

PERSPECTIVE

INSTITUTE FOR CHRISTIAN STUDIES

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News from the
graduate Institute
for Christian
Studies

A REPORT FROM THE HERMENEUTICS CONFERENCE

Wrestling with the Word of God

by Jamie Smith, Villanova University (ICS M.Phil.F. 1995)

In Jacob we find a faithful wrestler—one who struggles with Yahweh precisely because of his trust in the Lord, fighting for a blessing. In many ways the ICS conference *Trust and Suspicion? Hermeneutics in a Broken World* was also a place where we found community of faith, inspired by trust, wrestling with God's Word.

Struggling with the text of Scripture, the intent of this conference on biblical interpretation was to take up the task of Jacob: to meet God in Scripture and struggle with the way in which the Bible can be read in a postmodern world. How can we now, after Auschwitz, read passages in the Old Testament which seem simply genocidal? In the shadow of the horrific events of the 20th century, how should we hear the New Testament disdain for "the Jews"? How could a victim of spousal or sexual abuse trust in a Bible which includes the offering of spouses and daughters for abuse and rape? How can we take seriously the postmodern critique of suspicion of "metanarratives" and yet continue to trust in the Bible as the story of the community of faith?

An international group of scholars, activists, poets and musicians gathered to explore these kinds of questions, offering suggestions and answers in the form of testimony, poetry, music, workshops and lectures. For those accustomed to attending academic conferences, the spectrum of participants at the ICS conference was unique and refreshing. It included academic persons of course, but also pastors, chaplains and laypersons seeking to struggle with hermeneutics questions. The pastoral implications of these interpretive questions was continually emphasized, particularly in Walter Brueggemann's enlightening and extemporaneous discussions.

Brueggemann, along with fellow Old Testament scholar Phyllis Trible, provided keynote addresses, as did the Institute's Sylvia Keesmaat and James Olthuis. Following Olthuis's presentation, Bud Osborn, a poet from Vancouver deeply acquainted with the brokenness of a postmodern world, read from his poetry, accompanied by the jazz band

Lonesome Monsters.

Thursday and Friday the participants attended interactive workshops and panel discussions on various aspects of the conference theme. Many found the panel devoted to "Postmodernism and Reformed Hermeneutics" to be a highlight. Fulfilling a mandate given by the ICS Board following the 1992 ICS anniversary conference, this panel sought to clarify the implications of

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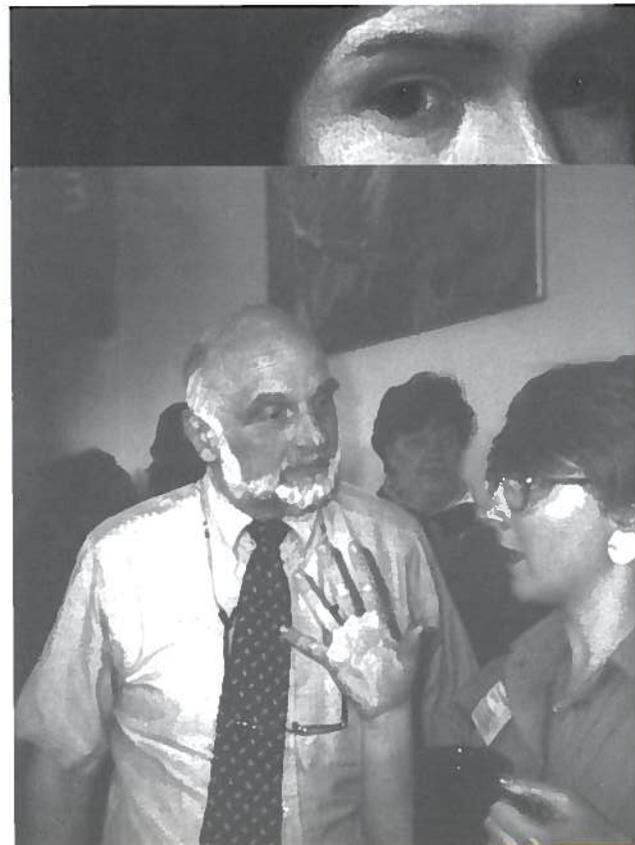
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Walter Brueggemann discusses some of the finer points with Sylvia Keesmaat.



Shaping a Living Tradition IV

Shaping a Living Tradition is the Institute's theme for the 1996-97 academic and fiscal year. The choice of this theme was prompted by significant transitions in the make-up of ICS's faculty. A time of transition provides an opportunity to take stock of where we have come from and where we are going. My first column in this series explored the place of the ICS faculty in shaping a living tradition. Subsequent columns addressed the role of the support community and the place of students. In this final instalment I want to touch on what it means to be part of a living tradition.

Entire books have been written to explore and explain what "tradition" is. For our purposes, we can say that "tradition" is a pattern of understanding and ordering the world, and our place in it. This pattern provides us with a set of tools (concepts, principles, outlooks, etc.) which we employ as we go through life, trying to make sense of our experience. When such a pattern of interpreting and ordering life persists through several generations we can speak of a tradition.

ICS has its roots deeply embedded in the Christian faith as it has been understood and lived in the Calvinist branch of reformation Christianity. The Institute's faculty members are part of a tradition of scholarly inquiry closely associated with this branch of Christianity. More specifically, the Institute's tradition of inquiry has been shaped by reformation thinkers such as Calvin, Kuyper, and more recently Dooyeweerd, Vollenhoven and Runner.

This tradition of scholarship shares with other streams of Christianity a desire to affirm Jesus Christ as the one by whom all things were created, in whom all things hold together, and through whom all things are reconciled to God (Col. 1:16-20). A distinguishing mark of the Institute's tradition is its painstaking effort to translate this broad confession into a persistent emphasis on the inner renewal of scholarship, that is, scholarship which demonstrates the inner point of connection between a Christian worldview and the nuts and bolts of various fields of study. The ICS faculty receives the heritage of this tradition of inquiry as a gift and believes that it has fruitful resources to assist and guide efforts to gain reliable and redemptive insight into created reality.

It is difficult to over-emphasize the importance of having a tradition. At ICS, our tradition provides orientation and direction in the complex task of

understanding God's world. Our tradition puts us in touch with the hard-won, God-given insights of previous generations, and gives us a sense of place as we interact with many conflicting understandings.

But being part of a tradition has its risks. To highlight these risks, I will modify an image used by James Olthuis in his presentation at our recent ICS conference on hermeneutics. Following a tradition (of interpretation), said Jim, is a bit like driving on an expressway. The road is clearly marked, and there are strong guardrails to keep traffic on the right path. Following the expressway provides a relatively fast, safe and uncomplicated journey. Expressways enable us to follow the broad, direct route from point A to point B.

But as we all know, expressways often avoid the most interesting corners of the country. Driving on the expressway can be boring and mind-numbing. If we never take the narrow byways, we will never see the diversity of the land; we may forget that roads have potholes; we may become oblivious to the backwoods and the city slums. We may fail to recognize that expressways themselves can do damage by dividing the landscape.

Tradition and its guardrails are vitally important. But if the guardrails block the exits, preventing us from exploring the countryside, the expressway is no longer serving its true purpose.

A living tradition both affirms the importance of direction and guardrails and encourages exploration of the byways. A living tradition welcomes opportunities to double back, to seek out what we may have missed before, or to find new vantage points from which to appreciate the vast array of creation.

Above all else, a living Christian tradition is rooted in trust. Those who pursue this path know that the most basic thing we can say is this: "For God so loved the world that he gave..." The bottom line of the Christian story is that God's love can be trusted. In that trust we find our freedom to explore.

What I am referring to is the principle the sixteenth century reformers had in mind when they coined the phrase *semper reformanda*: always reforming. Rooted in our tradition, our calling as followers of Christ is to venture on in trust, seeking more and more to give expression to our conviction that God has put all things under Christ's feet and made him the head over all (Eph. 1:22). For ICS this means that our scholars, rooted in a tradition, may not simply repeat the verities of the past. An immense amount of work awaits our efforts to witness to Christ as the Lord of learning.

"Every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old." (Mt. 13:52). This is the essence of *shaping a living tradition*.

“
ICS has its roots deeply embedded in the Christian faith as it has been understood and lived in the Calvinist branch of reformation Christianity.
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Hermeneutics conference

(Continued from page 1)

postmodernism for the Reformed community's understanding of Scripture. Marked by sincerity and passion, the discussion sparked by the panel was constructive in a spirit worthy of the Spirit with whom we struggle.

While conference participants wrestled and struggled with the God of Scripture, we did not leave without a blessing. Precisely in our lament (expressed so well in the devotions led by Brian Walsh and Richard Middleton), which is a suspicion and complaint rooted in faith, the community of faith which gathered at the conference expressed a very deep Christian trust in spite of a broken world—a faith and hope that things *ought* to be, and one day *will* be otherwise. Though in our contemporary, broken world we must commit ourselves to a hermeneutics of trust *and* suspicion, our faith in the goodness of creation signals a trust *before* suspicion.

Drama student breaks new ground

Chris Cuthill is used to pressing against the limits of the schools he attends. In his first year in the M.Phil.F. program in aesthetics at ICS his written work is in the form of stage plays, with the help of his teachers Sylvia Keesmaat and Robert Sweetman. In Keesmaat's Biblical Studies course he is writing a play relating the prophecy of Habakkuk to post-holocaust theology. For Sweetman he is writing a play placing Dirk Vollenhoven's problem-historical methodology in a theatrical metaphor in which the history of philosophy is told by two players.

Cuthill describes himself as a protester of injustice while a student at Redeemer College. He says he did a lot of protest art work and wrote controversial articles for the student newspaper. He was very active in the arts, especially theatre, and directed Redeemer's presentation of Bertolt Brecht's *Threepenny Opera*.

Cuthill grew up in the countryside near Hamilton, Ontario. His first experience with Christianity was with Pentecostalism. Later he moved into a faith cult movement. He enrolled at Redeemer because it was known as a Christian college. But when he experienced the reformational Christian worldview there, "it was a light that dispelled the darkness," he says.

While at the Institute Cuthill is working with Brookstone, a Christian theatre company in Toronto. He is interested in playwriting and directing, and some day he would like to set up his own theatre company.



“**Cuthill describes himself as a protester of injustice while a student at Redeemer College. He says he did a lot of protest art work and wrote controversial articles for the student newspaper.**”

alumni activities

Jonathan Chaplin (M.Phil. 1983) has written a chapter "Christians and the public realm" for the book *Agenda for Educational Change*, published in England by Inter-Varsity Press for a vibrant evangelical Christian movement in Christian schooling in England.

Henry Luttikhuisen (M.Phil.F. 1989) was recently appointed to a tenure-track position as assistant professor of art history at Calvin College. Henry has taught at Calvin for a few years on annual appointment.

ICS co-sponsors conference on Christian higher education in Canada



Calvin Seerveld

Ken Badley, former ICS Senior Member in Philosophy of Education, spearheaded a recent three-day conference called WHAM (With Heart and Mind) held at Ontario Theological Seminary, which brought together 60 leaders from many of Canada's post-secondary schools of higher education. This conference follows a similar one held two years ago in Regina, Saskatchewan.

Calvin Seerveld was one of two featured keynote speakers. His talk on "Thankful Imaginativity Inside Schooling" was the centerpiece for most of one day's discussion. Other conference speakers included ICS alumni Clarence Joldersma, Michael Goheen and Tom McCormick.

On the day before the conference Badley and Gordon T. Smith of Canadian Theological Seminary led a discussion of research they are doing on characteristics of seminary professors who are outstanding teachers in the later years of their careers.

faculty activities



Robert Sweetman gave five weekly Lenten presentations at the (Anglican) Church of the Redeemer on "The Mystery of Love and the Spirituality of Suffering in Julian of Norwich's *Showings*." The series explored the fruitfulness of Julian's spirituality for contemporary faith in the context of worship and prayer.

He also wrote a chapter titled "Christianity, Women, and the Medieval Family" for the book *Religion, Feminism, and the Family* edited by Anne Carr and Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, published in 1996 by Westminster/John Knox Press.

Sweetman contributed a chapter with the title "Thomas of Cantimpré, *Mulieres Religiosae*, and Purgatorial Piety: Hagiographical *Vitae* and the Beguine 'Voice' " to the book "A Distinct Voice": *Medieval Studies in Honor of Leonard E. Boyle, O.P.*, published by the University of Notre Dame Press.

Sweetman was speaker for the ICS Symposium held January 31, at which he presented a paper on "Reading-for-Perfor-

mance as Performance: The Case for Thomas of Cantimpré."



George Vandervelde joined other theologians for a discussion at Ontario Theological Seminary with British theologian John R.W. Stott, for which Stott shared his vision for the training of theological leaders for churches in disadvantaged countries, a ministry for which Stott has set up a Foundation.

In February Vandervelde spoke at Waterdown, Ontario, at the first of a series of community presentations. Vandervelde's presentation on unity and divisions in the church received an excellent response.



Sylvia Keesmaat's article on "How Prayer Changes God" was featured in the March 10, 1997, issue of *The Banner*. Her article "A World Where Righteousness is at Home" was published by the

Barnabas Anglican Ministries in its publication *InCourage*. She lectured in February at St. Jude's Anglican Church in Oakville on "Apocalyptic Literature in the New Testament."

Keesmaat gave two papers at the annual meeting of the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies in Newfoundland. They were "Paul's World Creation: Suspicious Rhetoric or Trust-Evoking Speech" and "Bearing (Intertextual) Good Fruit in Colossians 1:6 and 10."



James Olthuis gave a paper "Donner la Mort / Donner l'Amour: From Derrida's Pure Giving to Irigaray's Mutual Loving" at the 21st annual conference of the International Association for Philosophy and Literature, held in Mobile, Alabama.



Paul Marshall attended the World Evangelical Fellowship's Triennial

Conference in Vancouver in May. He continues to write a monthly column for the newspaper *Christian Week*. He contributed a chapter "Liberalism, Pluralism and Education" to the book *Agenda for Educational Change* recently published by InterVarsity Press in England.



Marcille Frederick was affirmed as chair of the Peace, Justice and Social Concerns Commission of the Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada, and also as a member of the MCEC Executive Board.



Emeritus Senior Member **Calvin Seerveld** and his wife Inès travelled to Mexico City where he lectured at the Juan Calvino Seminary on the Older Testament Wisdom Literature and on Christian Aesthetics. Together they viewed

ancient Aztec culture in Mexican museums and studied the murals of Diego Rivera in Mexico City.

In April Seerveld gave the keynote address to the Christian school teachers of the Sarnia and Chatham, Ontario, region, speaking on "Skeletons in the Christian Classroom." He also gave an illustrated workshop on "God, Image-making, Faith Knowledge and the Christian Schoolroom."

from our students

Kerkham speaks at prestigious conference

Graduate student Ruth Kerkham gave a paper titled "Crossing Borders: Identity and Exilic Regeneration" at the College Art Association meeting in New York City in February. She looked at change in South African art since the new government of Nelson Mandela took over, and at the potential "fluidity" of old and new art with regard to tangible change. Her paper also emphasized the role of memory in the process of healing. The conference was attended by about 4,000 artists, theorists and others engaged in the artistic enterprise.

Report on ICS finances



a) Expenses:

A five year history of ICS's operational expenses, plus this year's and next year's budgets/projections, reveals no growth in our expenditures except where it is funded by the Anniversary Campaign funds. The following numbers exclude items specially funded by the restricted fund money raised during the Anniversary Campaign.

Fiscal year	Expenditures
1991/92	\$1,120,942
1992/93	\$1,151,760
1993/94	\$1,131,077
1994/95	\$1,187,250
1995/96	\$1,076,844
1996/97 budgeted	\$1,084,799
1996/97 projected	\$1,054,799
1997/98 budgeted	\$1,078,875

b) Income:

Income has been growing. Voluntary income over the past year or two has gradually been improving. The following general fund numbers give evidence of this.

Voluntary income Jan. through Apr. 1996
\$ 89,099

Voluntary income Jan. through Apr. 1997
Increase \$104,788
Percent \$ 15,689
17.6%

c) Projections for June 30, 1997:

With the above income and expenditure figures in mind, our deficit for the 1996/97 year is nevertheless projected to be over \$130,000. This could be as much as a \$70,000 improvement from last year, but we still have some way to go to achieve a balanced budget.

Phone-a-thon 1997 continues through the early weeks of June and we are sincerely grateful to the many volunteers who make this event possible. Thanks from our hearts to them and to those who pray and/or give generous financial gifts for making the Institute's work possible.

d) The future

If voluntary income continues to improve at a similar rate for the next two years, we have a good possibility of balancing our budget. The prayers and gifts of many supporters make this possible. Staff, students and board at ICS continue to thank God for the blessings that flow at the Institute.

New reformational book on history of philosophy



John H. Kok of Dordt College has written a new book which gives a general approach to understanding God's mighty acts in history, shown in basic thought patterns that express a biblical worldview. The work is rooted in writings on the philosophy of history by D.H.Th. Vollenhoven, which reformational thinkers have long wanted to have available in book form in English.

Written for a general reader, the book is used in an introductory philosophy course at Dordt College. The book has two parts: a historical survey of western thought, and the contours of thought patterns in line with the reformational thinking of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven. You can buy a copy from ICS.

Cassette tapes and CD available

Cassette tapes of the plenary addresses given at our recent Hermeneutics Conference are now available. We also have some CDs of solo and duo Canadian organ music performed by Marnie Giesbrecht of the University of Alberta and Joachim Segger of The King's University College, performers at our recent Art Talks! concert. See the back page of this issue for details.

Vaden House Inaugural Lecture now in print

We have now produced in booklet form the Inaugural Address of Vaden House, ICS Senior

Member in the Philosophy of Science and Technology. It is titled "Saving Science: Science as Liberation and the Liberation of Science." See the back page of this issue for ordering information.



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Kuyper meets Augustine: Olthuis at Villanova



John Caputo and James Olthuis, with Augustine cheering in the background.

As Visiting Professor of Christian Philosophy at Villanova University in Philadelphia, James Olthuis carried the reformational mission of redemptive theorizing back to its roots, in a way. As a university in the Augustinian tradition, at Villanova there was much fertile soil for Olthuis to till, particularly in his opportunities to engage John Caputo (a closet Augustinian!) who had initiated the invitation to Olthuis to take up this prestigious post for the Spring of 1997. Indeed, it was a unique and special pleasure for me as an alumnus of ICS to enjoy the presence of both of my "mentors" here together at Villanova.

*by Jamie Smith, Ph.D.
student at Villanova
University*



During his tenure at Villanova, Olthuis and Caputo (known to ICS folks from his 1994 Christian and Learning Lectures) team-taught an undergraduate Honors course focusing on "The Gift" in the work of Nietzsche, Derrida, Jean-Luc Marion, and French feminists such as Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva. Olthuis also taught a graduate level course which considered the work of Irigaray and Kristeva against the background of psychoanalysis, particularly the work of Jacques Lacan. Along with his knowledge of the material, Olthuis brought a fresh peda-

gogy which students, and even faculty sitting in on the class, found to create a genuine "seminar" which encouraged dialogue and participation. It was, in fact, a manifestation of just the kind of "mutuality" which was being theoretically considered.

The fruit of Olthuis's research and work this semester was shared in a public lecture entitled "Rhythmic Becomings—Subjects In-Process/On Trial: Kristevan and Irigarayan Interweavings." In it Olthuis explored the unique contributions that Kristeva and Irigaray make to our understanding of the self and our relations with others.

Olthuis likes the writings of Irigaray, who says that our very nature as a self is to be open to others, to love. Love, as Olthuis so often says, is the air we breathe. Working within the reformational task of a "Christian reformation of the sciences," in his work with French feminism Olthuis has retrieved the redemptive themes in its thought and articulated them within a current Christian philosophy which is both critical of but in dialogue with contemporary thought.

It was both instructive and inspiring to see Olthuis carry on this task of leading us in studies of Heidegger, Derrida and Lyotard within a department which works on the cutting edge of "postmodernism." The players and figures may change, but Olthuis's work continues to demonstrate a theme that is very Kuyperian—and Augustinian: grace.

"Art Talks!" a great success

The first annual "Art Talks!" event, supported by our Ruth Memorial Fund, was an organ and piano recital by the Edmonton-based international performers Marnie Giesbrecht and Joachim Segger. Although it was held on the evening of a snowstorm, about 150 people attended and were delighted with the evening.

The following day Segger presented a performance-lecture at the Faculty of Music of the University of Toronto in which he played and analyzed piano music written by Weburn.



Joachim Segger and Marnie Giesbrecht.

Conference celebrates the 100th anniversary of Kuyper's Stone Lectures

To celebrate the centennial of Abraham Kuyper's seminal Stone Foundation Lectures at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1898, the Seminary, together with the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam and the Center for Public Justice in Washington, D.C., is planning a major conference in February.

Nicholas Wolterstorff will be delivering the 1998 Stone Lectures. The conference will also include various panels of distinguished speakers, among whom are many Christian scholars who participate in the work of ICS.

The conference will focus on the significance and promise of Kuyper's contribution to a public, reformational Christianity; themes in contemporary public theology in the light of Kuyper's writings; civil society, mediating structures, and subsidiarity (which Kuyper called "sphere sovereignty"); religiously plural societies; and on Christianity's contribution to international integration, differentiation and justice.

There is a revival of interest in the Kuyperian tradition today, say the conference organizers, because it "provides ample encouragement for the development of a comprehensive Christian worldview fit for our complex and often fragmented societies."

Stanford Reid dies

Professor W. Stanford Reid, noted historian and good friend of the Institute, died in December at the age of 83. He was professor of history at McGill University, and then chaired the History Department at the University of Guelph for many years before his retirement. Among his services to ICS was his periodic donation to our library of issues of history journals to which he subscribed.

Reid was internationally known for his writings on John Calvin and John Knox. He may be best known in ICS circles for his articles on "The university's social task" (1959) and "Covenant and kingdom: A Christian view of history" (1976).

Prayer Letter

Each month about 185 people across North America and in other parts of the world receive our President's Prayer Letter. It provides daily items for prayer related to events at ICS or to the lives of ICS staff, students and friends.

ICS staff sometimes refer to the Prayer

Letter as the "newsletter." Indeed, the Prayer Letter provides an excellent way to keep in touch with people and with events that often do not make the pages of *Perspective*. But the most important function of the Prayer Letter is to surround ICS with the daily prayers of a large number of friends. This is most encouraging to those of us who work at

ICS. Those who use the Prayer Letter feel a deepened sense of kinship with ICS. And, of course, we know that our prayers are dear to God.

If you would like to receive the Prayer letter please contact the Institute by phone, fax, letter or e-mail (hfernhout@icscanada.edu). We'll be happy to add you to the list of those who receive it!

Trustees steer the course

by Gayla Postma, ICS Trustee

When the ICS Board of Trustees meets it usually feels like a congenial, if efficient, family gathering, and Friday the 30th of May was no exception. Board chair Ed den Haan moved the board gently but firmly through a heavy agenda.

Budget discussions were easier than in previous years. The deficit is down and voluntary income is growing. President Harry Fernhout reported on the curricular revision taking place at the Institute. One major change is the move to semester courses instead of full year courses.

Consultation continues regarding affiliation with The King's University College in Edmonton. The memberships of both institutions will be surveyed on their reaction to a possible affiliation model.

We welcomed Rika Vanderlaan, Henry Knoops and Warren Piers as new board members and bade a reluctant farewell to Joe Koole. We are thankful

for the many years of service Joe has given, especially in his role as treasurer.

The board and the senate unanimously approved the half-time appointment over three years of Doug Blomberg as Senior Member in Philosophy of Education. The unusual arrangement will allow Blomberg to continue

his work at the National Institute of Christian Education in Australia while sharing his gifts with the ICS community. This will perhaps open the door for ICS to offer a master's level degree in education via distance education.

Members are encouraged to visit ICS in cyberspace at www.icscanada.edu.

Marshall's new book stirs a storm of activity

Paul Marshall has been very busy with speeches, interviews and personal appearances following the publication of his new book about persecuted Christians called *Their Blood Cries Out*.

He spoke to the New York City Council, to the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C., to the Advisory Committee on Religious Persecution of the U.S. State Department, and to the Heritage Foundation in Washington, D.C. While in Washington he also met with people in the American Studies Program of the Coalition of Christian Colleges and Universities.

Marshall was interviewed on "Midday Connection," a program carried on about 90 radio stations, and on CMF2 TV, Toronto. He spoke at Spring Arbor College in Michigan and at Little Trinity (Anglican) Church in Toronto. He was interviewed for articles in such papers as *Christian Week*, *Faith Today*, *Christian Courier*, and *New Man*. A column on his book written by A.M. Rosenthal appeared in *New York Times*, and a column was also published in *Newsday* and an article in *U.S. News and World Report*. A syndicated column written by Mona Charen appeared in about 100 newspapers, including the most prominent papers throughout Canada.

Marshall takes particular pleasure from the fact that as a result of his speaking for the Asylum Officers of the New York Office of the Immigration and Naturalization Service he heard that within ten days ten Christians were granted asylum on the grounds of religious persecution, which would otherwise not have happened.

In March Marshall spent two weeks in China with his ICS graduate student Peter Noteboom doing research and investigation on the church in China and specifically on its persecution.

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Suspicious Narratives and a Trustworthy God? by Phyllis Tribble	\$10.00	\$
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CD by ICS Art Talks! music performers Dancing Ice: Solo and Duo Canadian Organ Music , by Marnie Giesbrecht and Joachim Segger	\$20.00	\$

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NOTES: Wrestling with the word of God: A report from the Hermeneutics Conference [ICS Conference: Trust and Suspicion? Hermeneutics in a Broken World], From the President: Shaping a Living Tradition IV, Drama student breaks new ground [Chris Cuthill], ICS co-sponsors conference on Christian Higher Education in Canada [WHAM With Heart and Mind: Keynote: Thankful Imaginativity Inside Schooling by Calvin Seerveld], Kuyper meets Augustine: Olthuis at Villanova [public lecture by Olthuis: Rhythmic Becomings--Subjects In-Process/On Trial]: Kristevan and Irigarayan Interweavings], "Art Talks!" a great success [First annual event: Organ and piano recital by Marnie Giesbrecht and Joachim Segger],

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