

PERSPECTIVE

INSTITUTE FOR CHRISTIAN STUDIES

VOLUME 38, ISSUE 1, APRIL 2004



2004 ARIHE LECTURES

Bad Fences and Iron Cages

By Jason Postma

M.Phil.F. Student

Since the dawn of time, humans have struggled to answer the questions: who are my neighbours and what is my responsibility toward them? In the face of globalization and recent world events, these issues become all the more pressing as forlorn faces and plight-filled places across the world are brought into our living rooms on the evening news. However, it is often difficult to understand these occurrences given our culture's fixation with information—horrific images are flashed on the screen and are, just as quickly, forgotten. The purposes they serve are to quell addiction for information as well as to enlighten us. Yet, the questions loom larger with every Wolf Blitzer report and Lloyd Robertson digest: who are my neighbours and what is my responsibility toward them?

Providing insight into this complex issue, Dr. Bradley Breems of Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights IL, visited ICS on March 18 and 19 as part of the Cross Links: The ARIHE Faculty Lecture series. This new lecture series, supported by the eight member

Continued on page 4

In this issue

The Funding Factor **2**

Hart Symposium **3**

Alumni Dinner **4**

ICS in Western Canada **5**

Ph.D. Profile: Dianne Bergsma /
The Soul of the University **6**

Faculty Focus / Books **7**

INSTITUTE FOR CHRISTIAN STUDIES
Christian Graduate Education since 1967

NEW APPOINTMENTS AT ICS

Continuity of Spirit

Two scholars on the cutting edge of their fields will join ICS's faculty in the next two years. This July, Nik Ansell, highly regarded as an energetic and visionary scholar as well as a popular teacher, joins ICS as its Senior Member in Theology, and the following July 2005, Ron Kuipers arrives to take up his new role as Senior Member in Philosophy of Religion.

"It hasn't sunk in for me," says Nik Ansell. "I still remember getting off the streetcar in August 1986 and seeing the ICS building for the first time—having only seen Willem Hart's line drawing of it in the Academic Calendar—and finding the notion that this place actually existed a bit of a surreal experience. If anyone at that point had said to me, 'in fifteen years you'll end up there as a Senior Member', I wouldn't have believed them."

Ansell and Kuipers are both graduates of ICS, having earned masters degrees in philosophical foundations in 1994 and 1990, respectively. Both of them continued on to doctoral work with ICS and the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. Kuipers was awarded his Ph.D. in 2002 under the supervision of Dr. Hendrik Hart of ICS and Dr. Hendrik M. Vroom of the Vrije Universiteit, while Ansell submitted his doctoral dissertation to the Vrije Universiteit this past fall.

"This is an important moment in the life of ICS," said ICS President Harry Fernhout of the appointments. "We celebrate the chance to appoint professors who are themselves graduates of ICS's master's and doctoral programs. This fulfils one of the aspirations of the Institute's founders—to train a generation of Christian scholars who would, in turn, train the generations that follow."

It's a sentiment that Ansell shares. "The reformational tradition at its best is very much a living tradition. Its character does change with the generations but there is a continuity of spirit that is very strong. There's a strong sense of identity that comes with standing in that tradition in my generation, and a great deal of responsibility that flows from it."

Prior to his appointment, Nik Ansell has been a popular lecturer at The King's University College in Edmonton, Alberta, where he has been assistant professor in theology for the past two years. He has been a prolific writer and reviewer in academic and popular Christian publications (including the British magazine *Third Way*) and is the author of *The Woman Will Overcome The Warrior: A Dialogue with the Christian / Feminist Theology of Rosemary Radford Ruether*. His 2002 essay, "The Call of Wisdom/The Voice of the Serpent: A Canonical Approach to the Tree of Knowledge" in *Christian Scholar's Review* was the winner of the Charles J. Miller Christian Scholar's Award for best article in that publication.

Nik is very much looking forward to "getting into the 'nitty-gritty' of theology" from a reformational perspective. "A lot of work has been done in exploring the philosophical end of things, but I feel now is the time to push into the heart of theology."

"This is a great time to be working in theology because there are a lot of new movements that are very constructive and have all kinds of points of contact, I think, with our own priorities. For example, the

Continued on page 3



(above) incoming Senior Member in Theology Nik Ansell; (below) Senior Member in Philosophy of Religion Ron Kuipers



The Funding Factor

Imagine the following news release from ICS:

This fall, the Institute for Christian Studies will become the second Canadian institution to offer a guaranteed level of financial support for graduate students pursuing doctoral degrees. The funding package, starting at a minimum of \$12,000 plus full tuition support, will be available for up to five years and will help put graduate students at the Institute on a more equal footing with their counterparts in the University of Toronto and in the United States.

"Graduate students are key to our strength as a research-oriented institution," said Academic Dean Lambert Zuidervart. "We want to attract the best and ensure they have the resources to achieve their academic goals. The guarantee is a big step in that direction."

Except for name changes, the above is the duplicate of a news release issued by the University of Toronto (U of T) in August 2001, when it became the first Canadian university to provide a funding guarantee.

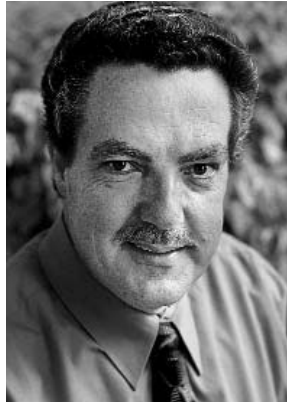
Why would a university do such a thing, and should ICS aspire to do the same?

Part of the U of T's motivation, as indicated above, is to meet competition from universities in the United States. To 'attract the best' you have to provide support comparable to American graduate schools. But this is only part of the story; U of T also wants to "ensure they have the resources to achieve their academic goals."

A February 2003 article in *University Affairs*, Canada's national university paper, put this issue in context. The article, entitled "The Long Haul," reported the results of a study examining how long it takes graduate students (in four selected universities) to complete their degrees, and how many actually complete them. The results were sobering. In the humanities and social sciences doctoral students who actually complete their Ph.D. take an average of 6 years to do so, but only slightly more than half of those who start doctoral studies actually graduate. The *University Affairs* article referred to a major U.S. study which identified four key factors affecting these completion and attrition rates:

- Admission process
- Funding
- Program procedures (such as regular tracking of student progress)
- The type of research (team or individual) and mentoring

On three of these factors ICS is in a position to do very well. In our



Harry Fernhout
PRESIDENT

admission process we can ensure that applicants are suitably gifted, and that there is a good match between the objectives of the program and the objectives of the student. In our *program procedures* we can see that there is regular contact between student and supervisor, also during the dissertation-writing phase. And as a small, interdisciplinary and community-oriented school, we can ensure that students are not isolated in their research and that they have a healthy mentoring relationship with their supervisor.

That leaves the funding factor, which the study identified as the most important. The key here is whether doctoral students find it necessary to get jobs, to support themselves and their families, immediately after completing their course work (which typically takes two years). If so, it becomes exceedingly difficult to find the time and energy for thesis research and writing.

Consequently their program of study stalls. To buy some time, a student may seek a leave of absence from the program, but this can be an abyss from which some never return. This exacts a double cost: the student is unable to obtain the credentials necessary for his or her vocation and society (specifically its academic institutions) cannot benefit from that person's contribution.

The U of T's strategy of providing five years of financial support for doctoral students is designed to provide them an opportunity and incentive to complete their studies before venturing into the job market.

Through its doctoral program ICS works to prepare Christian scholars for leadership as college and university professors. We are keenly aware that most of our students, and particularly our doctoral students, could get better financial packages elsewhere. This academic year we managed, for the first time, to provide tuition support for all of our doctoral students, but last year our average financial award beyond tuition was \$2,500. We recognize, and our students recognize, that, while we can provide a strong academic community, ICS cannot compete with U of T and others financially. That said, however, ICS should do its level best to ensure that a lack of funding does not lead to the double cost of thwarting a young scholars calling and stunting his or her contribution to the intergenerational project of Christian learning.

Like other institutions, ICS needs to address the funding factor. It is not a luxury for graduate students, but can make a pivotal difference in the long haul to graduation. ☺

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debate right now in evangelical theology between open theism and classical theism, that's a conversation we need to be involved in, because we can contribute to that."

"Understanding what it means to be a bearer of religious tradition will occupy my attention," explains Ron Kuipers of what he is looking forward to examining in the area of philosophy of religion. "The role religious communities play in shaping our judgment and our perception of reality—both in terms of understanding things outside our community and understanding things within our community that might need to be addressed."

ICS students are already familiar with Ron as a sessional lecturer at the Institute for the past seven years. For an academic at the start of his career, he has accrued a remarkable and impressive body of published work. He is the author of *Critical Faith: Toward a Renewed Understanding of Religious Life and its Public Accountability and Solidarity and the Stranger: Themes in the Social Philosophy of Richard Rorty*. Last year, he co-edited with Janet Wesselius the festschrift for Hendrik Hart, *Philosophy as Responsibility: A Celebration of Hendrik Hart's Contribution to the Discipline*.

Ron Kuipers will be starting his appointment in July 2005 as he will be working on a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) post-doctoral research grant over a fifteen month period beginning in April. Ron's proposed project for this prestigious award involves research in philosophy of religion on topics very close to the issues and themes of his proposed ICS courses.

For Ron, a key component of his work at ICS will be "continuing a personal, yet communal dialogue with this tradition I have grown up with, exploring how to remain a faithful member of it, and yet being a part of carrying it forward into a future that provides challenges that were not necessarily present with to a previous generation of scholars."

"I'm gratified that the trust that's been shown in me has now become real potential in becoming someone who now passes on the tradition. That's an honour and a challenge." ☞

ICS News

ICS's U.S. foundation, **Friends of ICS**, has appointed **Morris and Alice Greidanus**, to begin a new initiative to help ICS become better known and better supported. In that initiative they will initially be working deliberately in a limited number of churches to raise the profile of ICS and its mission, working toward gradually developing financial support from within those churches.

ICS continues to press on toward the goal of a legislative amendment expanding our degree granting powers. President



Harry Fernhout and Manager of Administrative Services Maureen Oulton are pictured with the thirty binders for ICS's submission to the **Private Education Quality Assessment Board** of the Ministry of Colleges, Universities and Training made this past February. In April, ICS will host the Program Review Panel (a team of three external

professors who will assess ICS's programs), one of the final hurdles left in the process.

At the Hart of Things

By Michael DeMoor

ICS Ph.D. Student

On February 27, a sizable group of people, both from within and without ICS, gathered together in the big classroom (which, with probably 25 to 30 people in it at any given time did not feel so big anymore) to discuss Henk Hart's life's work on the question of reason and religion. Specifically, the focus was on three sympathetic but critical evaluations of Henk's work by his colleagues and students that were published in the festschrift dedicated to him entitled *Philosophy as Responsibility* (reviewed in these pages by yours truly a few months ago). In that volume Jim Olthuis, Vaden House and Lambert Zuidervart each praised Hart for the work he has done advocating for a "level playing field" wherein explicitly religious scholarship is treated as an equal with secular thinking in the academic arena. Each, however, also had their criticisms of the specific ways he went about his project.



Jim, Henk's great friend and long-time colleague, questioned his understanding of reason and conceptuality, arguing that, by understanding reason as the key to finding ordered sameness in the world, Henk fails to do justice to the ways in which all dimensions of experience can yield "access to order."

Vaden House, one of Henk's former Ph.D. students and his erstwhile colleague, gave him kudos for his attempts to demonstrate that religious life is a holistic set of practices and commitments that cannot be reduced to propositional claims about God and the world and thus that it is not susceptible to being invalidated by theoretical reason. House wondered, however, if, though limiting its scope of competence, Henk does not fail to appreciate that science (and theoretical reason generally) itself cannot be reduced to propositional claims about the world and that it is itself a holistic set of practices and commitments, not all of which are "rational" on its own terms.

Lambert Zuidervart, Henk's successor as senior member in systematic philosophy at ICS, raised questions about Henk's understanding of "religious ways of knowing." Though he appreciated Henk's desire to show that our knowledge of God and of ourselves in relation to the "boundary issues of life" is a different kind of knowing than, say, rational scientific investigation. Lambert questioned whether Henk has made the distinction too thorough-going and that religious knowing is thus left entirely invulnerable to rational critique of the validity claims that it raises.

In the symposium, Henk gave a short paper responding to the above arguments as presented in the festschrift, followed by presentations by each of his three critics elaborating and re-stating their criticisms. After Henk was given his chance to respond, a lively discussion ensued, sometime re-reading long-standing arguments about the nature of concepts and order, but also raising new questions about the nature of science and of language. The give and take was testimony to the fact that the reformational tradition in philosophy, which Henk inherited from Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven and passed down to another generation of philosophers, is still alive and kicking—changing to meet the challenges of our day but remaining true to the task of demonstrating how all of our scholarly activities are grounded in our religious commitments. ☞

institutions of ARIHE (Association of Reformed Institutions of Higher Education), seeks to foster continuing dialogue within the associative members and to provide an example of Christian scholarship in action. Along with Dr. Breems, ICS Senator Dr. Clarence Joldersma and ICS Senior Member Dr. Robert Sweetman comprise the other lecturers in this program.

Open to the larger community, the lectures drew an audience comprised of ICS Senior and Junior Members, supporters and community members.

Breems, an ICS alumnus (M.Phil., 1976), presented two lectures outlining what he called a "curative-critical" approach to sociology, focusing specifically on ethnicity. As a sociologist, Breems heeded Dooyeweerd's call for a Christian sociology that attempts to uncover the underlying structures of reality. According to Breems, the heart of the Christian sociologist's task should be the care and

concern of society. In other words, the Christian sociologist must "lie lightly on one's shoulders the mantle of justice, working critically toward peace," liberating us from the "iron cages" of materialism and modernity.

Breems "curative-critical" approach uses the strong points of modern and post-modern sociology, namely the importance of context, the universality of the cultural aspect, and the effects of social structures on human action. However, Breems argues that there are norms and principles that guide the development of culture. While the norms of justice and love are universal, they cannot be enclosed with a certain philosophical methodology. In fact, love and justice are girded by the normativity of God's laws for creation.

Not only is ethnicity a norm arising out of the social aspect of reality, it can actually lead to justice. For example, through public dialogue, ethnic groups can seek and promote reconciliation. Thus, rather than something that is merely tolerated, there is value in ethnicity. Arising out of the context of colonialism and post-colonialism, ethnicity is an interactive situation that becomes a way of reclaiming identity in the face of contact with other groups. However, when ethnicity is threatened, it becomes closely guarded, often militantly. In such situations, ethnicity serves to build fences, reminiscent of Robert Frost's vivid imagery in "Mending Wall," where he states: "I let my neighbour know beyond the hill; / and one day we meet to walk the line / and set the wall between us once again".

Rather than promoting a multi-cultural vision of unity through ethnic diversity, one's ethnicity can quickly become a self-serving ideology.

The building of such boundaries is essentially un-neighbourly. According to Breems, one need only consider the actions of the Bush administration during the past three years to see this through. The disinterest of the U.S. government in the 2002 World Conference of the Environment, its refusal to sign the Kyoto Protocol and the waging of preemptive wars serve as startling examples. As Breems explains, in an effort to justify these decisions, the Bush administration has overemphasized "the American people" as an ethnic group. In the war against terror, old imperialist tendencies come to new light in the shift from Cold War containment strategies to present expansionist foreign policy. The concept of terror becomes a threat to the



Dr. Brad Breems

constructed idea of the "American people." Once nameless and faceless, terror is given a visage in the guise of Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein and kept hyper-real via television and the Internet. In such examples, the idea of a people and their connection to a place for identity becomes institutionalized.

When ethnicity develops into the idea of "people-hood," the created goodness of ethnicity is distorted. Rather than seeking unity and justice, ethnicity becomes an ideological construct that prevents care and concern for the other. The erected boundaries prohibit the possibility of discussion and growth with other groups. When ethnic groups become hermetically sealed off from each other, the result is a stagnant festering of intolerant identity. One's neighbours quickly become one's enemies.

In response to this, Breems argues that a critical-curative sociological approach will allow the Christian sociologist to appreciate the norm of ethnicity, while working to break down the walls of "the false call to people-hood". Thus, in order to identify our neighbour, we must be willing to destroy the high fences that separate us. Working together in unity through diversity, communities must seek justice and peace while demolishing the boundaries that separate them. Only through such a vision of love can we, along with Frost, proclaim:

*Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
what I was walling in or walling out,
and to whom I was like to give offence.
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
that wants it down* 🌀

Here Is God's Plenty

It had something of a *Field of Dreams* quality to it—if you build it they *might* come. And yet, the leap of faith was honoured as ICS's first Alumni Dinner, held on March 19 provided an opportunity for alumni to meet in a warm spirit of conversation and laughter.

Nearly forty alumni and ICS Senior Members gathered at Wycliffe College for a



chance to reacquaint with old friends and the world of ICS. Senior Member Jonathan Chaplin—himself an ICS alumnus—acted as host, digging out some interesting tidbits about ICS including the following from a speech on ICS's early years by Calvin Seerveld in 1977: "These bearded young fellows dropped out of the European sky like phosphorous bombs ... there were some fireworks, not to say explosions. Rocks got thrown ... toes were stepped on with the greatest concern. There was a heady excitement that some believed prefigured the rapture ..."

The highlight of the evening came with what H. Evan Runner Chair in the History of Philosophy Bob Sweetman described as "an after-dinner mint." Calling his speech, "Remodelling in the House of Subversion: A Flagrantly Flip History of ICS," Bob gave an amusing, if delightfully arcane, jaunt through ICS's history, concluding with the challenge, "We ICSers are, like everyone else, always Janus-faced. We look at and to a present culture and academy and at the same time at and to a community of faith that itself faces our present culture and academy even as it faces us."

In watching the spirited interaction of everyone present, one person suggested that Chaucer's description of his *Canterbury Tales*, "Here is God's Plenty" was an apt summation of the evening. It is hoped that this event will be the first of many such alumni events for ICS. 🌀

Farewell To Sylvia

Sylvia Keesmaat, who has taught biblical studies at ICS for the past 10 years is leaving her position as Senior Member in June. Sylvia, who home schools her two children Madeleine and Lydia with her husband Brian Walsh, wants to give greater priority to her family over the coming years.

Sylvia still considers ICS her academic “home” and will continue to teach at ICS as adjunct faculty, most likely teaching a course annually in a concentrated time period as well as speaking at ICS events in future.

Everyone at ICS will miss Sylvia, her perceptive insights, her passion for ICS as a community, and the pots of homemade vegetarian chili before evening classes!

We asked Sylvia some parting questions:

How do you feel about leaving ICS?

I'm rather torn about leaving ICS. On the one hand, I'm looking forward to staying home with my kids and having time to do justice to being home with them and other things in my life. I am, however, sad about leaving my students. In particular, I'm going to miss teaching incoming students. The nice thing about the courses I teach, particularly Biblical Foundations, is that every year I get to teach all the incoming students, and get to know the whole community, and I'm going to miss that opportunity very much.

What are you going to miss most about ICS?

My teaching. I will miss my students in the classroom and how much they teach me about reading the Bible.

How do you think Biblical Studies has changed in the past ten years, both at ICS and in the academy?

Biblical Studies is undergoing a huge change away from historical-critical readings of the Bible to a wider use of biblical theology—using different ways of reading the Bible and different perspectives. At ICS, we take seriously a lot of those ways of reading the biblical text—because we read it as a text that actually shapes the community for a certain way of living in the world, and that has dominated my teaching here, and I hope that will continue to be how Biblical Studies is done here. 🌊



Unexpected Importance

By Jenny Krabbe

ICS Western Canada Advancement Officer

Conferences that are led by “people of compassionate insight through the gift of their own vulnerability” speak powerfully, noted one ICS member. Jim Olthuis and an array of workshop leaders did just that at one-day ICS conferences in both Calgary and Edmonton during February and March respectively. Yes, there were two ICS conferences in Alberta—a first—each with just over 100 people attending.

Jim shared the same keynote, “The Beautiful Risk: Finding our Passion, Opening our Hearts,” presented in British Columbia and Ontario last year. His abundant use of story to convey the insights shared spoke to us all. We were reminded to see and hear and love. In the evening he offered “Retrospective: From Troth to Troth”, sharing his journey of 36 years as Senior Member in Philosophical Theology at ICS, noting key biblical texts that framed stages in his own understanding.

Afternoon workshops featured local people with related interests and insights. In Calgary, Glenn Friesens’ offering of “Spirituality and Depression: Dooyeweerd’s Model of Consciousness” was a popular choice. There was opportunity to gain insight on practical topics such as anger and grief or practical techniques such as the art of storytelling and spiritual exercises to assist our awareness of the presence of God in our lives. The dilemma of authenticity in relationships and role of relationship in community development were explored. The later topic focussed on meaningful relationships as key to community among young people, while another workshop allowed the participants to explore the lyrics of the rock group U2 and its commitment to authentic relationships with both God and people.

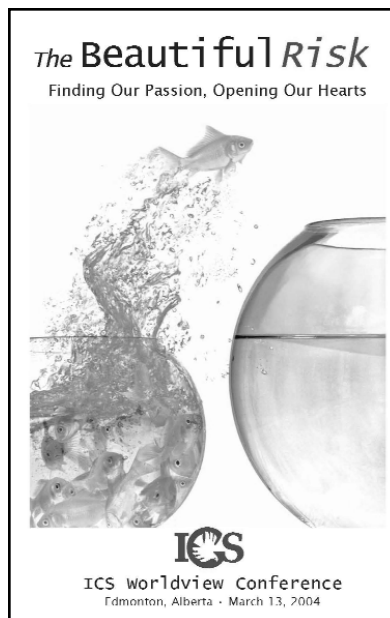
In Edmonton, you could participate in restoring your life through story or art therapy or listening. There was opportunity to explore adventure as a metaphor for life, and the stories of mass culture and their connection to our everyday lives. ICS grads Nik Ansell and Janet Wesselius helped participants consider God at work when we wrestle with him as in

the story of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22 and his relationship with us through the wild spaces of creation.

The food for thought and the food for lunch and dinner were appreciated, as was the food for the soul offered by Harry Fernhout’s devotions, the sax of Charles Zwaagstra and piano of Joachim Segger in Edmonton.

When we have a Senior Member of

ICS in the west we like to maximize the event. Jim Olthuis spoke to some 70 students of the University of Alberta’s Campus For Christ group and others. The students asked him to speak on “Purpose? Finding your Passion: a Risky but Beautiful Journey”. Jim’s presentation that passion is possible when we are authentic was, admitted one student, not what she had expected but none the less important to hear. Jim managed to squeeze in a morning with graduate nursing students who contacted him after reading his Book *The Beautiful Risk*, and that same day spoke to



the senior philosophy class at King’s University College. In Calgary he shared his work with counsellors at Sonshine Counselling Services.

Jim also spoke at Campus Café an event at the University of Calgary organized by ICS and a local Campus Ministry Committee, to some 30 students. In an on-campus setting with music and food, Jim spoke on the topic on postmodernism, contrasting modernity and our current post-modern experience. The topic was both interesting and thought-provoking for the students. When Jim explained how he found that postmodernism is making it easier for Christians to talk about their beliefs in public, students started searching their memories for personal examples to test this idea. There was some resistance in the audience as to how accommodating they found society to be toward Christian beliefs. The discussion during and after the presentation was indicative of the good level of interest in the topic.

The encouraging interest in one-day conferences hosted by ICS has spurred the Institute on to adding a new venue in Ontario next year. Stay tuned for developments and let ICS know if you are interested in participating in a conference-planning group. 🌊

Solid Roots, Daring To Fly

By Jennifer Neufeld Luymes

ICS M.Phil.F. Student

Dianne Bergsma is currently working on her Ph.D. thesis at ICS while teaching in the Centre for Women's Studies at Brock University, working as a Coordinator for the Ontario Public Interest Research Group at Brock University and staff writer for *Mercuric Perspectives Inc.* which provides weekly reflections and commentary on the Christian lectionary readings on their website: www.perspectives.ca We talked with her about her work and the influence ICS has had on her.

What brought you to the ICS? What has your journey been like?

Well, that was a long journey. It was just kind of a dream. I was a house wife, a stay at home mom. I started a job at Brock University in 1988, and later started an undergraduate degree in philosophy and women's studies at Brock. Then I did master's studies in philosophy at Brock. Some professors there that knew of the ICS encouraged me to attend, and I had also heard about ICS through the Christian Reformed Church tradition as well. I am currently working on my Ph.D. thesis on Julia Kristeva. I recently presented a paper called "Stabat Mater" at the "Mothering, Religion and Spirituality" conference at York University.

It is amazing that you are able to work on issues of motherhood, as you are a mother yourself.

I, with my husband Jerry, have four children and have had ten foster children, one at a time. Some of them were babies, and some of them were toddlers, some were teenagers. And now we have twelve grandchildren. It is my joy.

In what way has the ICS equipped you?

ICS was the first time in my academic career that I would be sorry that a course was finished as there would be so much more to say. And the whole atmosphere at the ICS was wonderful. If you declared yourself a Christian, you go out from that basis. So you can ask questions and you can do your scholarship from that perspective. ICS is where I feel I have been mentored blessedly in developing this kind of scholarship. You don't have to defend it. It gives you the confidence to say let's look at it this way, then that way. So I found that just being at the ICS was very affirmative and very supportive in my spiritual journey and academic life.

I understand you work in the Centre for Women's Studies at Brock University. What does that position entail?

I teach part time there. I have been teaching Introduction to Women's Studies which is basically a look at how women have been seen and considered throughout the ages, in philosophy, various religions, anthropology, and sociology.

I also teach an Experiential Learning Course. Instead of essays and exams, students do 50-60 hours of volunteer work and analyze it to see how the theory can be applied in practice. They also have to organize an event on campus, and come away with a deeper appreciation for the work involved.

I am excited about another course I teach this term called "The Mythical Woman in Legend and Religion". We look at the major world religions, how they started, how they developed and how women have been seen in


them. I have a strong focus on the mothers in the Hebrew Scriptures, from Sarah onward, and some of the women in Medieval times like Hildegard of Bingen. The course emphasizes that because they were before the Reformation, these are the mothers of the Reformed tradition as well.

I am also a big supporter of the CRC campus ministry at Brock. It is one of my biggest efforts on campus outside of my academic work.

I am interested to know how this research on Mothering, "Stabat Mater" and all these things fit into your work with the CRC. How do those tensions play out for you?

As a member of the CRC, I was challenged on my scholarship. And that was very difficult. But I feel that the CRC church has given me solid roots and sometimes, like I feel with our own children, it is only when you have solid roots that you can dare fly.

And then it is just a matter of how far you fly.

Or what direction you go in. And this is why it is important for me to be at conferences as well because you can check if you are on track with what others are saying. You also want to be careful that things are not offensive, and at the same time you want to raise questions, but not doubts. 




Renaissance, Not Retrenchment

ICS was in evidence at a major conference on Christian higher education held at Baylor University, Waco, Texas, on March 25-27.

The conference theme—"The Soul of the University: Faith as a Foundation for Intellectual Community"—expresses Baylor's strategic aim of sharpening its profile as a leading North American Christian research university. Baylor, a Baptist university, has over 14,000 students and has been substantially expanding its faculty in recent years.

ICS President Harry Fernhout appeared on a seven-member panel on "The Struggle for Excellence in Christian Higher Education" organized by the International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education. Jonathan Chaplin, Senior Member in Political Theory, served as respondent at a panel on "Christianity and Political Liberalism," and gave a paper entitled "Blessed be the Tie that Binds": Theories of Civil Society in Christian Perspective" at a panel on social theory. Several other people with ICS links played active roles in the event, including former and adjunct faculty and alumni. Former Senator Susan van Zanten Gallagher (Seattle Pacific University) also gave one of the concluding presentations.

Conference participants included individuals and representatives of institutions involved in Christian higher education from all across North America and representing a wide range of denominations and theological traditions. Among the central issues addressed in panels and plenaries were whether and how Christian faith could serve to bring about greater coherence and direction in the academy, both from the base of Christian institutions and as a presence with secular institutions; how it might creatively and critically engage leading currents of secular thought; and how it could better fulfil its global mission at a time when the great majority of Christians are now found in the "South" — a theme powerfully addressed by Joel Carpenter. The gathering demonstrated both the vigour and the diversity of Christian higher education today, and also laid out clearly both its opportunities and challenges. As the program put it: "we believe that renaissance and not retrenchment is the order of the day for Christian scholars." 

With the hiring of new faculty and two PEQAB submissions, the work of Academic Dean has absorbed much of **Lambert Zuidervaart**'s time. He learned recently that two of his writings on Theodor W. Adorno will be republished in *Critical Theory*, a four-volume anthology edited by David Rasmussen and James Swindall (SAGE, 2004). The collection will include the *Introduction to Adorno's Aesthetic Theory* (MIT Press, 1991), a book that contains parts of the dissertation Lambert wrote in the ICS/VU doctoral program. It will also reprint his essay on Christoph Menke's "deconstruction" of Adorno's aesthetics. On February 27 Lambert presented a paper titled "The Inner Reformation of Reason" as part of an ICS Symposium on Reason and Responsibility in Reformational Philosophy.



Sylvia Keesmaat had an article entitled "Discernment and the Lord's Supper" published in the April 2004 issue of *The Banner*. She is also involved in a series of

consultations that the Anglican Diocese of Toronto is holding on the issue of same-sex blessings. Sylvia's presentation at these meetings is entitled "Scripture and the Making of Decisions in the Church." During each consultation she also participates in panel that answers questions from the attendees. Her article on this topic, entitled "Welcoming in the Gentiles: A Biblical Model for Decision-Making" has been published in the book *Living Together in the Church*, ed. Chris Ambidge and Greig Dunn (Anglican Book Centre, 2004). On March 27, Sylvia presented a workshop at the Arts in Worship Niagara Conference entitled "The Bible and Worship: Shaping a Christian Imagination."

In January, **Doug Blomberg** led a seminar in ICS alumnus Johanna Selles' Christian Education course at Emmanuel College. He had papers accepted for the conferences of the Coalition of Christian Teacher Educators (May) and the International Network of Philosophers of Education (August). He proofed the final version of *Shrewd As Serpents, Innocent As Doves: Christian Schools After Post-Modernity*, to be published as a book chapter. At the end of March, he attended the Philosophy of Education Society conference, held this year in Toronto.

Bob Sweetman was in Palos Heights, IL in January giving his ARIHE lectures "An Embarrassment of Difference: Integral Christian Scholarship and our 'Inner Aristotelian'" and "In the Spirit of Things: Inner Reformation and the Adventure of Integral Christian Scholarship" at Trinity Christian College.

Earlier that month, **Hendrik Hart** was also at Trinity Christian College, giving two lectures to faculty.

Jonathan Chaplin recently completed an entry on 'Mediating Structures' for an encyclopedia of Catholic Social Thought. He wrote a column, "Reining in the state: lessons from a very British affair," for *Comment*, now a web-based journal, published by the Work Research Foundation. (www.wrf.ca/comment). He also has an article entitled, "Defining Public Justice in a Pluralist Society: Probing a Key Neo-Calvinist Insight," in the March issue of *Pro Rege*.



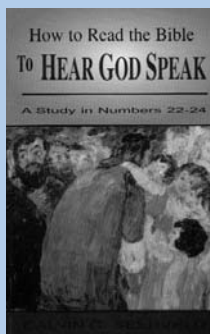
New Books

How To Read the Bible To Hear God Speak: A Study in Numbers 22-24 by Calvin G. Seerveld (Dordt College Press and Toronto Tuppence Press, 2003).

Having grown up in churches where what Seerveld terms a 'fundamentalistic' reading of the Bible is *de rigueur*, I often find myself searching for a way to think about the scriptures that avoids a shallow literalism without deadening or silencing God's voice. As a student, I try to find that way in jargon-filled journals and books of philosophy, but those often leave me detached. It's easy to forget that when I read the Bible, God is wanting not only good scholarship but a student on his knees. In this new, expanded edition of his 1963 book, originally called *Balaam's Apocalyptic Prophecies: A Study in Reading Scripture*, Calvin Seerveld offers his readers an alternative 'Reformational' way to read the Bible and hear God speak.

Taking the story of Balaam from Numbers 22-24 as his test case, Seerveld begins with a generous but pointed analysis of three methods of reading scripture: fundamentalistic, higher-critical and dogmatic. He carefully avoids caricatures, assessing strengths as well as critiquing weaknesses.

Seerveld's way of reading the Bible requires that we read the Bible



"on our knees," not alone but along with the community, coming to the texts with the desire to hear God speak and the belief that our desire will be granted. He identifies four components to the Reformational approach. "Telling the true story" means that the Bible-reader interprets any passage well to the extent that the reader's conscience is steeped in and shaped by the story as a whole, from creation to fall to redemption and consummation. "Discerning literary contours" and "detecting the history-making context" means understanding that God is telling us the story of the work of redemption through a variety of historically embedded literary forms, and that literalistic readings miss that story because they violate its historical, literary character.

For Seerveld, the Bible is a story meant to be *told*. It isn't a recording of what God said to certain people a long time ago—it's "a live telling, a proclaiming which asks those within hearing for a decisive response. The Bible is the inscription of God speaking." The scriptures are our "eye-glasses," which help us "read God's creational revelation aright" and directs us "in leading a daily life in God's world with meaning that lasts."

This new edition adds several illustrations and a long afterward, in which Seerveld supplements his critiques of the fundamentalistic, higher critical, and dogmatic methods with extended analysis and updated examples (notably a discussion of liberation theology as an instance of the dogmatic approach), and further develops his account of the Reformational way of Bible-reading. Seerveld's well-known talent for simple but evocative and even poetic writing makes for delightful and compelling reading, and scholars will find just as much to chew on as general readers.

Adam Smith



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Perspective is the newsletter of the Institute for Christian Studies
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ISSN 0847-0324

Printed in Canada
on recycled paper