

*Giving Thanks  
for the Role of  
Women in the  
Church*

*Thanksgiving*

*Installation of  
Rev. Dr.  
A.J. de Visser*



## *Theological College Evening*

*“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”*

Colossians 3:17



**W.B. Slomp**

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# Giving Thanks for the Role of Women in the Church

*Are women not just as capable as men, especially as it concerns their mental and intellectual capacity?*

In our churches women do not have any ruling functions and so are left somewhat in the background. Many people, especially the people of the world, will find that odd, to say the least. They think that we are hopelessly out-of-date. In this day and age women are equal. They can and should have positions of authority as well. For that reason some will ridicule us.

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*You can only reject the position of the women in the church if you also reject a literal interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis.*

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That is exactly what happened this spring on the floor of the Senate. While debating the issue of homosexual rights, the honourable member Serge Joyal tried to show how narrow-minded Bible believing Christians are, not only on the issue of homosexuality as such, but also on the issue of the place of women in society at large. In support he cited passages such as 1 Timothy 2:9-15 and 1 Corinthians 11:7-9, which teach that women should submit to men, that they should learn in quietness and be silent and that they may not have authority over a man.

## **Is our position extreme?**

To our modern ears this also does seem somewhat extreme. Are women not just as capable as men, especially as it concerns their mental and intellectual capacity? Why do they not have a greater role in the church? Following this line of argument, many modern churches have given a more prominent role to women in the church.

For example, this is what the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) has done. According to Rev. G. Vander Weit, writing in the *Question and Answer* column of the 2004 March issue of *The Banner*, the official publication of the CRC, women should be able to serve as pastors in the CRC. He writes, "For centuries people used Bible verses to teach that the sun moves, that slavery is permissible, that the world was created in six 24-hour days, and that women may not serve in church offices. Today none of those positions is universally accepted, not because Christians are not studying the Bible but because Christians are also considering the times, culture, and intent of the Bible writers."

In other words the believers had had it wrong throughout the ages when they believed these things. Now we are enlightened and know so much better than all the believers before us.

It is significant that Rev. Vander Weit connects the belief in six 24-hour days with the belief that women may not serve in church offices. These two are very closely connected (space does not permit me to deal with the other two "archaic" notions he mentions regarding the position of the sun and slavery). Indeed, you can only reject the position of the women in the church if you also reject a literal interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis.

## **The Genesis connection**

Paul himself connects the position of the women to Genesis. He says in 1 Timothy 2:13, "For Adam was formed first, then Eve." Adam saw that he was incomplete without the woman, and so the Lord created Eve for the sake of Adam. The woman came after the man, and therefore he takes the lead. The woman was created to follow man, not the other way around. However, she took the lead, and consequently was the first to sin. Note well that Paul in 1 Timothy 2 is writing about

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the position of the woman in the context of worship. It is in the church that the woman should not have a position of authority (elsewhere, e.g. Ephesians 5, he speaks about the submission of a wife to her husband). That is not because a woman is less capable than a man. On the contrary, some women are more capable than men. The point is that the men are to take position of leadership in the church. That is how the Lord God has ordained it from the beginning, and we should honour Him by obeying Him in this.

**Giving thanks for the important functions of women in the church**

Please note, however, that women do have very important functions in the church. It is not a position of leadership, but of service. The theme of this issue of *Clarion* deals with Thanksgiving. In that connection, please take note of the many things the women do in the churches. They are the ones who

**Inside . . .**

This is our Thanksgiving issue. Rev. M.R. Jagt writes about thanksgiving to God in *Treasures New and Old*. God has blessed us so richly and we should show our thankfulness to Him with our whole life.

This issue also demonstrates how richly God has blessed us with our Theological College. You will read about a new professor, new students and students who have graduated. The work of the College is a reason for great thanksgiving.

In the editorial of Rev. W.B. Slomp, he speaks about the role of women in the church. Our secular society ridicules the biblical teaching about this role. However, what some fail to notice is that women are very important in the life of the church and are very much involved. Indeed, we are deeply thankful for that, as Rev. Slomp outlines for us.

Dr. F. G. Oosterhoff continues her series of articles on "How Do We Read The Bible?" We also have our regular column, *Children's Catechism*.

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raise money for many good causes in the local churches and the churches-at-large. They are also involved in publishing and administration. As a matter of fact, this issue or any other issue of *Clarion* could not come off the press without their involvement. They help their husbands with the editing, giving much-needed feedback, and with other administrative work.

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*We may give thanks to the Lord for the women in the church, without them the church could not function as it does.*

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In the churches they also do much of the visiting to the sick and lonely. They provide meals and look after the many social functions in the church. They are also involved in the nomination of office bearers by submitting names, and by advising their husbands about the qualifications of prospective office bearers.

The single women in the churches are just as important to the well-being of the church as the married ones. They can and do devote time to other aspects of church life, such as the teaching of the youth, and of the writing of books and articles. They also provide services to the needy and lonely, and do many other things the married women do as well.

I could go on and on about the various good works of the women in the church. There is no end to their talents and their devotion to the church of God.

We may give thanks to the Lord for the women in the church; without them the church could not function as it does. They do their work quietly and without demanding recognition. Let them serve as an example to the men. They seek to please the Lord and not themselves.

That is also what it means to be a Christian. And as long as it is our aim to please the Lord, then the world may ridicule us all it wants for being out-of-date. For we know that in submission to God's will the church of the Lord Jesus Christ will flourish here on this earth.



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# Thanksgiving



MATTHEW 13:52

*I will . . . glorify Him with thanksgiving.*

Psalm 69:30

How important is thankfulness to you?

It's good to ask this, because being thankful is often seen as nice, but not all that necessary. After all, if someone passes you a peppermint in church, you can enjoy the peppermint, whether or not you've said thanks. Sure, our parents tell us to mind our "p's" and "q's". But it often seems like you can get away without them.

The Word of God, however, teaches us otherwise.

In Romans 1, the Apostle Paul describes the ungodly world as those who "neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him" (1:21). Being ungrateful is no small thing: it is the first step in rejecting God and plunging into a life of darkness! The first sin of Adam and Eve also had this root. By eating from the one forbidden tree, they showed themselves ungrateful for all the other trees the LORD God had given them. It has been said that when and where you are not thankful, there the devil has a foothold in your life.

The Christian, on the other hand, must live in thankfulness. In Scripture, we read that Daniel prayed and gave thanks three times a day (Dan 6:10). We are constantly warned not to be murmurers and grumblers. It was for sins like these that the LORD did not allow a whole generation to enter the Promised Land. In 1 Timothy 4 the apostle Paul tells us "everything God created is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is

consecrated by the Word of God and prayer" (4:4-5). Paul there adds one qualification over God's good blessings: they must be received with thanksgiving. Without that the good things we enjoy are not holy, not fit for use in God's service. Giving thanks is itself a blessing on God's gifts!

In Philippians 4:6 we read that we are never to be anxious but to bring our requests to God, with one key ingredient: with thanksgiving. Thanksgiving demonstrates that we are not spoiled, ungrateful children. And it reminds us we are children who in every circumstance do enjoy blessings from our heavenly Father, and who therefore have no need to worry.

But there is much more. The Heidelberg Catechism points out that a thankful life is the new life Christ redeems us for and renews in us (Q/A 86). In other words, being thankful is not a peripheral thing in the Christian life. It is the Christian life.

To understand this, we need to remember that the catechism is speaking about more than just saying thanks. Christ renews us "so that with our whole lives we may show ourselves thankful to God." Our catechism is echoing texts like Romans 12:1: "Offer your bodies as living sacrifices." In the New Testament Age, we no longer have to sacrifice animals – Christ has given himself as the great and only sin offering. But one sacrifice remains: the thank offering – which is our very lives.

Here we are being taught about the nature of worship. Worship is first of all exclaiming praise and thanks, two threads that always belong together. For the LORD's glory is his goodness and steadfast love, and which have been forever woven together in the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. But worship, is greater than our voices. Even that is joyful, but there are greater joys for us! Christ renews us so that our whole lives can be worship!

How does that work, you may be wondering? I can see how my words give praise and thanks to God. But my life?

It goes like this: In worship, we tell God how much He is worth. We give Him the praise and glory that we see He is due.

In our lives, we show God how much He is worth. In the decisions we make, the life we pursue, the words we live by, in all this and more, we have the opportunity to show God how much He is worth. Our lives can give weight to our thanks and depth to our praise.

Look at your life. Does it show that your God is worth everything to you? Is it your delight to show yourself thankful, serving the Lord with the sacrifice of your life?

You may not have a beautiful voice to sing your thanks in harmony with others. But you can worship God with a beautiful life, one that is lived more and more in harmony with his will. This is the sweet tune of thankfulness – a life in tune with the LORD.



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# How Do We Read The Bible? (4)

We now come to the reception of De Bruijne's essay on biblical history writing. Various Reformed periodicals have published articles about his work in *Woord op schrift*, but we will concentrate on the weekly *De Reformatie*. On May 17, 2003, that periodical, in cooperation with the theological university in Kampen, hosted a conference at which six Reformed theologians from different church backgrounds discussed and evaluated De Bruijne's contributions. In the morning three of these men dealt with the essay on biblical history, in the afternoon the other three discussed the one on ethics. *De Reformatie* subsequently published these speeches, together with De Bruijne's introductions and responses.<sup>1</sup> The majority of my references will be to these presentations.

## Is a hermeneutical overhaul necessary?

The presentations suggest that one reason for the disagreements on De Bruijne's work is one's view of the *need* for comprehensive hermeneutical work by Reformed theologians. As De Bruijne points out in his introduction to the conference, the conviction that inspired his work was that this need is indeed urgent. It is more than time, he believes, for Reformed theology to deal with questions about the understanding and use of the Bible in modern times. He adds that those who do not share his conviction – who have, as he puts it, no “antenna” for the hermeneutical question – will for that very reason

already have reservations with respect to his essays (p 642).

The first speaker at the conference, Dr. G. van den Brink, admits that he belongs to that category.<sup>2</sup> Attempts at a serious hermeneutical overhaul, he points out, often lead to polarization among believers and are in any case unnecessary, since we have an excellent consensus on scriptural authority in articles 3 to 7 of the Belgic Confession. Why add to that? he asks. He himself feels at home with the remark of A.A. van Ruler that it is far more interesting and worthwhile to reflect upon the *contents* of Scripture than to labour on a definition of its *formal nature*. That, he argues, is in any event an impossible task, just as it is impossible to come with a fully satisfactory theory of biblical inspiration. The Bible is too great a book to be caught in man-made formulas. He is convinced, moreover, that we will never be able to protect the Reformed doctrine of biblical authority fully against the dangers coming from the Bible-critical tradition on the one hand, and fundamentalism on the other. We must of course do what we can, but the best means of guarding against negative influences from both left and right is still to be found in the confession.

But if he rejects the need for Reformed theology to come with a new hermeneutics, Van den Brink believes that there is a need for a periodical *reflection* on hermeneutical issues – primarily as a means to stay informed about what is happening in the field. When it is seen in

these terms, he heartily welcomes De Bruijne's work, which he finds informative and helpful. Especially important, he says, is the evidence it provides about the striving for historical accuracy among biblical historians. He believes that in drawing attention to the work of experts like Baruch Halpern and V. Philips Long, and in general in insisting upon the literal-historical intention of biblical historians, De Bruijne leads Reformed theology in the right direction. He does that also by showing the potential of literary analysis and of an awareness of narrative conventions such as those of dialogue and direct speech.

## Fiction and myth

Van den Brink questions, however, De Bruijne's idea that ancient-eastern and biblical narrative conventions allowed for the introduction of fiction into what was presented as a literal-historical passage. He believes that on this point De Bruijne follows Halpern too uncritically, and that by doing so he contradicts his own primary thesis – namely that biblical authors were careful to distinguish between fact and fiction. If they intended to introduce fiction or myth in an historical account, we may assume that they marked that very clearly. Van den Brink believes that occasionally we may be able to notice such markings, for example in the statement about the “sons of God” in Genesis 6, but even here he has his questions. Generally, he writes, he agrees with the theologian A. Noordgraaf, who urged caution

“because elements like myth and saga have all too often been used to deny the factuality of the event.” Halpern’s decision to consider 1 Kings 13 to be fiction because of his disbelief in miracles teaches us to be extraordinarily critical with respect to any suggestion about the presence of myth or other forms of fiction in historical texts – unless, of course, there are explicit pointers to such a presence.

A similar conclusion is reached by the other two speakers on biblical historiography, namely the German theologian A.D. Baum and H.J. Room, pastor of the Reformed church at Harderwijk.<sup>3</sup> Baum, a New Testament scholar who studied in Kampen under Dr. J. van Bruggen, concentrates on De Bruijne’s suggestion that the practice of inserting fiction and myth may have been followed especially in cases where sources were scarce. Questioning that assumption, he states that he knows of no historical sources from the Greek and Roman (and therefore the New Testament) period that mention such a usage. He also doubts that it existed in Old Testament times. As has been well attested, biblical historians wrote with literal-historical intent.

H.J. Room, who specializes in Old Testament studies, also expresses doubts on this particular theory. With respect to De Bruijne’s statements regarding “white spots” and the need for broad brush strokes in Genesis 1-11, he remarks that much in these chapters is, in fact, narrated in detail and with great precision. In his opinion the differences between Genesis 1-11 and the rest of the book are not as profound as is sometimes assumed.

### **Historicity and metaphor**

While expressing doubt on the matter of fictive elements in historical accounts, Baum, the second speaker, welcomes De Bruijne’s statements regarding the truth claim of biblical history. As to the historical books of the New Testament, his own area of expertise, he fully endorses De Bruijne’s

position. New Testament historians lived in the Greco-Roman world, and the available evidence makes clear, he remarks, that a primary rule for historians in this world was to tell the literal truth. We have manuscripts from ancient historians and philosophers wherein they state this in so many words. That New Testament historians honoured the same rule is evident, for example, in the work of Luke. This author shows his close association with the prevailing practice by modelling the prologue to his books on that of contemporary secular historians and by emphasizing that he has “carefully investigated everything from the beginning” (Luke 1:3). Baum concludes that Greco-Roman and New Testament historians were inspired by the same love for truth as modern are. Because he is not an Old Testament scholar he hesitates to make a similarly definitive pronouncement with respect to Old Testament historiography, but he is inclined to support De Bruijne here over against Loonstra.

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*We must of course do what we can, but the best means of guarding against negative influences from both left and right is still to be found in the confession.*

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Baum further agrees with De Bruijne that Reformed theologians should be more open to the metaphoric potential of historical texts in the Bible – for example, by noticing the possible metaphoric “surplus value” of literal passages. The New Testament itself provides examples here. Paul interpreted the Israelites’ passing through the Red Sea as pointing to baptism and saw in the two sons of Abraham an allegory of two covenants. At no point did Paul state that the passages

were *intended* as figurative; he simply *interpreted* them as such – but without denying their literal-historical truth. Something similar applies to the New Testament accounts of Jesus’ miracles. The accounts of his healings, for example, refer to what literally happened but symbolize at the same time a different event, namely the forgiveness of sins.

And finally, Baum supports De Bruijne’s reference to ancient narrative conventions. One of the most striking ways in which biblical history writing differs from its modern counterpart is in its dealing with quotations and in the use it makes of direct speech. When quoting from the Old Testament, New Testament writers often do not do so literally. And the statements Jesus made at certain occasions are usually reported differently in the different gospels. The same convention, he remarks, was evidently followed in the Old Testament. In the books of Genesis up to and including Kings there are close to 100 instances where people’s statements are cited in direct speech, and in practically all cases the choice of words in the second citation differs from that of the first. By way of example, Baum suggests a comparison between Genesis 24:1-27 and Genesis 24:34-49.

Baum goes on to show that this usage was an accepted convention in Greco-Roman historiography, and that it was not seen as detracting in any way from the accuracy of the statements in question. Ancient historians took pains to make this clear, explaining that although their choice of word differed from the original, the meaning remained the same. In short, as Baum concludes, “The literary freedom of the ancient historian concerned only the form of the direct quotations and not their historical content. Both writers and readers. . . realized this.” He remarks that the convention may seem strange to us, but that at least in one respect we come close to following it. His reference is to the work of translation. A translator uses different words from those used in the original, but this in itself does not make

his work unreliable. As long as it gives a correct translation of the original words in the receiving language, it is considered an accurate and legitimate rendering.

### **Inerrancy and infallibility**

The last of the three speakers on biblical historiography, H.J. Room, expresses appreciation for De Bruijne's initiative. He emphatically rejects allegations that his work is of a Bible-critical nature. De Bruijne's goal is, rather, to achieve a clearer understanding of the Bible's intention and message. In the process he does not hesitate to refer to questions and issues that tend to come to the fore in discussions on biblical authority. This openness makes him vulnerable, for misunderstandings arise easily, but it does not justify the accusation of a Bible-critical attitude.

Room emphasizes that he makes his presentation as part of a discussion that is being held within the legitimate boundaries of Reformed theology. It is in this context that he raises a number of questions of his own. The most important one is a methodological one: in his opinion De Bruijne approaches many of the issues he raises in too global a fashion. Much of Room's presentation is devoted to attempts to refine the method.

In this connection he also touches upon the matter of biblical inerrancy. De Bruijne spoke of possible errors and discrepancies in the Bible, and considered the possibility that these existed already in the original manuscripts and not only in the copies we now have (*Woord op schrift*, pp. 185-7). Room agrees with him on this point. He also believes, however, that de Bruijne could have spoken more guardedly on the topic of biblical errors. Apparent errors always occur *within a context*, and that context may be unclear to us. Often the problem is a lack in our understanding, as a result of which we see errors where they do not necessarily exist. He believes that in any case we should be sparing in using the word "error" when speaking about the Bible. After all, we are dealing with the Word of God.

At the same time Room notices that we are confronted here with a gap in Reformed teachings about biblical authority. As far as he can see, Reformed theology has never explained the relationship between the doctrine of biblical infallibility and the possibility that the Bible contains errors. It has often rejected the fundamentalist theory of inerrantism (according to which there are no errors in the original manuscripts,

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*One of the most striking ways in which biblical history writing differs from its modern counterpart is in its dealing with quotations and in the use it makes of direct speech.*

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only in the later copies), but without explaining how the inerrantist position differs from that on biblical infallibility. Room concludes by suggesting that we will be wise in our reading of Scripture to pay attention to the manner in which the Lord Jesus Himself spoke about the Bible.

### **Response**

In his response,<sup>4</sup> De Bruijne gives a good deal of attention to the issue of fictive elements in accounts that are presented as historical. Criticisms on this point had reached him from more than one direction, and he had already in his introduction to the conference admitted that in *Woord op schrift* he too readily followed Halpern on this point (644).<sup>5</sup> De Bruijne repeats this admission in his response to the three speakers, but adds that much is still unclear. While it is not possible to state definitively that the convention existed in Old Testament times, it is equally impossible to prove that it did not exist. There are indications, also in the work of conservative scholars on ancient historiography, that may point

to the contrary. Further research is necessary (739f.). De Bruijne leaves it at that. But as critics have rightly argued, such a convention, if it indeed existed, would seem to contradict de Bruijne's principal thesis that biblical historians took great care to distinguish between fact and fiction.

Another topic in his response concerns the matter of errors and discrepancies in Scripture, for example in the early chapters of Genesis (although not only there). In connection with Room's remarks, De Bruijne admits (as he already did in his introductory speech) that he should have spoken with greater reserve. He also agrees with Room's comments regarding the lack of consensus among Reformed theologians on the question of biblical inerrancy. On the one hand, many a Reformed exegete speaks freely about possible "errors" in Scripture, but on the other we subscribe to the doctrine of biblical infallibility. It is often stated that this doctrine does not imply faultlessness. But then what does it imply? De Bruijne continues to reject, as he did in *Woord op schrift*, the theory that although the manuscripts we now have may contain some "errors," the original manuscripts were faultless. That, he says, is pure speculation, and it fails to explain why God should have provided faultless original manuscripts, which got lost, and then allowed errors to appear in the manuscripts that were preserved.

De Bruijne says he understands why people hold to this theory. Fearing a careless use of the Bible, they sooner adopt a forced explanation than allow questions about the trustworthiness of the scriptural text. He believes, however, that offering forced explanations is in the end counter-productive and will only aggravate the problem. It is time, he thinks, to improve our theology regarding biblical infallibility. But in the meantime we should indeed be careful in our speaking of possible "errors" in the Bible. If we continue using the word, it would be good always to speak of "apparent errors," or "problems for which the idea of an error would seem to offer the most satisfactory solution" (752f.).

Lastly, there is the matter of the antithetical use of myth in the Bible. We have seen that De Bruijne suggests that possibility in connection with the passage in Genesis 6 about “sons of God” marrying “daughters of men.” According to this view, the passage would be interpreted not literally but metaphorically. In spite of the criticism the suggestion has aroused, De Bruijne maintains his original position. To make a critical use of myth (and in the process to negate it), he argues, is different from inserting a fictive story. In response to the concern his suggestion has aroused he does, however, introduce some qualifications. Firstly, he admits that he knows of no other convincing example in Scripture, so that the use of the convention, if it indeed existed, will have been exceptional. Secondly, he explains that the idea is not to be defended simply because “it could happen” in ancient-oriental historiography. The exegesis must do justice to the biblical text. Scripture explains itself. At the same time, he adds, the text must not be isolated from its context. It is in the interaction between text and context (biblical, but also historical and cultural) that we seek to understand the text as God gave it at a specific time and place (753).

De Bruijne further points out that none of the prevailing *literal* interpretations does justice to all aspects of the text. Earlier he had already argued that it is not uncommon among orthodox theologians dealing with this passage to rely heavily upon external context – something for which he himself has been criticized. He mentions that orthodox theologians have suggested, for example, that the “sons of God” may have been angels, or else that the term may have referred to tyrants, and both explanations have been supported with reference to extra-biblical sources.<sup>6</sup> A major difference between these suggestions and De Bruijne’s, however, remains: in the former cases the literal-historical meaning of the text was preserved, whereas in De

Bruijne’s it is not. One problem with his suggestion is no doubt his use of the word “myth” (see in this connection the warning by A. Noordeggraaf), but another is that his proposal is once again difficult to square with his principal thesis that what is presented as literal in the Bible must be interpreted as such (although it may be shown to have a metaphorical “surplus value”).

In conclusion, it may well be that De Bruijne’s suggested interpretation of Genesis 6:1-4 raises as many questions as it seeks to solve. It would seem that the most we can say at this moment about the passage is, in the words of H.J. Room (p. 672), that “we do not (yet) quite understand what we are told here,” and leave it at that.

So much, then, for De Bruijne’s views on the role of non-literal language in biblical historiography and for the questions to which they have given rise. As I hope the foregoing has made clear, De Bruijne’s work substantially contributes to our understanding of the Bible. Especially important are the proofs he supplies (1) in support of the literal intent of biblical historiography and (2) for the manner in which an awareness of the role of figurative language in historical accounts can aid our understanding of these accounts. It has also become evident that questions remain. The attempt to arrive at a biblical hermeneutics, as De Bruijne himself has pointed out more than once, will have to continue.

In the next instalment we turn to De Bruijne’s essay on ethics.

<sup>1</sup> See the issues of May 31 up to and including July 26, 2003. References to these presentations within the text will have only the page number(s) of *De Reformatie*.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. van den Brink teaches dogmatics on behalf of the *Nederlands Hervormde Kerk* at the University of Leiden. His presentation appears in *De Reformatie* of May 31, 2003, pp. 645-9.

<sup>3</sup> For the presentations of Baum and Room, see *De Reformatie*, June 7, 2003, resp. pp. 663-9 and pp. 669-75.

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604-572-3401 (fax)

Declined the call to the Free Reformed Church of Albany, Australia:

**Rev. J.D. Louwerse**

of Fergus (South), Ontario.

Accepted the call to Neerlandia, Alberta:

**Rev. J.D. Louwerse**

of Fergus (South), Ontario.

Called by the church of Cloverdale, British Columbia:

**Candidate John Smith**

<sup>4</sup> For De Bruijne’s response, see *De Reformatie* of June 28 and July 5, 2003, pp. 737-41 and 751-5 respectively.

<sup>5</sup> His opening speech to the historiographical discussion appears in *De Reformatie* of May 31, 2003, pp. 642-5.

<sup>6</sup> See de Bruijne in *Woord op schrift*, pp. 190f., and also in *Nader Bekeken*, May 203, pp. 138f., where he is in discussion with Dr. H.J.J.C.J. Wilschut, Reformed pastor in Assen.

# Installation of the Rev. Dr. A.J. de Visser

On Sunday, August 22, the Rev. Dr. A.J. de Visser, new professor at the Theological College, was installed as minister of the Word in Ancaster Church.

Since Rev. de Visser came from another federation of churches, the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa, he needed to be called by one of our churches. General Synod Orangeville, 1968, decided that the church within whose boundaries the Theological College lies should be the calling church. As the West Mountain of Hamilton is part of Ancaster's parish, Ancaster Church was asked to extend the necessary call. In Article 6 of the Church Order we have agreed that every minister must be bound to a local church. Ancaster Church is very happy to serve the federation of churches in this way.

Rev. de Visser was installed by the pastor of the congregation, the Rev. G. Ph. van Popta. The text for the sermon was Ephesians 3:2-12. The main point made was how the new professor, while continuing as a preacher of the mystery of Christ, has now been given the added task of training other men to be preachers of the mystery of Christ.

After the service some letters of congratulations from sister churches were read. As well, the Rev. Dr. N.H. Gootjes spoke some words of congratulations on behalf of the

Theological College. The Rev. D. Vandeburgt of Trinity Church in Glanbrook did the same on behalf of Classis Ontario West, the classis at which Rev. de Visser had successfully undergone a *colloquium*.

In the afternoon, Rev. de Visser preached his inaugural sermon. His text was Ephesians 3:16-19. In the sermon, the preacher brought out how it is through prayer that we experience the fullness of God, his powerful work and incomprehensible love.

We are thankful the Lord has brought the de Visser family across to us and that Dr. de Visser may take up his place working at the College. At the same time, we are sensitive to the poignancy of the moment. The new professor is taking the place of our much beloved Dr. J. De Jong whom the Lord, in his inscrutable providence, removed from active duty through the hard reality of Alzheimer Disease. We commend the De Jong family into the continued gentle care of our heavenly Father.

We also commend the de Visser family into the Lord's care as they take up their place within our churches. May He bless Dr. de Visser in his teaching at the College. May the Lord use him as a tool in his hand to train other men to be preachers of the mystery of Christ and prayerfully to depend upon God for every aspect of their ministries.

## Facts on the de Visser family

A.J. (Arjan) de Visser was born in 1958 in Zaamslag, The Netherlands. He went to primary school in The Netherlands and moved to South Africa with his family in 1971. After following high school education in Bellville, a suburb of Cape Town, S.A., he moved back to The Netherlands to study theology at the Theological College in Kampen. He completed these studies in 1987 and attained a Doctorandus degree (similar to our Master's degree) majoring in dogmatics.

Candidate de Visser received and accepted a call for the mission work in Soshanguve, a black township close to Pretoria (South Africa). He worked there for the past fifteen years, first as an evangelist (church planting), then a pastor (building up the congregation), and then a coach (working with evangelists). Last year the mission work in Soshanguve-North was



*Dr. and Mrs. de Visser with children,  
Arjaan, Lennart and Marise.  
Picture taken on day of installation at  
Ancaster Church.*

completed with the installation of elders and a minister. Meanwhile other preaching points had been opened where Rev. de Visser worked with students and evangelists.

He also taught theology and trained students for the ministry. Since 1997 he taught Homiletics, Liturgics, Dogmatics, and Church Planting at Mukhanyo Theological College in KwaNdebele. Lectures were also given to pastors of a Reformed church in Zimbabwe.

He completed his Th.D. thesis in 2000 at Potchefstroom University. The result was the publication of *Kyrios and Morena: The Lordship of Christ and African Township Christianity*.

Dr. de Visser's favourite hobby is playing the piano.

In 1989, Arjan de Visser married Inge Oostdijk. Sister de Visser has been a teacher as well as a lecturer at the PABO Teachers' College in Zwolle, The Netherlands. She has been involved in evangelism work and has a Doctorandus degree in pedagogic studies from the University of Groningen.

The De Vissers have been blessed with three children, Marise (14), Lennart (12) and Arjaan (9) who were all born in South Africa. At home the family speaks Afrikaans although the parents admit to slipping into Zeeuws (their common mother tongue), when no one is listening.

Rev. J. Moesker is minister of  
the Canadian Reformed  
Church at Vernon, B.C.  
[jmoesker@canrc.org](mailto:jmoesker@canrc.org)

# The 35th Anniversary Meeting and 30th Convocation of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches on September 10, 2004 in Ancaster, Ontario

On the evening of September 10, 2004 a special event in the life of the Canadian Reformed Churches was remembered in the auditorium of Redeemer College in Ancaster, Ontario. It was the 35th year that a college evening was held. Some of you may remember the first one on a warm September evening in the Presbyterian church in downtown Hamilton. It was also the 30th time that degrees or diplomas were conferred on graduates. In total, including the four graduates of 2004, eighty-one students have received degrees or diplomas from the College! Our new professor, Dr. A. J. de Visser also officially took on his professorship on that evening. For these reasons the evening was an evening of thanksgiving to God, as expressed in singing from Psalm 92 and as mentioned in the word of welcome and in the opening prayer by the chairman of the Board of Governors. However, also some reason for sadness too. For the first time since he was



*The de Visser family.*

made professor, Prof. Dr. J. De Jong, who is on indefinite medical leave, was unable to take his place on the stage among the faculty. Also not present at this anniversary meeting due to frail health was Prof. Dr. J. Faber. Please continue to remember these men in your prayers.

## **Principal's report**

Dr. C. Van Dam delivered the annual principal's report. He reported on the past and present state of the College, touching on students, faculty, library, and the Pastoral Training Program. The full principal's report is published in this



issue of *Clarion*. After this report, Mr. F. Ezinga, organist of the Langley Canadian Reformed Church, capably led the singing from Psalm 110 on Redeemer College's magnificent organ. Prof. Dr. N.H. Gootjes then delivered a very interesting and enlightening speech entitled "How Much Did Jesus Know?" This speech is being published in two instalments beginning in this issue of *Clarion*. The address was followed by singing from Hymn 21, about the suffering of God's Son as true man.

### **Prof. Dr. A.J. de Visser**

Prof. Dr. A.J. de Visser was introduced to the gathering. You have most likely read about him already in a previous issue of *Clarion*. He was born in The Netherlands and immigrated with his parents to South Africa more than thirty years ago. He later returned to The Netherlands to study theology at the Theological University in Kampen. While there, he met and married Inge Oostdijk. On completion of his studies he was called by the Free Reformed Church of Pretoria for mission work in Soshanghuvu among the Sotho people. He also took part in the theological training of students for the ministry of our sister churches in South Africa. He completed his doctoral studies in missiology at the University of Potchefstroom. Synod Chatham 2004 approved brother de Visser's appointment as professor of Diaconology (study of practical pastoral subjects) and Ecclesiology (study of church history and church order) at the College. He accepted the appointment and in June he and his wife and their three children arrived in Canada. He was



*Students Ian Wildeboer, Reuben Bredenhof, Albert Gootjes, Pila Njuka*

installed as professor in a worship service in Ancaster on August 22, but until he signed the subscription form for professors of theology, he was not officially professor at the College. This subscription took place at the convocation, and Hymn 6 was sung in response. God grant Prof. Dr. de Visser all he needs to continue the work of Dr. De Jong.

### **Graduates**

The Master of Divinity degree was formally conferred by the principal upon four successful graduates of the College – Reuben Bredenhof (accepted a call to the Canadian Reformed Church of St. Albert, Alberta), Albert Gootjes (continuing studies at Calvin Seminary, USA), Pila Njuka (called by one of the Reformed churches on West Timor), and Ian Wildeboer (accepted a call by the Free Reformed Church of Armadale, Australia, to work as a missionary in

Lae, PNG). What a special event to see these men receive recognition of their theological training. God bless them, and may they never stop learning. Men will never get finished studying God's Word and his majesty. In recognition of special achievement in the study of New Testament Greek, brother Albert Gootjes was awarded the Selles Book Prize and received a sum of money. Psalm 134:1 and 3 was sung in response to the conferring of the degree to these brothers. Brother Pila Njuka spoke some words of gratitude on behalf of the graduates.

### **Women's Savings Action**

As has been the custom now for thirty-five years, the money was presented to the principal of the college by the Women's Savings Action. Sisters J. Van Dam, W. Gootjes and C. Nienhuis handed over a cheque for \$35,000 for the purchase of books for the College

library. This amount was appropriate for this 35th anniversary, and was gratefully received. We are proud of the library, and the Women's Savings Action has certainly been a major factor in making it what it is.

### **Foreign Student Bursary Fund**

A collection was held for the Foreign Student Bursary Fund. This fund was established by the Board of Governors in 2002 to help needy students from developing countries who are academically qualified to study at the College. Presently a Sudanese student is receiving funding for all four years of study, and money is being collected via collections and donations to assist a



*Women's Savings Action Presentation*

Russian student for the same number of years of study. During the collection brother F. Ezinga served the audience with a wonderful musical interlude which went over into the singing of Hymn 40. The collection for the Foreign Student Bursary Fund amounted to \$3726.88.

Rev. W.B. Slomp closed the convocation with thanksgiving prayer and with intercessions for the College, the students and faculty, and the churches. God bless the College so that it may continue to be a blessing to the churches of God here and abroad.



*Senate of the Theological College*



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](mailto:cvandam@canrc.org)

# Theological College Evening in Hamilton on September 10, 2004

## Principal's Report 2004

The Lord our God in his sovereign good pleasure has given the Theological College a good year. It was a year full of challenges and change but the Lord has blessed this institution and He has given his human instruments what they needed to fulfill their task and calling. In all the circumstances, both joyous and sorrowful, He has surrounded us in his care. We praise his holy name.

### College evening 2003

At our College Evening last year, the principal spoke on "Elders Seeing God" and the degree of Master of Divinity was conferred on Mr. David De Boer who is now minister of the congregation of Dunnville, Ontario.

### Students

Tonight we may witness the graduation of Mr. Reuben Bredenhof, Mr. Albert Gootjes, Mr. Pila Njuka, and Mr. Ian Wildeboer.

The senate has admitted to the first year study for the Master of Divinity program the following new students: Mr. Rolf Den Hollander from Toronto, Mr. Stuart James Harsevoort from Burlington, Ontario, and Mr. Cornelis Kleijn from Pretoria, South Africa. The senate has also admitted to the Diploma of Theological Studies program Mr. Andrew VanderHeide who comes to us from Albany, Australia. Enrolled as a special student is Miss Francine Van

Woudenberg who hails from Winnipeg. The total number of students for the coming academic year, including one auditor, is sixteen.

### The vacancy filled

The illness of Dr. De Jong continued to have considerable impact on the College. We were constantly reminded of the frailty of our human lives and our total dependence on the Lord. May the Lord continue to encourage and sustain the De Jong family. They are grateful for the support they receive from many quarters in the communion of saints. On October 25, Dr. De Jong's twenty-fifth anniversary in the ministry of the gospel could be remembered and celebrated. To mark Dr. De Jong's departure from teaching, his meditations which have appeared over the years in *Clarion* are being published under the title: *Treasures New and Old*. You will be hearing more about this in the next while.

The College was blessed by the readiness of ministers and their consistories to help with providing the necessary instruction in the fields of Diaconology and Ecclesiology. We are grateful for the assistance given by Rev. J. De Gelder, Rev. W. Den Hollander, Rev. G. Nederveen, D.Min., Rev. Cl. Stam, Th. Drs., Rev. G. Ph. van Popta, Rev. J. Van Woudenberg, Rev. H. Versteeg, and Rev. J. Visscher, D. Min. Their labours are much appreciated.

Tonight we can witness the installation of a new professor of Diaconology and Ecclesiology, Dr. A.J. de Visser. Much work is hidden behind this moment involving the Senate, the Board of Governors, the Synod which met in Chatham in February, and finally the official appointment by the Board. But that was not the end. Dr. de Visser was in South Africa and so after much red tape he can be here. Welcome, Dr. and Mrs. de Visser and children! May the Lord bless this appointment and cause our brother to be a great blessing for the College and Christ's church.

### The academic year

We are thankful that the members of the senate could enjoy good health and strength this past year. We are also grateful for the assistance which our retired Prof. J. Geertsema was able to give by teaching a major course this past winter for Prof. G.H. Visscher so that Prof. Visscher could devote more time to working on his dissertation.

Besides the regular lectures, we were also able to have some special lectures during the past academic year. On October, Prof. Mark D. Vander Hart, Associate Professor of Old Testament Studies at Mid-America Reformed Seminary, spoke on the structure and themes of the book of Esther. Rev. R. C. Janssen, a graduate of our College who is pursuing graduate studies in Kampen,



*Senate, students and board of governors*

spoke on February 16, 2004, on his specialty, namely, "Aspects of Confessional Subscription." The senior students were privileged to have Mrs. Joyce De Haan speak to them on several occasions in the second half of February about different aspects of counselling and current issues relevant for the parsonage.

On April 6, 2004, the Theological College hosted an in-house academic conference with our brothers from Farel Reformed Theological Seminary in Quebec. Lectures were presented by professors A. Neele on "Exegesis, doctrine, and practice: a historical-theological approach." Prof. C. Van Dam addressed the issue of whether there was one office of elder, or two, namely, the teaching elder and the ruling elder. Prof. M. Veldman dealt with the "The Word of God and its anthropological implications in the thought of Karl Barth and Herman Kohlbrugge." Finally, Prof. N.H. Gootjes dealt with the issue "Miracles, are they still happening today?" It was good to have academic dialog and Christian fellowship with our Quebec brothers.

### **Faculty activities**

Academic conferences are an important way of keeping abreast of

research and meeting others who are working in the same disciplines. The past November, Prof. G. H. Visscher was able to attend the meetings of the Evangelical Theological Society, as well as the Institute of Biblical Research, both meeting in Atlanta.

Although Australia is far away, the churches in the western portion of that vast land have a special place with us. Their support for the College in both prayer and deed is cherished. From October 2 to November 24 of last year, Professor and Mrs. J. Geertsema could visit our sister churches there. From all reports, his presence and lectures were much appreciated. Visits like this serve to strengthen the bond that binds us together in Christ.

### **Foreign student bursary fund**

Although the main focus of the Theological College will remain equipping men for the ministry in the Canadian Reformed and sister churches, we also have wonderful opportunities to train those who come from different parts of the world. We consider it a singular privilege to be able to share the rich heritage of the Reformed faith that the

Lord has given us with foreign students. This past year we have been able to support one foreign student from Sudan and we are committed to supporting him for the next three years as well. Another opportunity to help in a responsible way has also presented itself and the decision was made to also help another needy foreign student who would not otherwise be able to come. He also is a promising and deserving student. The importance of training men in Reformed theology and sending them back to work in their homeland cannot be overestimated. Please consider whether you may be able to make a contribution to the Foreign Student Bursary Fund.

### **The library**

Our library continues to flourish under the expert guidance of our Librarian, Miss M. Van der Velde. Our collection is growing slowly but with great care and we now have approximately 26,000 titles. Dr. Gootjes, the Assistant Librarian, together with the Librarian make the final decisions on what is ordered. Miss Catharine Mechelse then orders the books. This is one of her many tasks! We also much appreciate her work.



Also in the field of Library Science, there are constant new developments and it is prudent to be kept up to date. Our Librarian was able to attend the annual conference of the American Theological Library Association when it met in Kansas City on June 16-18. There she was also able to have meaningful contact with others dealing with smaller Reformed or Presbyterian libraries.

Since we could not imagine how we could do our work in equipping students to become preachers and pastors without a good library, we are always very grateful for the labours of the Women's Saving Action. Without their efforts we would not have our library. A heartfelt thank you to them and to all the representatives in the congregations and to all those who donate to this cause.

Our library could also not function without the willing hands and minds of volunteers. We would like to acknowledge the help of these volunteers, especially Mrs. D. Gootjes, Mrs. H. Vanderbrugghen, and Mrs. A. Schutten.

Currently our Librarian is also involved in upgrading the College website. Although the changes will not be visible for a while, feel free to check it out!

### **Board of governors**

With a general synod such as we had this past February, there is also a changing of the guard among the Board of Governors. Much work that is unseen and unnoticed gets done by these brothers who give of their time and expertise for the benefit of the school of the churches. Herewith we would like to acknowledge with thanks the contributions of the recently retired governors: Rev. R. Aasman, chairman of

the Board; Rev. B. Berends, vice-chairman of the Board; Mr. M. Kampen, chairman of the Finance and Property Committee, and Mr. J. VanderWoude. Unless one is intimately involved in the affairs of the Theological College, one has no idea of the amount of work that goes on behind the scenes to ensure a smooth running of a school like this. Thank you, brothers! We welcome the new governors, Mr. L. Jagt, Rev. W.B. Slomp, Rev. J. Van Woudenberg, and Mr. K.J. Veldkamp. May the Lord bless you and the entire Board in your labours for the training of the ministry. We look forward to continue to work together with you.

### **The Pastoral Training Program**

The College exists for the benefit of the churches that the gospel may continue to be preached and applied to the life of the body of Christ. In this connection, the Pastoral Training Program provides a vital and much appreciated service in helping students make the adjustment from the classroom to the parsonage. We appreciate very much the leadership given by Rev. J. De Gelder in directing this program.

### **In closing**

We are most grateful for the many mercies and blessings of the Lord our God in this past academic year. As Dr. De Jong never tired of saying: "Praise God from whom all blessings flow!" That is indeed what we wish to do, also in our academic work at the Theological College. We do our work in faith, encouraged also by the prayerful support from the churches, also in Australia. May our labours be pleasing to God and to the glory of his name!



*Students and Senate*

*Students (left to right): Reuben Bredenhof, Ian Wildeboer, Albert Gootjes and Pila Njuka  
Senate (left to right):*

*Prof. Geertsema, Prof. Visscher, Prof. Van Dam, Prof. Gootjes and Prof. de Visser*

Dr. N.H. Gootjes is professor of Dogmatology at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Hamilton, Ontario. [nhgootjes@canrc.org](mailto:nhgootjes@canrc.org)

# Speech at the Theological College Evening in Hamilton on September 10, 2004

## How Much Did Jesus Christ Know? (Part 1)

### Our limitations in understanding

When we speak about Jesus Christ, we quickly realize our limitations. We are able to understand people who live around us, for we ourselves were born from a human father and mother. The Lord Jesus Christ, however, is more than a man. He is God as well as man. He has both a divine nature and a human nature. Actually, He had a divine nature before He was born as a baby in Bethlehem. He was always God: from eternity he existed as God. At a specific moment in time, however, He assumed the human nature. He, who was God from eternity, also became man. The apostle John points to these stages in Christ's life when he says: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God." He adds later: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:1, 14).<sup>1</sup>

This is an astonishing miracle. The Son of God, who continued being fully God, also became a human. He was born as the son of Mary. This is a marvellous truth, which was, and still is, not easily grasped. It took the church several centuries before it was ready to speak about this with generally acknowledged clarity. The monument of this process of Christian thought is the Nicene Creed<sup>2</sup>, which is still used in the Christian church.

We all know this statement, confessing that Jesus Christ is true God as well as true man. We should not take away anything of his human nature, for He was born from Mary and is in every respect just like us, with the one exception of sin. At the same time, He continues to be God in the full sense of the word; He has a complete divine nature. There is nothing lacking in his divinity.

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*This is an astonishing miracle. The Son of God, who continued being fully God, also became a human.*

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Taking this as point of departure, the church has continually attempted to increase their understanding of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. Is it possible to see in his life and from his words and works how the two natures exist together? Without wanting to speculate about issues beyond our understanding, can we increase our understanding of the greatness of our Saviour Jesus Christ? For example, how much did Jesus Christ know? Was his knowledge divine

knowledge and did He know everything? Or was his knowledge limited just as our human knowledge?

This question is presented to us by God's revelation itself, for several statements concerning the knowledge Jesus Christ had during his life on earth can be found in Scripture. We may gain more insight into the life of Jesus Christ by listening carefully to what the Bible says about Him. That is all the more important for it looks as if the data given in God's Word do not fully agree. That leads to our question: How much did Jesus Christ know?

### How much did he know as a youth?

The first indication can be found in Jesus' youth. In Luke 2, several aspects of his knowledge are shown. First of all it is indicated that Jesus Christ, when He was growing up, did not know everything. When Luke describes his development, he mentions not only that the child Jesus grew in length and strength, but also that "he was filled with wisdom" (Luke 2:40). What Luke wants us to know is that the young Jesus gradually increased in wisdom. There were things He first did not know, but at a certain moment learned. Just as He increased in height and strength, He also increased in understanding and wisdom.<sup>3</sup>



*Dr. Gootjes – giving the main address.*

Actually, the Bible recounts an event in which this became evident. When Jesus was twelve years old He accompanied his parents on their journey to Jerusalem. At a certain moment He was in the temple, listening to the teachers and asking them questions. Everyone who heard Him was amazed at his understanding and his answers (Luke 2:46, 47). He was obviously ahead of his peers in the understanding of the Scriptures. At the same time, the fact that He asked questions makes clear that He wanted to know more. His knowledge was not complete. To this can be added that He did increase in knowledge. After He had returned to his hometown Nazareth, He “grew in wisdom and stature” (Luke 2:52). The last word means that Jesus grew physically – we would say that He had his growth spurt. At the same time his understanding was increasing and deepening. That shows his mental development. Just as He grew in height He grew in wisdom. He is fully human, and that also showed in respect to his knowledge.

### **As he grew older**

However, after Jesus had taken up his public ministry among the people of

Israel, a different aspect of his knowledge became noticeable. That began early, while He was gathering his disciples. When Jesus saw Nathanael He said: “Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false” (John 1:47). Nathanael’s honesty was obviously not visible on the outside, let alone that it could be perceived from the first moment of meeting. Yet, Jesus knew this before anyone had told Him. He revealed here his divine knowledge.<sup>4</sup> Actually, the event itself contains a double witness of his divine knowledge. Jesus began by stating concerning Nathanael that there was no falsehood in him, something that could not easily be verified. Then He confirmed the truth of his words by adding that Nathanael had been under the fig tree before he was called, a statement that could be verified. Combined, these two statements provide strong confirmation of Jesus’ divine knowledge.

The New Testament records many more instances showing that Jesus Christ knew things mere humans would be unable to know. The following examples are taken from the gospel of John which was used before.

- He knew early in his ministry that He would die at the hands of the Jews. After He had cleared the temple, the

Jews were outraged. In response He said, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days” (John 2:22). The Jews did not grasp the meaning of the expression “this temple” and questioned Him about it. In fact, Jesus had been speaking about his death and resurrection. At the time, no one could know about his execution. He himself, however, knew both of his early death and his rising from the dead.

- Another instance in which several aspects of his unusual knowledge became apparent can be found in his discussion with the Samaritan woman (John 4:17). Although Jesus had always lived away from the area where she was and this was apparently the first time He met this woman, He proved to know everything about her married life. The woman, probably uncomfortable with his statement and attempting to divert the attention away from her lifestyle, asked Him a question in return, but she did not deny the truth of Jesus’ words. Actually, she recognized Him as a prophet who could speak of what God had revealed to Him (19). In his answer, Jesus announced the change in worship which would soon take place (21-24). In this discussion, Jesus Christ proved to have exceptional knowledge, both of the past and of the future.
- Jesus’ knowledge of Lazarus was comprehensive. Not only was He aware of the fact that Lazarus had died (11:14), already before He was made aware of this He had stated that

Lazarus' illness would not end in death (4). In other words, He knew beforehand both Lazarus' death and his return to life.

- Jesus knew that it was Judas who would betray Him. Actually, He showed that He had insight in Judas' plans beforehand (13:11).
- During the night when He instituted the Lord's Supper, and before Peter actually had betrayed Him, Jesus also warned Peter of his betrayal (13:38). Later, John reports in general terms that Jesus knew all that was going to happen to Him (18:4).
- Before Jesus had to undergo the final suffering, He told his disciples about Pentecost. He taught them that the Holy Spirit would come on them so that they would remember all He had told them (14:26).

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*He not only knew what was going to happen to himself, He also proved to know in detail the lives of other people.*

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- Jesus also knew and made known to his disciples that in a little while they would not see Him, but a short while later they would see Him again (16:16). This shows that his knowledge extended not only to his own life, but included what would happen in the lives of others.



*The Theological College*

This is an impressive collection of statements. They all indicate that Jesus Christ did have a comprehensive knowledge. He not only knew what was going to happen to himself, He also proved to know in detail the lives of other people. He knew of the lifestyle of the unknown Samaritan woman as well as the thoughts of his disciples. He also knew what would happen in the future.<sup>5</sup>

This may give the impression that Jesus did not know everything prior to his public ministry, but after having taken up his ministry knew all there was to know. However, again the facts contradict our expectation, as we hope to see in the concluding article.

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<sup>1</sup> For more texts on Christ's two natures, see L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Fourth revised and enlarged ed.; Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1949) 316-18, and H. Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* (Fourth edition; Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1929) 231f; 263f. Bavinck mentions here that he has included many more text references in ch. 15 and 16 of his more popular explanation of the

doctrine in *Our Reasonable Faith*, (tr. H. Zijlstra; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), see 280-329.

<sup>2</sup> This creed was actually made by the Council of Constantinople 381, building on the decision of the Council of Nicea, 325. For the texts of these creeds, see Ph. Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (Sixth ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990) 57-60. An explanation of the background and content of these statements is given in J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (Third ed.; New York: Longman, 1970), 205-262; 296-367.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, A. Plummer, *The Gospel According to S. Luke* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark; fifth ed. 1964) 74; J. Van Bruggen, *Lucas: Het evangelie als voorgeschiedenis* (Second ed.; Kampen: Kok, 1996) 99, 103.

<sup>4</sup> L. Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (NICNT; rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 146; P.H.R. Van Houwelingen, *Johannes: Het evangelie van het woord* (Kampen: Kok, 1997) 75f.

<sup>5</sup> To this can be added that Jesus' knowledge was different from that of the Old Testament prophets: they received their prophesies from God or through the Spirit. This is nowhere stated about Jesus Christ.



J. Wiskerke van Dooren

# Lord's Day 21



Mrs. J. Wiskerke van Dooren published a Children's Catechism in Dutch. This has been translated with her permission.

Do you, too, go to church? Of course. You belong to the sheep of the good shepherd. You know, of course, that is the Lord Jesus. He told us himself: I am the good shepherd. And we are his flock.

The flock can also be called the church. The Lord Jesus takes good care of his sheep. He wants them to be well cared for. They should eat good food. That is why he gave us ministers. They are sometimes called shepherds. They should look after the sheep and give them good food.

Do you know what "good food" means? They should preach what the Bible teaches. And they do other things, too. They visit people who are ill, they teach catechism, and there is more. If

they would not do that, they would not be good shepherds. And they should no longer work in the church.

It is good that there are many good shepherds. At home, you pray for them: for the ministers, and also for elders and deacons. Your parents won't forget to pray for them, and you should do that, too!

And that is not all. Do you read *Mission News*, about the missionaries? They are sent to places all over the world, to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. For the church must be full. All who believe that gospel may belong to the church. It does not matter whether they are black, or brown, or white. You, too, belong to the church, and that is

great! There you can be full of joy for everything the Lord gives to you and promises to give you.

It happens that children of the Lord stay away from the flock. Even though they belong to it! They may be happy, but they also miss something. But they do not know it.

The church on earth continues on the new earth. That will happen when the Lord Jesus returns on the clouds. Then, all God's people will be together.

Do you know when the church began? With Adam and Eve. But they did not go to a big building with a pulpit. Together they spoke about the good things God had said to them and all He had done for them. Later they talked it over with their children. The church grew. During the time of Enos, something like our worship began.

Later still, they came together at the tabernacle, and after that at the temple. And after the Lord Jesus had come on earth, worship services as we have them began. Now you know why we say that the church has always existed.

All those people belonging to the church should be thankful for the Lord and for one another, and help one another. Together we are one big family. That is what the minister says, too. In church, he does not say: ladies and gentlemen. He says: brothers and sisters. The Holy Spirit works in the church, so that we worship God and live together as brothers and sisters.

