Div. of the Hapdong Theological Seminary of Suwon, South Korea) and **June Kwon** (who has a M. Div. of the Kosin Theological Seminary, Chonan, South Korea).

**Maple Zeng, Helen 't Hart** and **Lorien VanPopta** were admitted to the Diploma of Theological Studies program.

Inquiries regarding the admission to and study at the Theological College were made by members from the Canadian Reformed Churches and from their sister churches in Australia, and from quite a number of persons from churches outside Canada (from Germany, Ghana (2), India (2), Korea, Myanmar (2) and Pakistan).

### Library report

The library contains approximately 25,582 volumes in a variety of languages, including English, Dutch, German, French, Afrikaans, Hebrew, Greek and Latin. Areas of subject coverage include biblical study, biblical commentaries, dogmatics, ethics, diaconology, history and related fields. There is also a respectable rare book collection, with the oldest volumes dating from the sixteenth century. Most of these books have never been reprinted and are indispensable for the College. The library also subscribes to or receives free of charge approximately 98 periodicals.

The Women's Savings Action donated \$27,000 at the convocation of 2002, allowing the purchase of many more books. 545 new books (costing \$25,954) have been added to the library since June 1, 2001.

This year a decision was made to complete the library's Talmud holdings. The Talmud is essential to understanding the Jewish interpretation of the laws given in the five books of Moses.

The Library also received a number of donations this past academic year. From Rev. J. Nutma, of Strathroy, Ontario, a collection of Dutch books was received, as well as several runs of periodicals. The Immanuel Christian Reformed Church in Hamilton donated several boxes of books from their church library. A unique donation was received from Timothy Christian School in Hamilton, where the students had a reading competition. For each book read, the students brought in a penny. At the end of the week the students had taped 709 pennies to the wall. A decision was then made to donate those pennies to the Theological College; these were gratefully received.

The Librarian, Ms Margaret VanderVelde, expressed a special word of

thanks to the several volunteers. Special mention is made of the regular ones, Mrs. D. Gootjes, Mrs. A. Schutten, and Mrs. H. VanderBruggen.

Ms. VanderVelde also reported on a conference she attended, the annual Conference of the Canadian Library Association, held in Toronto, Ontario, which this year was combined with the conference of the American Library Association. She described her attendance as having been most useful.

This report was received with much gratitude. May the Lord grant Ms Margaret VanderVelde his blessings to keep up the good work.

### Lecture schedule for 2003-2004

The schedule was approved as presented by the Senate.

### Report of the convocation committee

All arrangements have been made for the Convocation Evening of September 5, 2003. The main speaker will be Prof. C. Van Dam, who will speak on "Elders Seeing God: a look at Exodus 24:9-11, Isaiah 24:23 and Revelation 4:1-11." The Master of Divinity will be conferred on: David DeBoer.

### Report on visits to the churches

Prof. G. H. Visscher submitted a written report on his trip to the churches in British Columbia from May 10 - 20. He spoke on "The Purpose of Romans: the Unity of God's People." He reported that the meetings were well attended and that the topic prompted lively discussions. He also stated that these annual trips proved to be worthwhile for the work of the College and to maintain the necessary contact with the churches.

### Other matters

Dr. C. Van Dam and Prof. G.H. Visscher reported on their attendance of the **54th Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society and the Society of Biblical Literature**. In addition, Dr. Van Dam also reported on his attendance of the **Institute For Biblical Research**. It was concluded that the considerable effort expended in attending, listening and debating issues was well worth it. In short order one is brought up to date as to what is happening in academia.

A written report and financial statement was given on the **Faber-Holwerda Bursary Fund**. The Committee decided "not to invite students for semi-annual

interviews at which monies are distributed." At the same time, the Dean of Students was encouraged by the Fund Committee to monitor the ongoing needs of the students so that in case of special financial need a student could as yet be invited for an interview.

The Committee responsible for the **Foreign Student Bursary Fund** could gratefully report that thus far \$45,000 had been donated to this Fund. The committee further reports that a person has presented himself as a successful applicant. His study and living expenses can be funded entirely out of the Bursary Fund.

The Board of Governors spent quite some time on the **Governance Committee's** new draft of the College's By-Laws and Regulations, specifically on the content of the **Board Member Handbook**. Various proposed changes were adopted, while a few needed more study. New sections dealing with Sexual/Gender Harassment Policy, Policy on Employment of Relatives, and with a Statement of Compliance, were approved.

The **Governance Committee** was charged to seek legal advice on the request by our sister churches in Australia to have ministers of these churches appointed to the Board of Governors. It reported having obtained such legal advice and of having received the following preliminary information: that Ministers of the Free Reformed Churches (of Australia), even if they are Canadian citizens, cannot serve on the Board of Governors without an amendment to the Theological College Act of 1981, and that requesting such a change to the Act would be a complex, time-consuming and potentially expensive process. The Board decided to receive this preliminary report for information.

The report on the **Practical Training Program** (which was presented by Rev. J. De Gelder and discussed at the Academic Committee meeting in the morning) disclosed that the students are very positive about the practical experience they gained from this program. The ministers (mentors) involved were able to give very positive evaluations and assessments of the students' work. This report was received with much gratitude. In view of the positive fruits of the PTP program over the last three years, the Academic Committee recommended that enrollment in the



PTP program should become mandatory for students who wish to become eligible for call within the Canadian Reformed Churches. After some discussion it is decided to appoint the Revs. R. Aasman and J. De Gelder to prepare a written proposal for the next Board meeting to show why the PTP should indeed become mandatory.

A request was received from the Senate that Prof. J. Geertsema teach New Testament Exegesis in 2004 to allow Prof. G. H. Visscher more time to work on his dissertation. After some discussion this request is granted.

A report on a possible **fifth professor** was tabled. The Board adopts the recommendation of the sub-committee not to proceed at this time in the direction of a fifth professor.

The draft copy of the Report to Synod (as circulated among the Board members during the summer) was tabled. A number of proposed improvements were adopted. In addition the Report will need to be changed significantly in view of the decisions taken at this meeting. Copies of the revised version will be circulated to all the members of the Board as soon as possible.

The Revs B. J. Berends and Cl. Stam were appointed to visit the lectures in the fall of 2003, while the Revs. J. Moesker and R. Schouten were appointed to do so in the early part of 2004.

### Closing

Br. G. Nordeman leads in thanksgiving and prayer, where after the chairman, Rev. Aasman, closed the meeting.

*For the Board of Governors,  
B.J. Berends*

### Press Release Classis Ontario West – London, Ontario held on September 10, 2003

The meeting was convened by Pilgrim Church at London. Elder Frank Oostdyk opened the meeting with Scripture reading and prayer. The Rev. John Ludwig served as chairman, the Rev. George van Popta as vice-chairman, and the Rev. Henry Versteeg as clerk.

The chairman welcomed the delegates to the meeting. He also welcomed the Rev. Ron Potter from Classis Covenant East of the RCUS, the Rev. Messrs. Dennis Royall and Harry Zekveld from Classis Southern On-

tario of the URCNA, Brother and Sister de Boer of Hamilton and his parents, Brother and Sister de Boer of Calgary. After setting the agenda, classis proceeded with the preparatory examination of Mr. David de Boer of Hamilton.

Brother de Boer delivered his sermon proposal on Mark 2:13-17. In closed session, Classis deemed that Br. de Boer has an aptitude for preaching and allowed the examination to continue. The Rev. Douglas Vandeburgt examined Mr. de Boer in Old Testament exegesis, focussing on Malachi 1. The Rev. James Slaa examined Mr. De Boer in New Testament, centering on Matthew 2. The Rev. John Ludwig examined the student in doctrine with an emphasis on the teaching of the Three Forms of Unity on the theme of faith. With thankfulness Classis could declare Mr. David de Boer eligible for call within the Churches. This happy news was conveyed to the brother. After he promised that he would teach nothing conflicting with the Word of God and the confessions of the church, Student de Boer became Candidate de Boer.

After the ladies of Pilgrim Church served the delegates an excellent lunch, Classis reconvened.

Question Period Church Order Article 44 revealed that two churches needed advice. Cornerstone Church at Hamilton sought concurring advice of Classis in a matter of church discipline. Trinity Church of Glanbrook sought advice on the matter of admission of guests to the Lord's Supper table in connection with our new ecclesiastical relationships, e.g., with the OPC, the RCUS, the URCNA, who may not have the same practice we have with respect to travel attestations. Some advice was given.

Cornerstone Church of Hamilton submitted an overture proposing that the Apostles' Creed be included in the baptismal form between the first prayer and the questions that are asked of the parents. Reasons given were:

1. A renewal of the catholic connection of baptism and the Apostles' Creed.
2. A return to the original form of baptism as found in the Church Order of Heidelberg, 1563.
3. A restoration of a parallelism with the form for the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

Classis accepted the overture and forwarded it to the next Regional Synod East with the request that Regional Synod forward it to the next General Synod.

Rev. Ron Potter of Classis Covenant East of the RCUS brought us greetings on behalf of his Classis. Since this was the first time we enjoyed the presence of a delegate of the RCUS, Rev. Potter explained to us the history of the RCUS and specifically his classis. Rev. James Slaa responded.

Rev. Dennis Royall of Classis Southern Ontario of the URCNA brought greetings on behalf of his Classis. Rev. George van Popta responded.

Classis received a letter from the Rev. John Ferguson of the Presbytery of Michigan and Ontario of the OPC extending apologies that he could not attend Classis and best wishes.

Classis approved the report of Ancaster Church, the administrating church for the fund for needy churches. An audit report regarding this fund was accepted.

Rev. George van Popta gave a verbal report on a visit he had made to a recent Classis Southern Ontario of the URC. This was an extraordinary classis held to consider a request for the invocation of Article 11 for the dissolution of the relationship between a pastor and one of the churches of that classis.

Eben-Ezer Church at Chatham, administrating church for the fund for needy students, submitted a report.

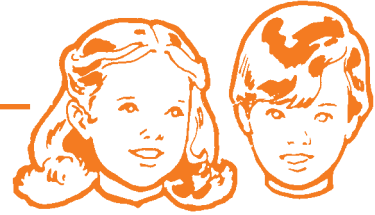
The Classical Treasurer proposed that the assessment for next year be set at \$4.00 per communicant member. This was approved.

Delegates to Regional Synod: Ministers – J.E. Ludwig and J.G. Slaa with D. Vandeburgt and G. Ph. van Popta as alternates. Elders – J.P. Kingma and J. Heyink with Ben Harsevoort and K. Post as alternates.

The next classis will be convened, Lord willing, by Ancaster Church in Ancaster on December 10, 2003. J.G. Slaa will serve as chairman, H. Versteeg as vice-chairman, and J.E. Ludwig as clerk.

Question Period was held. There was no need for censure according to Article 34 of the Church Order. The Acts were adopted and the Press Release was approved. The chairman closed the meeting with prayer.

*G.Ph. van Popta  
Vice-chairman, e.t.*



By Aunt Betty

Hello again. I'm glad to have a chance to write to you again. I'd also love it if you would send me a letter, too. I'm always delighted to find one of your letters in my mailbox.

Now that summer holidays are over, it is time to think about our school work again. Are you getting used to the regular routines again? Sometimes it might be hard to be enthusiastic about the work you have to do, but try to remember that God always wants us to do our best. It pleases God when we use the talents He gave us.

This time of year also gets us thinking about fall. Maybe, if you get a chance you can write to tell me your favourite thing about this time of year. How many new words can you make using the words AUTUMN LEAVES? Send me your list. The ten people with the longest list will receive a small prize. I look forward to hearing from you.

Love,  
Aunt Betty



## FROM THE MAILBOX

I was excited to receive a letter from *Heidi Jansen*. Welcome to the Busy Beaver club. Thank you for your thoughtful letter and picture Heidi. It's nice to know who I am writing to. Also thanks for your puzzle. Please send me more if you like.

## Puzzles

### This is Heidi's puzzle:

Cross out the letters that appear 4 or more times.

A	D	E	K
V	E	O	P
W	G	E	I
K	S	P	V
N	O	R	P
P	E	K	Y
W	Y	C	U
Y	T	V	N
N	W	N	Y
P	V	E	K



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## What was their occupation?

Unscramble their names and then use the numbers under the letters to help you figure out the occupations of these figures from the Bible.

SHJOEP

1    8

14 13 6 2 8 16 15 8 6

EETPR

2 15 6

E 4 17 9 8 6 11 13 16

EUKL

12

2 9 Y 17 4 14 4 13 16

ALPU

13 3

15 8 16 15 11 13 12 8 6

NIGDEO

7

10 13 12 8 6

IHMANHEE

16 11 4

14 3 2 10 8 13 6 8 6

SAUE

17

9 3 16 15 8 6

BCAOJ

14 10

17 9 8 2 9 8 6 5

HRDOBAE

5 9

1 3 5 7 8