

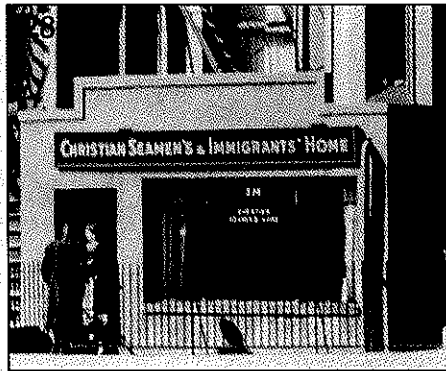
# ORIGINS



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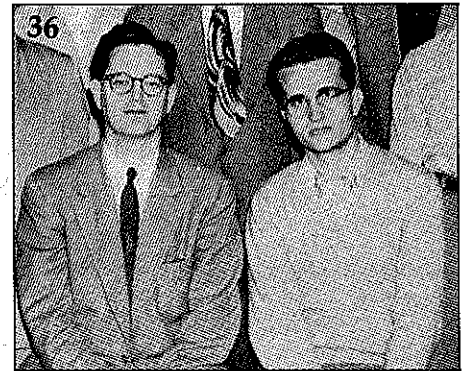
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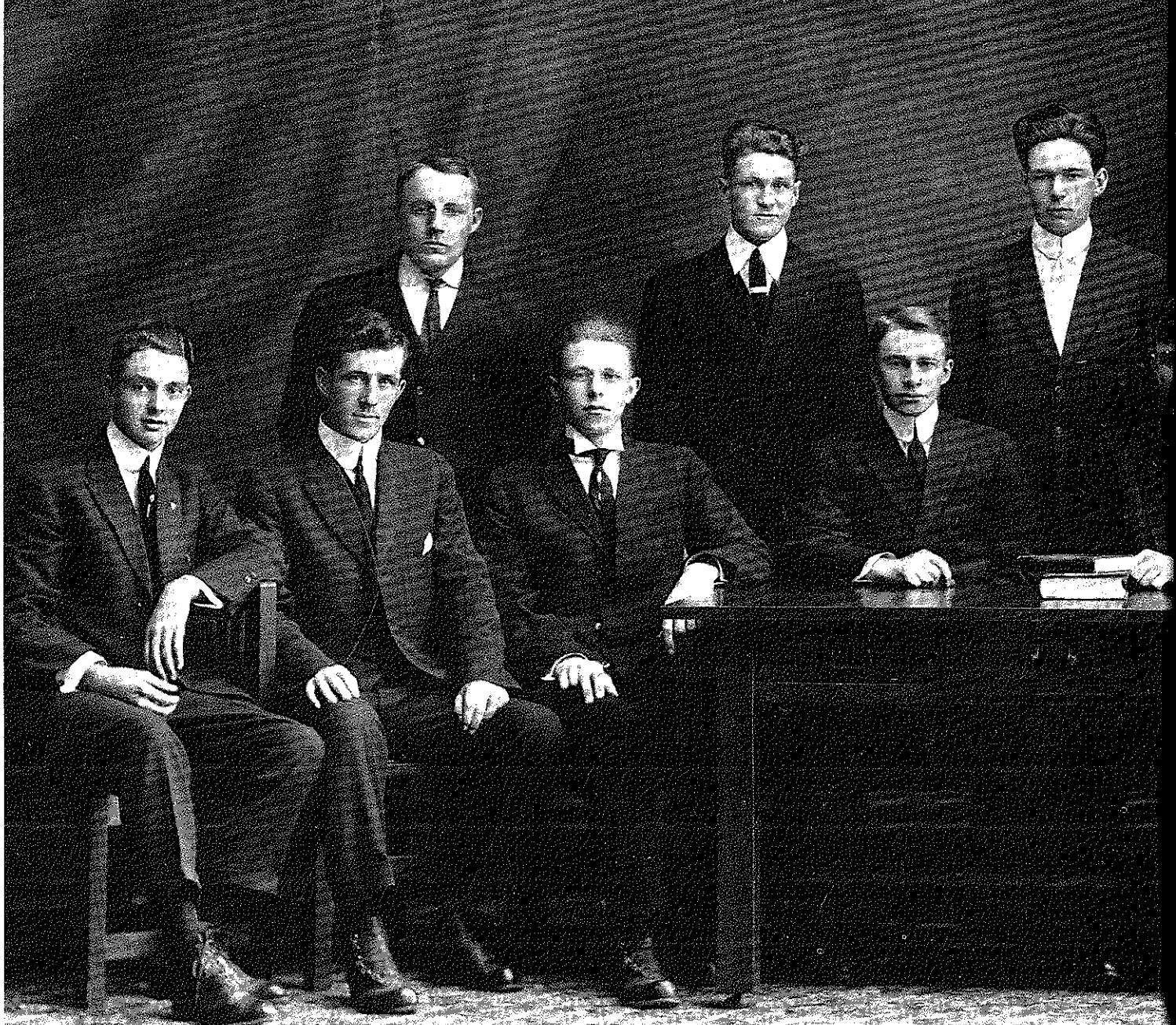
Cover: View of the dock from the Seamen's Home in Hoboken, New Jersey. See story on page 28.

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# FACTORY TO



*by H. J. Brinks*

# PULPIT



When E. H. Woldring emigrated from Groningen to Grand Rapids in 1910, he had only vague plans for his future in America. Travel,

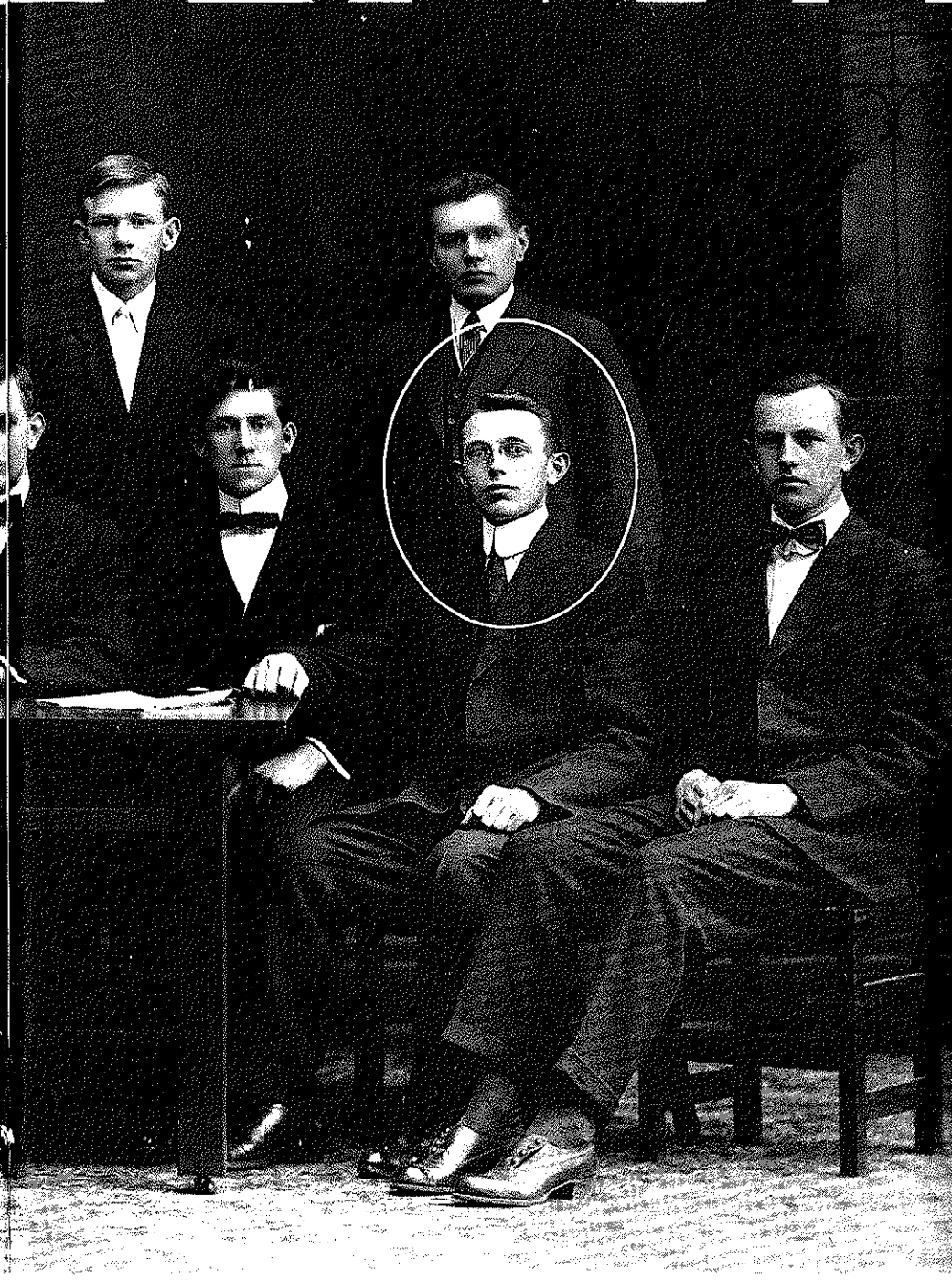
particularly out West, seemed attractive, and he also considered the possibility of farming. He was already twenty-six years old, and, as the son of a successful farmer, he was a knowledgeable agriculturist. But, since every option required funding, his immediate objective was employment. Because the general economy was flourishing in 1910, Woldring had no difficulty finding work in a Grand Rapids furniture factory, where he joined many other Dutch immigrants who were similarly employed. His detailed descriptions of factory routines during that time provide a fascinating account of the blue-collar world, but within two years Woldring was studying at Grand Rapids Theological Seminary (known today as Calvin College and Seminary). There, during eight years of preparation, he wrote dozens of letters to his family in Sauwerd, and these writings contain excellent descriptions of student life.

In his first report from Grand Rapids, Woldring asserted, "Grand Rapids is the city where the greatest number of Hollanders can be found in America." He gained that impression from working in the furniture factory, where he found most of his work mates to be "Hollanders. Most of these," he added, "are Groningers, and consequently I learn almost no English."

*Class of 1912, Grand Rapids Theological School.*

*Standing: 1. (?) 2. John Zeeuw 3. John Maselink 5. J. Herman Ibershof.*

*Seated: 1. Joe Euwema 2. (?) 3. Jacob Bruinooge 4. Cornelius De Ruischer 5. Nick Monsma 6. Cornelius Van Reenen 7. Eisse Woldring 8. Otto De Jong.*



Describing his work world, Woldring declared, "I can easily keep up with my fellow workers. The inspector, who looks after things, is a very nice fellow. Often we stand together bent over a chair as if it is the topic of our conversation, but instead we talk about all sorts of things. He was a tailor in the Netherlands and worked for J.A. Ronda. He lived in Bierum and later in Loppersum. From there he traveled all over the Hoogeland [an area north of the city of Groningen]. When he starts out saying 'Joa, jong,' or 'Och, kerel,' he can't stop talking about the Hoogeland. His name is Hendrick Kruisenga or Keuzema—I only know him as Henk. And then Cornelius Bos comes over to talk. He is from Uithuizermeeden. We don't use last names very much here, so we call him Niel.

"I have to live with the name 'Harry,' and in the factory I am listed as 'Harry' Woldring. 'Eisse' or 'Harke' could not be changed into English. Well, that doesn't matter. That is the easiest for them, so for the time being I will be 'Harry.' A schoolteacher also works near me, and when I take along the newspaper which Gerhardus sends from Groningen, I gather a whole crowd around me—everyone with a part of the Groningen newspaper. That, of course, is during the lunch break from 12:00 to 1:00. The work here is not difficult, and if it were a little less boring, everything would be all right."<sup>1</sup>

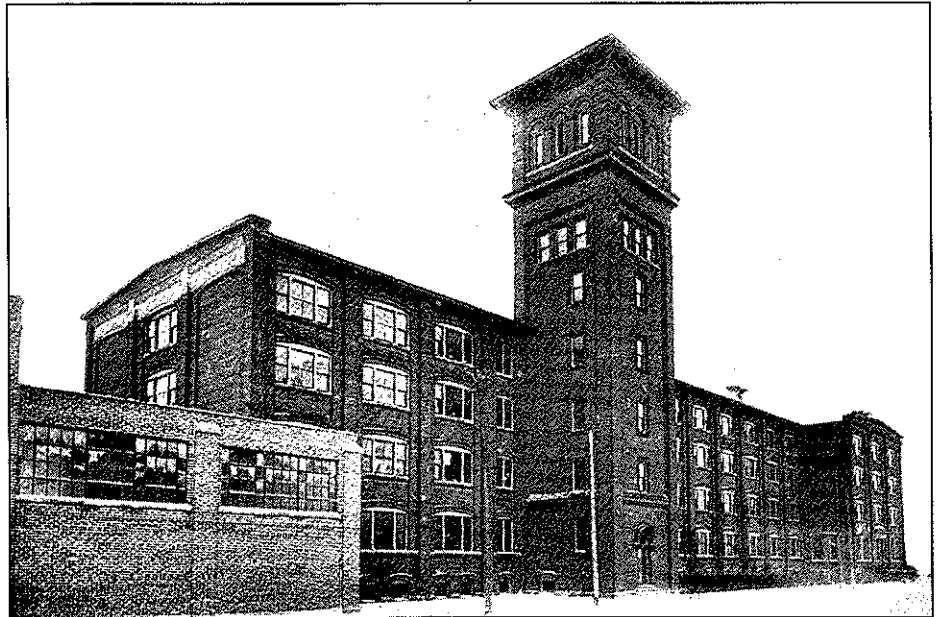
"Boring" indeed. One year later "Harry" detailed the precise nature of that tedium. "Every morning I wake up," he wrote, "and look in the mirror. I pick up my blue overalls, shirt, watch, vest, and glasses and go downstairs. I wash myself in the kitchen, put on my togs and overcoat. I find my shoes in the front-room closet and prepare a lunch for my noon meal. I take care of my immediate needs and then put an apple or pear in my pocket and fill a bottle with tea.

Armed with these, I go out-of-doors at 6:15 A.M. Now, wide awake and completely refreshed, I hurry to catch the streetcar. At 6:55 I find myself at the factory door.

"Once there I go through a passageway and get my number (231) from a large rack and take it with me. I walk across the ground floor, turn right, and climb two flights of stairs to reach my department. Here, for the inspector, I hang up my number on another rack. Then we all go to our workbenches. My coat, vest, and pants go into a closet, and I put on my

me (two of these are Groningers). There we sit, eat, and talk. At 12:45 the whistle blows, and later at 12:50 it blows twice. We work again until five minutes to 6:00 P.M., put on our togs, and go home."<sup>2</sup>

"Harry" found some escape from this dull routine by studying English at night and by participating in the activities of the church. He warned his parents that he would have less time for writing letters because "I've become a member of a recitation club, which takes lots of work, but that is a great comfort to me. Tomorrow I am



*Imperial Furniture Co.*

overalls or blue work pants. A whistle blows at five minutes to 7:00 so everyone can get ready. At exactly 7:00 the whistle blows again so everyone can get to work. The first hammer blows all begin at the same time—like we are automatons. The work goes on (with or without the boss) until 12:00 noon. Then the whistle blows again, and not another hammer blow is heard. We go to the closet, get a sandwich, and look for a little corner which becomes our dining room. Soon a fellow named Hoeksema and others such as Goudberg, Vander Schan, and Sebema join

going to a mission meeting in the southern part of the city. And Thursday I plan to attend a young people's meeting. The minister, J. Groen, leads that group, which gathers about five minutes away from my boarding house. I go there even though I don't belong to that church [Eastern Avenue CRC]. The minister [Rev. W. P. Van Wyk] of my own church, Oakdale Park, is very popular and very good. He doesn't have to take second place to anyone in the Netherlands."<sup>3</sup>

Considering his obvious ability and intelligence, it is not surprising that



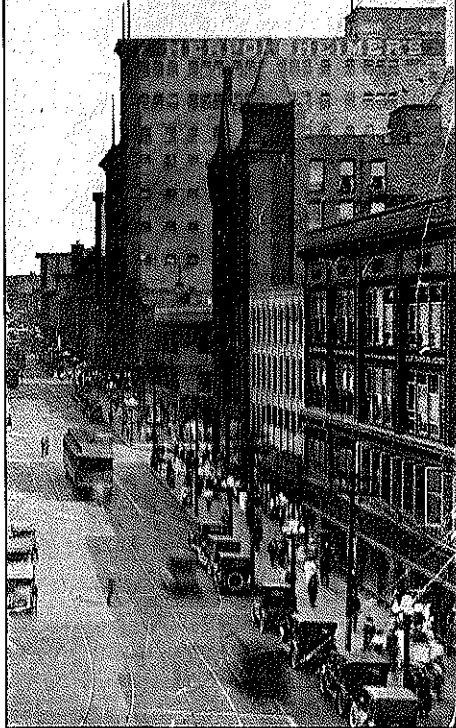
Woldring began to seek alternatives to the world of lunch buckets and factory whistles, particularly when he discovered that others near his own age were working to finance their schooling. Intrigued by that possibility, he wrote home to report an encounter with Herman Bel, a twenty-four-year-old student who also came from Groningen. "I don't know how such things go here," he wrote, "but Bel is planning to become a minister. He works during vacation periods and earns \$18.00 per week. With that he can pay for his studies

his abilities and potential. Thus he wrote, "Often, when I am in church and feel the power of the preaching, I am inclined to pray, 'Oh, God, use me too in your service.'" <sup>5</sup> That same year Woldring became certain that he was being called to the ministry, and then he reported, "I now plan to go to school. Until now my plan was not entirely clear, but now my desire is firm, and I will begin school in September. For the next two months I must work as hard as possible to earn enough money so I can live and buy books along with all the other necessities."

first year will be very difficult, because all the lessons are given in English. So, I'll have to learn the language as I go along."

New plans also brought new employment, as Eisse explained: "I am now connected with a bookstore and a newspaper publisher. There are three of us who sell newspaper subscriptions in Grand Haven, Holland, Zeeland, and Grand Rapids. The last place, Grand Rapids, is my area of responsibility. We earn \$12.00 per week plus a \$.20 commission for each new subscriber. I'm not overly op-

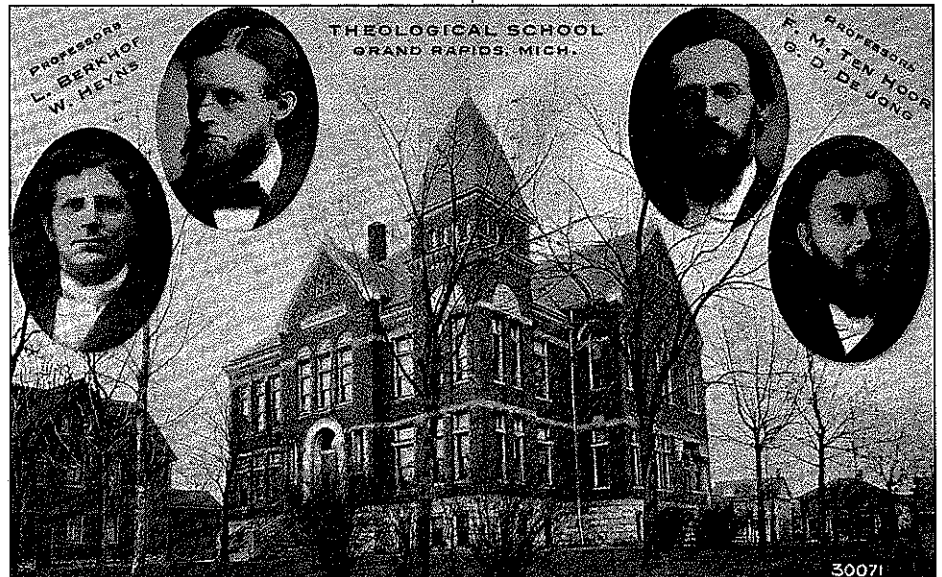
# GRAND RAPIDS MICHIGAN (U.S.A.)



Monroe Street—1920s.

during the whole school year."<sup>4</sup>

As Woldring became more active in the church, he grew more certain of



Grand Rapids Theological School

"It is true," he continued, "that I must study for a number of years, but time goes by quickly, and every year of delay is a year lost. School is even more attractive to me at this time because W. Goudberg will be studying also. So we will be working together. Yesterday I went in to see the principal [Rooks] to find out one thing and another. I talked to him about shortening the course of study. The ordinary time is ten years, but I'll see if I can finish earlier. . . . Yet, I must still discover if I am worthy to work in God's vineyard and if a field of work will open up for me. In any case, the

timistic about the prospects because the newspaper is not yet well received here. But we shall see. We begin tomorrow at 9:00 A.M. and have a contract for ten weeks of work. The newspaper's publisher offers a premium of Dutch books—books from the catalog of Callenback in Niekerk. People must pay a whole year's subscription, and for that they get a certain number of books free." Despite his fears, Eisse did well as a newspaper agent, and he earned approximately \$12.00 per week in commissions in addition to his weekly \$12.00 salary. These wages surpassed factory pay by \$6.00, a sub-

stantial 25 percent increase.

By September of 1912 he was confident that he could survive on his earnings, and he enrolled in the first year of the preparatory school, to study English, algebra, history, Latin, and a Bible course. English was his most trying hurdle, and he reported, "At one of our class clubs I had to give an extemporaneous talk in English, but that does not mean that I can speak fluently. If I were to speak English among you in Sauwerd, you would probably say, 'How nicely you speak English,' but here I can do only

plaints."

Despite his age, Woldring adapted quickly to the ethos of his younger classmates, and his description of school days in 1912 provides a rare glimpse into that bygone era. Describing the boisterous behavior of one class, he wrote, "About two weeks ago we had a little free time between classes while the professor left the room. One of the fellows quickly placed a large chair on the teacher's desk and then tied one of the younger students in the chair with a rope which I supplied. Because of the dis-

jumped out of his skin, and then the trouble began. Everyone involved was supposed to go downstairs, and ten students did go down. Then, after further warnings, another seven followed—in fact, all of them who were involved except me. They were urged to name anyone else who was involved, and those who did not confess were threatened with suspension. But, I thought, 'It won't come to that,' and, indeed, nothing came of it.

"But yesterday one of the professors asked me to come into his room for a moment, and I thought,



*Student life, 1917.*

*Front: 1. E. Woldring 2. J. Zeeuw 3. N. Monsma 4. J. Van Laar 5. Garret Andre 6 (?).*

*Back: 1. Lambertus Van Laar 2. John Gritter(?) 3. Martin Monsma 4. E. F. J. Van Halsema.*

little with it. When you consider that all of my classes are conducted in English, you will readily understand how difficult it is for me. But things are going well, and I have no com-

turbance, Principal Rooks rushed into the room, but by then we were all seated in our places—except, of course, the young fellow in the elevated chair. The principal nearly

'Now what!' I went, and he said, 'Mr. Woldring, will you take these books to the library for me?' Of course I said yes, and then he gave me ten cents. I tried not to accept it, but he insisted.

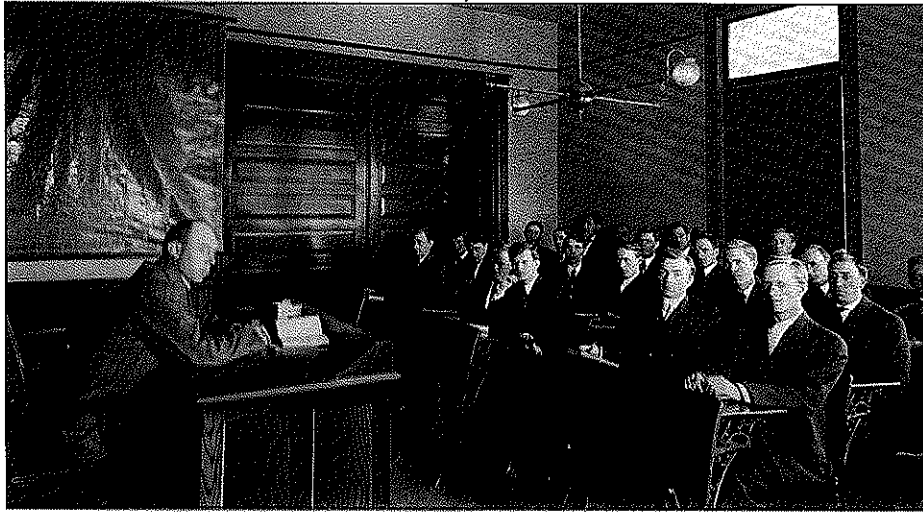
That money I earned easily because I live near the library [on Park Street near downtown Grand Rapids]. Besides, I felt honored to be chosen because at least twenty-five other students also pass the library. And it was a professor who is not generally liked, but I get along well with him, and he goes through a great deal of trouble to help me."

In a general assessment of his schoolmates, Woldring considered the Groningers superior. "They," he wrote, "are the only students with a sense of humor. But," he continued,

to make some money but don't yet know how. Maybe I'll sell Van Houten's cocoa door to door. Or, if there is enough snow, I'll go out and shovel it for the wealthy people. Perhaps I can go out with some books for sale. It's still winter, of course, and that's not the best time to make money."

"It's one day later, now," he continued, "and the first day of vacation. I've gone out alone to find some work but had no success. But it's also nice to have a little free time. This P.M. we had a great time fooling a policeman.

Appingedam. "It was a bright morning," Eisse recalled, "with a full Christmas moon such as seldom shines here. At four A.M. the moon lighted our path as if it wished to compete with the monarch of the day, and it gave the landscape a magic appearance. We could see for miles, except when the horizon was hidden by the hills, which sometimes surrounded us on all sides. After climbing up and down for four hours, we began to be tired, and we were happy when the village which was our destination came into view. Then we looked back



*Calvin College Class Circa 1911.*

*Prof. B. K. Kuiper*

*Seats nearest camera: 1. (l.) Jacob Mulder; 2. (l.) Martin Wyngarden, (r.) Clarence Cooper; 3. (l.) Karst Bergsma, (r.) Herman Bel.*

*Middle row of seats: 1. (l.) John O. Bouwsma, (r.) Richard Veldman; 3. (l.) Herman Heyns; 4. (r.) John Pikaart.*

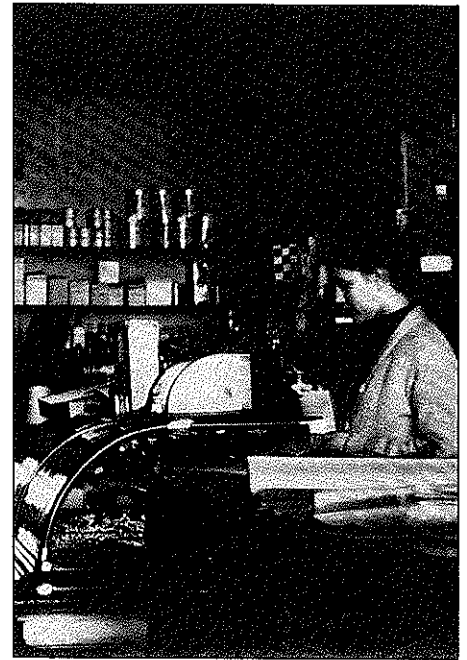
*3rd row: 2. (l.) Garret Heyns; 3. (l.) Sherda; 4. (l.) John Muyskens.*

"that kind of humor loses its punch in writing. It's just like a bunch of beautiful flowers—when you carry them around, they lose their beauty. The other students never utter a pleasant word. It's as if they have throat trouble. The only time they catch fire is when they talk about supra- and infralapsarianism or something else they don't understand."

Woldring's rambling correspondence continued, "Tomorrow will be the last day of school, and then we will have a two-week vacation. I will have

We placed a neatly packaged bag of snow on the sidewalk. And here comes a policeman who picks it up and takes it to the station. It's fun to imagine the laughter that greeted him when he opened the bag of snow in the police bureau. I guess we've been acting just like schoolboys. Right?"

On Christmas Day, together with his good friend Emo Van Halsema, Eisse hiked seventeen miles into the country—a distance which he described as equivalent to that which separates the city of Groningen from



*Rita Pasma ca 1913.*

proudly on our trip and enjoyed a cup of coffee and a sandwich at the minister's house. Now, Pa, you will probably say, 'That's too much—too much to walk for four hours. You will walk yourself to death.' I tell you, though, that our walk was the best thing in the world on that day. After resting for half an hour, I felt as good as a piece of cake. We were ready to walk back, but instead we spent two days there and went back by train."

Some days later, after vacation ended, Woldring continued his letter.

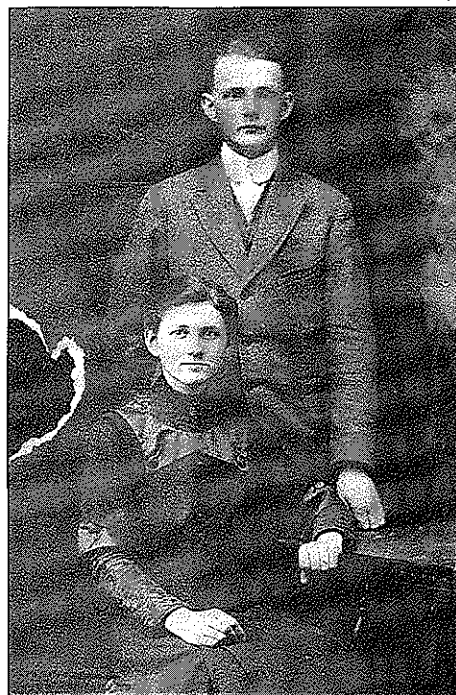
"This week we are busy with examinations, and I had to go over all of my material. . . . I don't yet know how well I have done, and although I'm not afraid that the end result will not be satisfactory, my examinations might have been better. In Bible I did pretty well, but not so well in English grammar. Mathematics went pretty well and geography, too. . . . I had applied myself especially to general history, and I memorized all the main events. But then the professor came up with the most obscure things, which were of no importance, and also the names of people who didn't amount to much. I had not crammed for that, so the history grade will be nothing extra. But don't worry, because I already dare say that I will not fail and that the work will at least be satisfactory. I was successful enough, even if I did not shine in class or make a great name for myself with the professors. But, that's the way it is."<sup>6</sup>

Not surprisingly, young Mr. Woldring reported the pleasures of leisure time more readily than the daily routine of classroom activity. And his de-

scription of a Thanksgiving Day excursion to Moline, Michigan, in 1912 reads more like a trip to paradise than a half-hour commute to a Grand Rapids suburb. Following his three-day visit to Moline, Eisse declared, "When I think about Moline, I can't help wishing to be back there again. . . . Oh, how heart-stirring it was when we had to step into the train and ride away from Moline, a place which was so full of enjoyment. Moline has given me to see . . . that there are warm-hearted and well-meaning people to be found in America. And while one can find such folk in the cities of the Netherlands and America, one must seek them out with a lantern. The country is to be preferred above the cities because the true kernel of human generosity is preserved there, while the cities are hotbeds of evil."

Woldring's trip began on a Thanksgiving Day morning, and he reported, "A classmate of mine, Andrew Pasma, asked if I would go with him to his country home. So I accepted the invitation and joined him at seven o'clock at the station. . . . After first steaming

through the city along factories, warehouses, stores, hotels, houses, and the like, rather quickly we were rolling through a hilly area the like of which you in the Netherlands cannot imag-



*Andrew and Rita Pasma circa 1915.*

*The Pasma farm in Moline.*





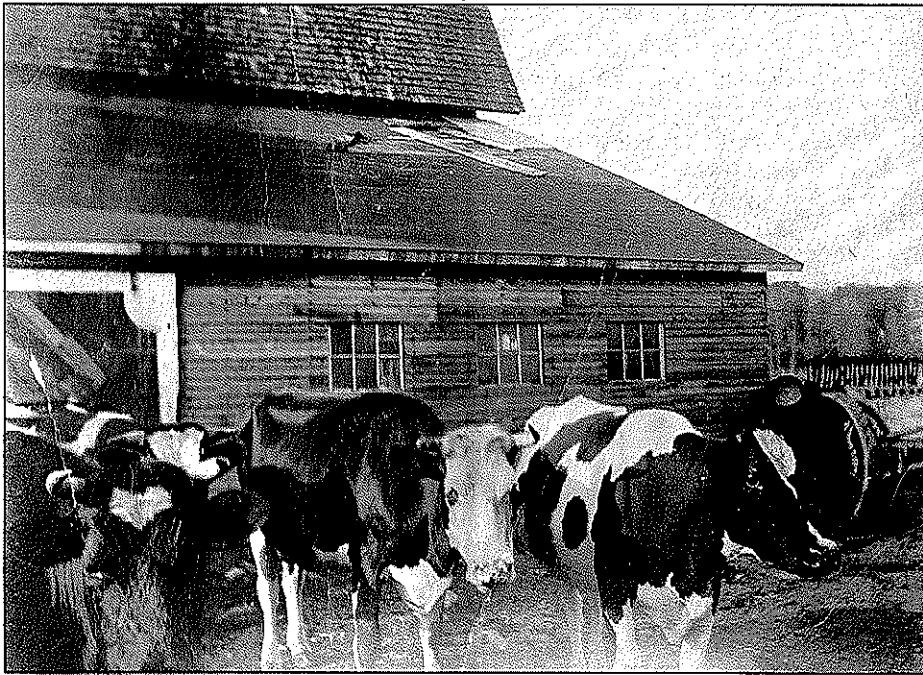
ine. A foot of snow lay on the ground, and it had the appearance of a sparkling blanket. By 7:30 we were already at our destination, and then we stepped out into a flourishing American village.

"Almost immediately someone arrived to take us to the home of Mr. Sinke, an elder of the church, who lived about ten minutes from the village. After proper introductions and a warm welcome, we were quickly seated before a warm stove with steaming cups of coffee in our hands. . . . So after eating my second breakfast that

morning, we walked to church through the snow. When we arrived, the church was full, and the preacher was standing at his post. Our late entrance notified the whole congregation that there was a newcomer in the crowd. As soon as we were out of the church, the round of introductions began—to Pete and Jan, to Pas and Mas, to Mr. and Mrs. this and that—indeed, to almost everyone in the whole church."

After the worship service Woldring was driven from one place to another. He visited the De Boers, where,

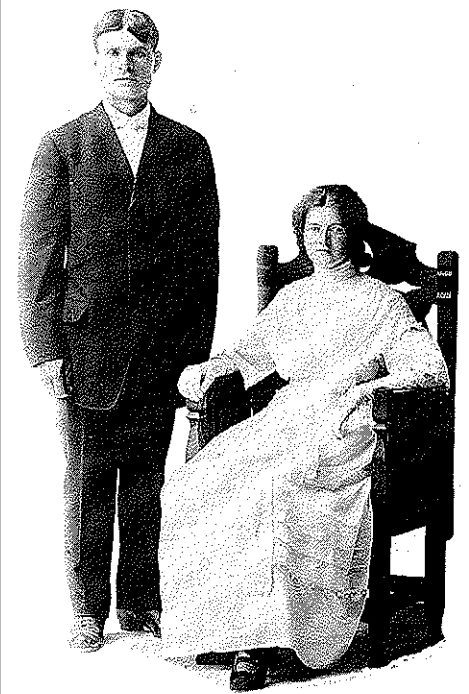
he was introduced to the routines of American farm life, and for the benefit of his family in Sauwerd, he penned a detailed account of that experience. "At about 6:00 a.m.," he wrote, "another day rang in with calls from downstairs, 'Kom aan, Jongens—Tis Tijd.' Within five minutes we were downstairs in the presence of Mama and Papa—an elderly and good-hearted couple. He did not say much, but he thinks a great deal; she talked all the time and was a real mother to me, showing concern about everything. I felt at home immediately.



Sinke farmstead ca 1915.

though Frisian was usually spoken, the hosts used high Dutch for the benefit of their guest. The day proceeded with a buggy ride, hunting, an enormous dinner, and parlor games. It was, Woldring wrote, "A day of tasty eating and drinking, interspersed with music and song, with which the girls regaled us." Following additional singing, together with recitations and entertainment at the church that evening, Eisse finally arrived at the Pasma farm, where the conversation continued until 1:30 A.M.

On the following Friday morning



Peter Sinke and wife Lena Ten Hoor ca 1912.

After breakfast we cut up a couple trees and prepared them for firewood. Then we hauled in some hay with the farm wagon. For you, I must explain that in America the hay is piled up on a mound about five minutes' distance from the house. . . . After we had exercised our muscles by forking hay, we came home with gigantic appetites.

"When the dinner bell rang, we were not the last to be seated. They served porridge and kale, or, in Gron-

ings, *moes*. This was on the table because I had said the day before that I would give anything to taste porridge and *moes* again. It is superfluous to say that for once we really filled our stomachs and ate as if we wanted to keep the taste of that food for years. It is now fourteen days since I ate that meal, but the pleasure of it still causes the saliva to rise in my mouth—even though I have just finished my lunch."

Describing differences between Dutch and American farms, Eisse continued, "The cow stall and barn here are not like those of Groningen. My first impression of barns here was that they were little more than huts. But upon closer examination I became impressed with the influence of the practical American character on these barns. Usually they are built into the

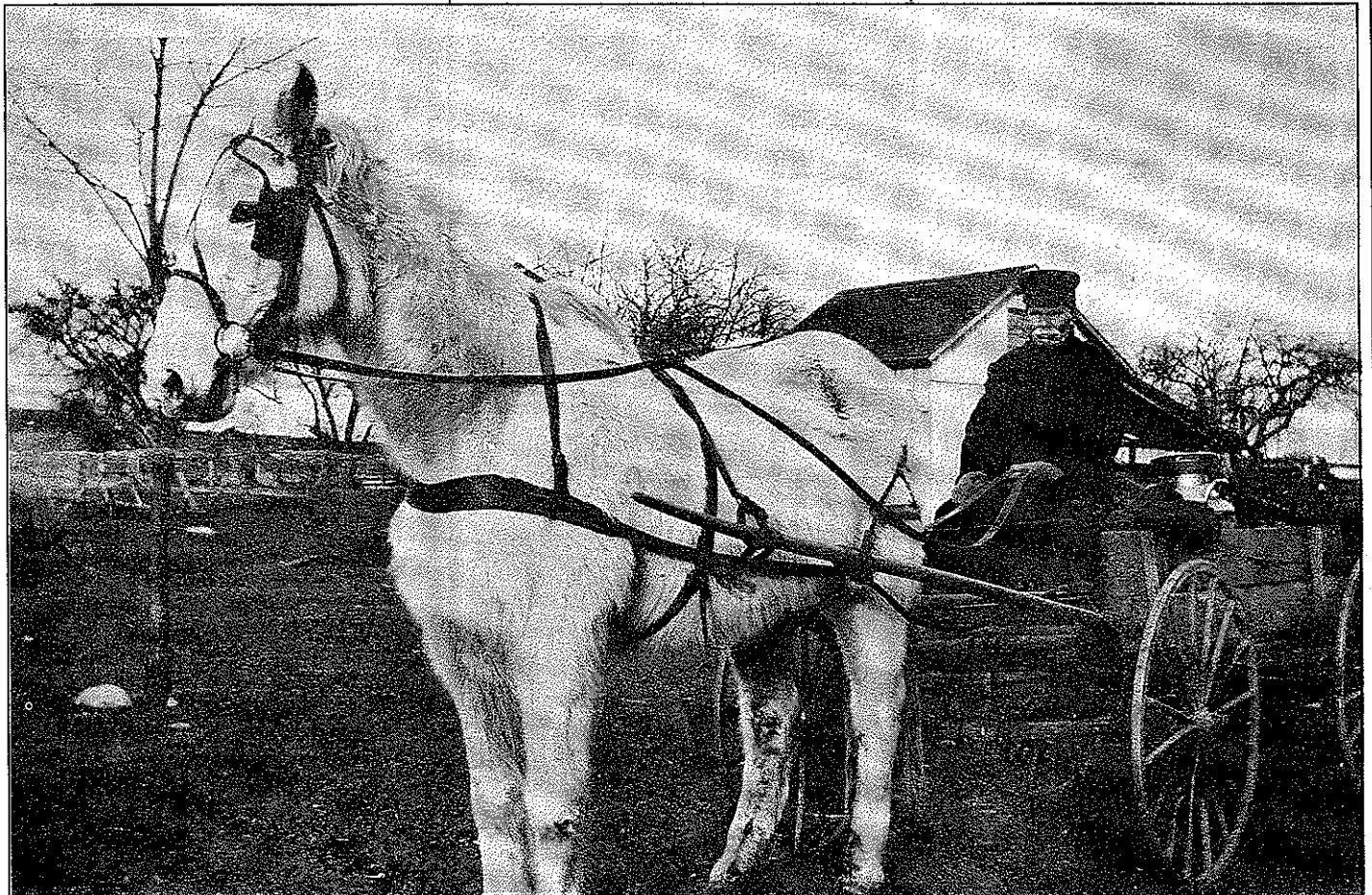
side of a hill. On the front one rides up a small hill and enters the second floor. To reach the lower level, one drives around the hill and enters at ground level. The stalls are on the lower floor, and the second floor contains the wagons and other equipment. . . . The farm is something like a village of buildings. When the barn becomes too small, they just add on to it."

Though they spent their mornings doing chores, the students pursued a full social calendar in the afternoons and evenings. Of Friday Eisse reported, "We said good-bye to the friendly Elder Sinke and his wife, and before we could stop her, she placed a cup of tea and plates of cakes before us. So with a cigar in the mouth and a kindly warning from the dear old man that we behave ourselves and hold

firmly to the old principles, we went off to visit his recently married son. If the friendliness shown to us thus far was great, it became so much greater that I almost felt uncomfortable. First we had cocoa, cookies, and cigars, and then we had to stay for supper . . . a supper such as I have never had before, either in America or in the Netherlands, where, as you know, there is some pride in setting a good table.

"At 7:30 we had our final visit with the minister, Rev. Voortman. Although he is short, he seems to have grown sideways, and perhaps that is why he exercises by walking back and forth while he preaches. We sat together smoking a fresh cigar, while the other one, which we had just

*Mr. Gerard Sinke ca 1920.*

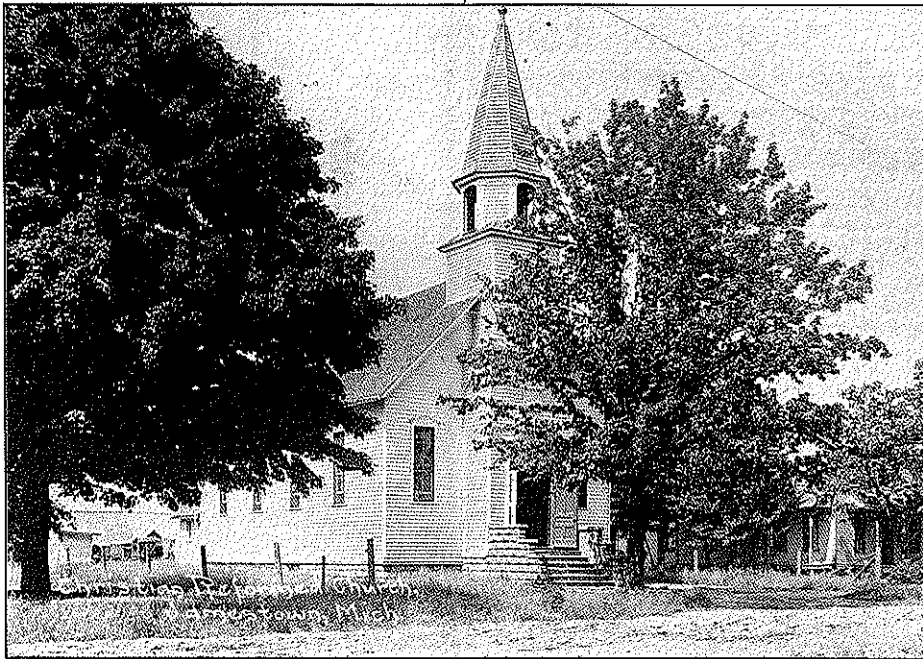


started, we tucked in our pockets to be lit again. Cocoa and the best pastries came out, too, while we talked about everything and then some. And I was impressed yet again with how different American ministers are from the Dutch. Here they are men of the folk and for the folk. . . . What a pleasure to be such a minister without having to put on a formal bearing. It was about twelve o'clock that night when we put the horse in the stall. We slept well and were up at the usual time the following morning. That day we had to take leave of Moline."

"to achieve a worthy goal, God will bless us, provided, of course, that we seek God's honor—and that is the main point. Not high offices and not the highest wage—no, God's honor alone. We have too many people who want to line their own pockets. We have too much Christianity without content."

Woldring was increasingly confident and satisfied with his chosen course of study, and he was also pleased that he could earn his own way. Though he had no intention of lining his pockets, he did know how

seemed, disaster struck. We were enjoying thoughts of our good fortune when the whole building collapsed and my hand was caught between a cart and a heavy object. The use of my right hand seemed to be in doubt, and we went directly to the doctor; he calmed my fears. My wrist was not broken, and though my hand was bruised, it was not dangerously damaged. Because we have what is called 'accident insurance' here in America, I went directly to the railroad company office to claim it. The outcome was that I received twenty-nine dollars for losing fourteen and one-half days of work, and that was in addition to my medical bills. Meanwhile, my wrist healed completely, and I started selling books, which went very well. A friend of mine, J. Hulst, who is now retired from his own bookstore, arranged the purchase of some of my books directly from the American Tract Society in New York. From this source the books cost only twenty-seven to thirty cents, and they sold for seventy-five cents. This provided a forty-five-cent profit. I sold two hundred and thirty English books along with Dutch publications such as Bouma's *Reformed Doctrine* and Bavinck's *The Christian Family, Called to Work*, and others. All in all, I sold about six hundred books and earned two hundred dollars. In the process I also learned a great deal working as a book agent."<sup>9</sup>



*Small rural church*

As a still wide-eyed immigrant, Woldring noted that Rita Pasma displayed her genuine Americanness when she "took the reins and handled the horses" en route to the train station "just as well as any Groninger farmer's son."

Eisse returned, then, to the daily round of lectures, books, and examinations, and he pursued his studies with vigor and success. The source of his motivation, penned in a 1913 letter, is timeless and instructive: "If we strive with all our might," he wrote,

to turn a dollar, and the summer of 1913 delivered an exceptional measure of financial success. He began the vacation wondering if he would be forced to drop out and work a year but gained instead a financial windfall along with a profitable book business.

"First I worked in a warehouse," he wrote, "loading boxes, bales, and much more. The work was not too difficult, and we had time to catch our breath between loads. If all went well, I projected a one hundred-dollar savings during the vacation, but then, it

Woldring supported himself rather comfortably from his book business, and in 1916 he reported that, compared to other students, he was well off. In fact, he'd already begun to accumulate a good working library.<sup>10</sup> By 1917, when he entered the theological phase of his studies, he had a surplus of four hundred dollars along with a real-estate investment valued at another four hundred dollars. By then, though, he had need of some financial surplus, because at thirty-three years of age he became engaged to marry.

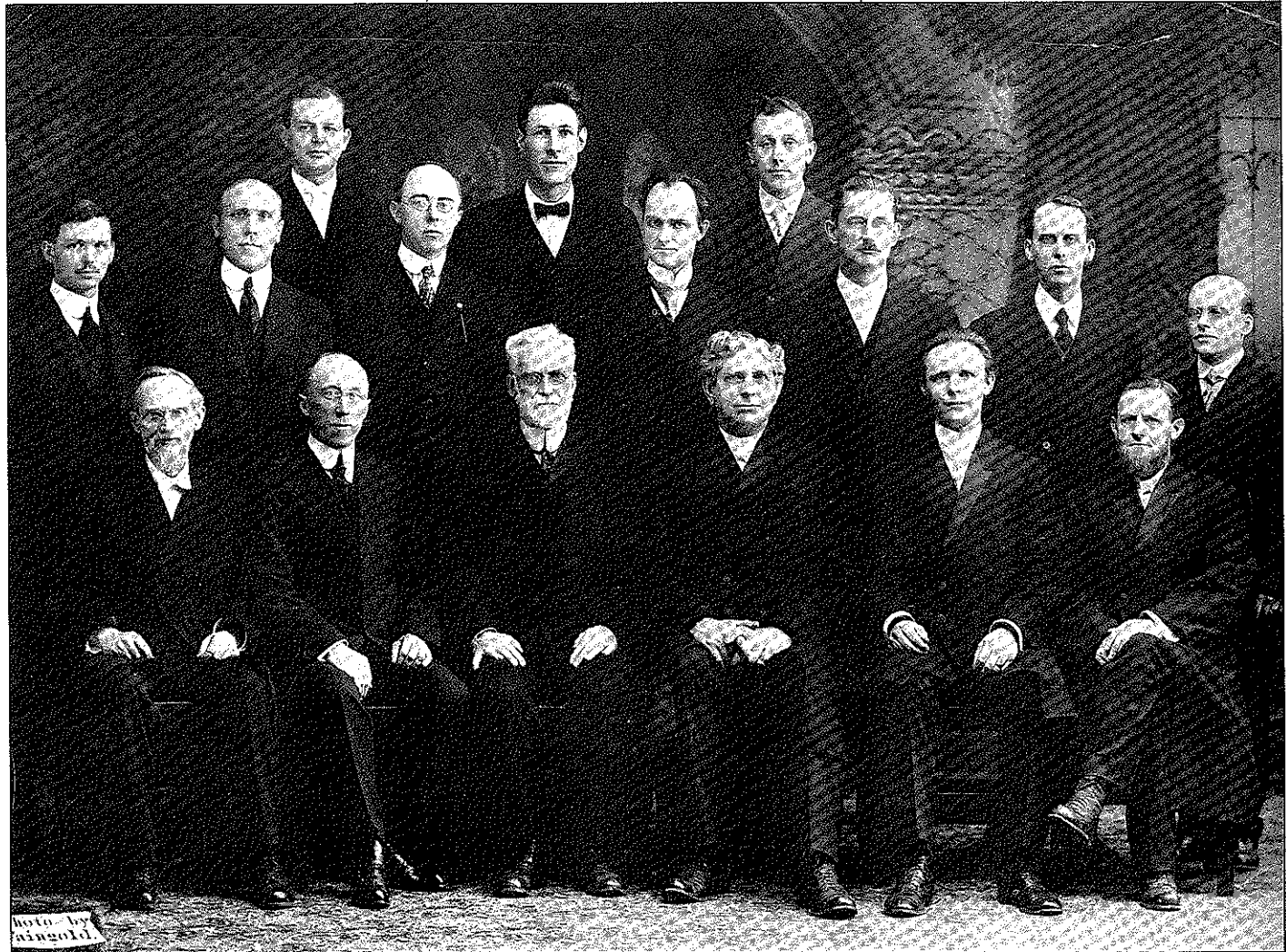
His fiancée, also an immigrant from Sauwerd, had passed through Grand Rapids en route to Pasadena, California, where she lived with her brother. Aided by a steady stream of correspondence, the courtship blossomed until it became serious enough for Eisse to inform his parents.

"I have already written about my courtship with Fie," he explained. "Perhaps it was surprising to you, but I'm sure mother had some intimations of it because mothers seem to have intuitive powers in such matters. I am,

of course, curious about your reactions—good and bad. I myself cannot explain the basis of our mutual attraction. We have many things in common but also some differences. Still, all these individual characteristics have brought us together in a warm attraction. I don't know who of us is most attracted, but my attraction is very strong, and I think hers is too.

"Next year I'll be going to see her in California and will spend the vacation there. We will see then if all continues to go well, and in that case Fie may

come back with me to Grand Rapids. We also have plans for a trip to the Netherlands, but not before I've finished my studies. Things are good spiritually, too, because Fie is planning to make her confession of faith as soon as she returns to Grand Rapids. There is no Christian Reformed Church in Pasadena. But I will say no more of this because such matters are too intensely personal. If all goes well, we plan to become engaged next summer. So, Father and Mother, I must have your approval. There is plenty of



*Faculty of the Prep School and Seminary.*

*First row: Prof. F. M. Ten Hoor; Prof. A. J. Rooks, A.M.; Prof. K. Schoolland; Prof. L. Berkhof, B.D.; Prof. S. Volbeda, D.D.; Prof. W. Heyns.  
Second row: Prof. H. J. G. Van Andel, A.M.; Prof. J. G. Vanden Bosch, A.M.; Prof. B. K. Kuiper, A.B.; Prof. R. Janssen, Ph.D.; Prof. A. E. Broene, A.B.; Prof. J. Broene, A.M.; Prof. W. Rinck, A.M.  
Third row: Prof. J. P. Van Haitsma, A. M.; Prof. J. H. Muyskens, A.M.; Prof. J. Nieuworp, B.S.*



time for you to think about it. And it is possible, too, that, after seeing each other for a whole summer, we may no longer like each other, although that is not very probable."<sup>11</sup>

In that assessment Woldring was more than correct: the courtship resulted in an August wedding. His new bride returned with him to Grand Rapids, which, she reported, was cold, with constantly gray skies. But the warmth of their cozy rooms and marital delight created sunshine

in spite of the Michigan climate. Writing to a friend that first year, Fie announced, "I heartily recommend married life. If you should ever experience genuine love and get married, you will be as fortunate as we. I never imagined that it could be this way. It's like heaven on earth. You read about such things in books, but that always seems rather silly and not really believable. But it is true, dear friend, and I now speak from almost nine months of experience. It seems that our love grows stronger as time goes by. We do everything we can to please one an-

other, and even with the little bit of money we have, we are the most fortunate people on earth. We are fully satisfied with each other so that I would not exchange all the millions of America for our love. . . . I used to think that money was essential for happiness, but I tell you, that's not true. It has nothing to do with it."<sup>12</sup>

In their three-room apartment at 848 Neland, the Woldrings made do with secondhand furniture and part-time employment. But soon thereafter Eisse was also collecting small sums for preaching in the area's

*De Gereformeerde Church in Sauwerd ca 1900.*



churches, and in that arena he was pleased to find constructive support from his bride. "I am very busy with my work," he reported, "and next week I must preach my first sermon—Matthew 7:13–14. I wrote it out yesterday, but now I must memorize it. In four weeks I will do another but must select my own text. Originally I planned to use Psalm 92:2, but Fie thought Psalm 91:1 was better, and so, as you can well imagine, I chose that

one. I think Fie has a better understanding of what it takes to be a minister than I do. I'm happy about that because I don't know much about it. I am no prophet, nor the son of a prophet, but come instead from the barn and from leading cows to pasture. I can easily understand why the prophet Amos said the same thing. And now, within a week, I must preach. I'm not afraid, and, in fact, I'm happy about it because it is high time that I

discovered if I can actually do it. I've always doubted my ability, and now I'll know the truth of the matter."<sup>13</sup>

As he approached graduation, Eisse wrote of his preaching assignments with greater self-assurance. "This week," he reported in 1920, "I had to deliver another sermon for the professors and the students. And last week I preached in Muskegon, where Rev. H. Bultema was deposed by the classis. Two hundred families left



with him, and only one hundred remained in our denomination. I preached to these one hundred. It was the largest church I have ever preached in, but the pews were not filled. On that occasion a Jewish minister, the elderly Rev. John Fles, was also in attendance."<sup>14</sup>

That same year Eisse and his bride made plans to visit the Netherlands. It had been ten very momentous years since his departure. The young farm-

hand would be returning with a wife and as a fully trained minister of the gospel. "It will be just ten years since I left the Netherlands at the end of June," he wrote. "I sometimes think of how we will stare at each other and about who of us has changed the most. Perhaps it would be a good idea if I grew back my mustache so mother will be better able to recognize her son.

"This week we received a couple of

Moline, the Michigan village which Woldring praised so highly in 1912. And it is tempting to imagine that his twenty-five-year pastorate in Kornhorn was a mutually beneficial term of service. Obviously, his training at Grand Rapids Theological School produced but little direct benefit for the Christian Reformed Church. His correspondence, however, although never intended for public scrutiny, has now become a useful source for understanding the early history of the Christian Reformed Church and its seminary. So Eisse and his bride, Fie Jongsma, have contributed to our school and church in ways they could never have imagined.

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Eisse Harke Woldring, letter to Parents, Brothers, and Sisters, 27 Nov. 1910, Calvin College and Seminary Archives.

<sup>2</sup>Woldring, letter to Parents, Brothers, and Sisters, 9 Oct. 1911, Calvin College and Seminary Archives.

<sup>3</sup>Woldring, letter to Parents, Brothers, and Sisters, 9 Oct. 1911, Calvin College and Seminary Archives.

<sup>4</sup>Woldring, letter to Parents, Brothers, and Sisters, 1912, Calvin College and Seminary Archives.

<sup>5</sup>Woldring, letter to Parents, Brothers, and Sisters, 1 Dec. 1912, Calvin College and Seminary Archives.

<sup>6</sup>Woldring, letter to Parents, Brothers, and Sisters, 30 Dec. 1912, Calvin College and Seminary Archives.

<sup>7</sup>Woldring, letter to Parents, Brothers, and Sisters, July 1913, Calvin College and Seminary Archives.

<sup>8</sup>Woldring, letter to Parents, Brothers, and Sisters, Sept. 1913, Calvin College and Seminary Archives.

<sup>9</sup>Woldring, letter to Parents, Brothers, and Sisters, 5 Nov. 1916, Calvin College and Seminary Archives.

<sup>10</sup>Woldring, letter to Parents, Brothers, and Sisters, 17 Nov. 1917, Calvin College and Seminary Archives.

<sup>11</sup>Fie Jongsma Woldring, letters to friend, 16 Apr. 1918 and 5 Dec. 1918, Calvin College and Seminary Archives.

<sup>12</sup>Woldring, letter to Parents, 10 Mar. 1918, Calvin College and Seminary Archives.

<sup>13</sup>Woldring, letter to Parents, 20 Feb. 1920, Calvin College and Seminary Archives.

<sup>14</sup>Woldring, letter to Parents, 20 Feb. 1920, Calvin College and Seminary Archives.



Above photo: Sauwerd—School Street ca 1910. Left photo: Student Life, 1917 (starting second from left) Jacob Bruinooge, Oets Bouwsma, Eisse Woldring.

boat tickets for our departure, and if every thing goes well, we will leave about June 26 on the *New Amsterdam*. We preferred the *Rotterdam*, but the other was twenty dollars cheaper. E. Van Halsema is going to get married and then join us on the trip. He has no money but will borrow \$1000. I wish we didn't have to worry about money, but I must save something and then earn enough to pay our way back."<sup>15</sup>

We have no record of the Woldring family reunion, but we do know that Eisse never returned to America. Instead, he accepted a call from the Kornhorn Gereformeerde church, and he remained there until 1945. This tiny village in the southwest corner of Groningen was and still is much like





## And Now, About Chicago

Dear Parents, Brother, and Sister,

My vacation began on June 1, and it continued for fourteen days. The day of our departure I received my final wages from [the factory], and we parted on good terms. With so much to do, the hour of our departure arrived quickly. Our plan was to take the 7:30 train to Grand Haven and the steamboat across Lake Michigan. We missed the 7:30 train, but with the next train we still arrived in Grand Haven at 9:50 P.M.

There we met four other companions, who brought our total number to twelve—all on vacation from

school. Henry Schultze, Ben Engbers, Ernest Van Halsema, and I shared a two-person compartment to save money. We lay like sardines in a can and did not sleep well. I woke up feeling miserable. I got up early and was the first on deck.

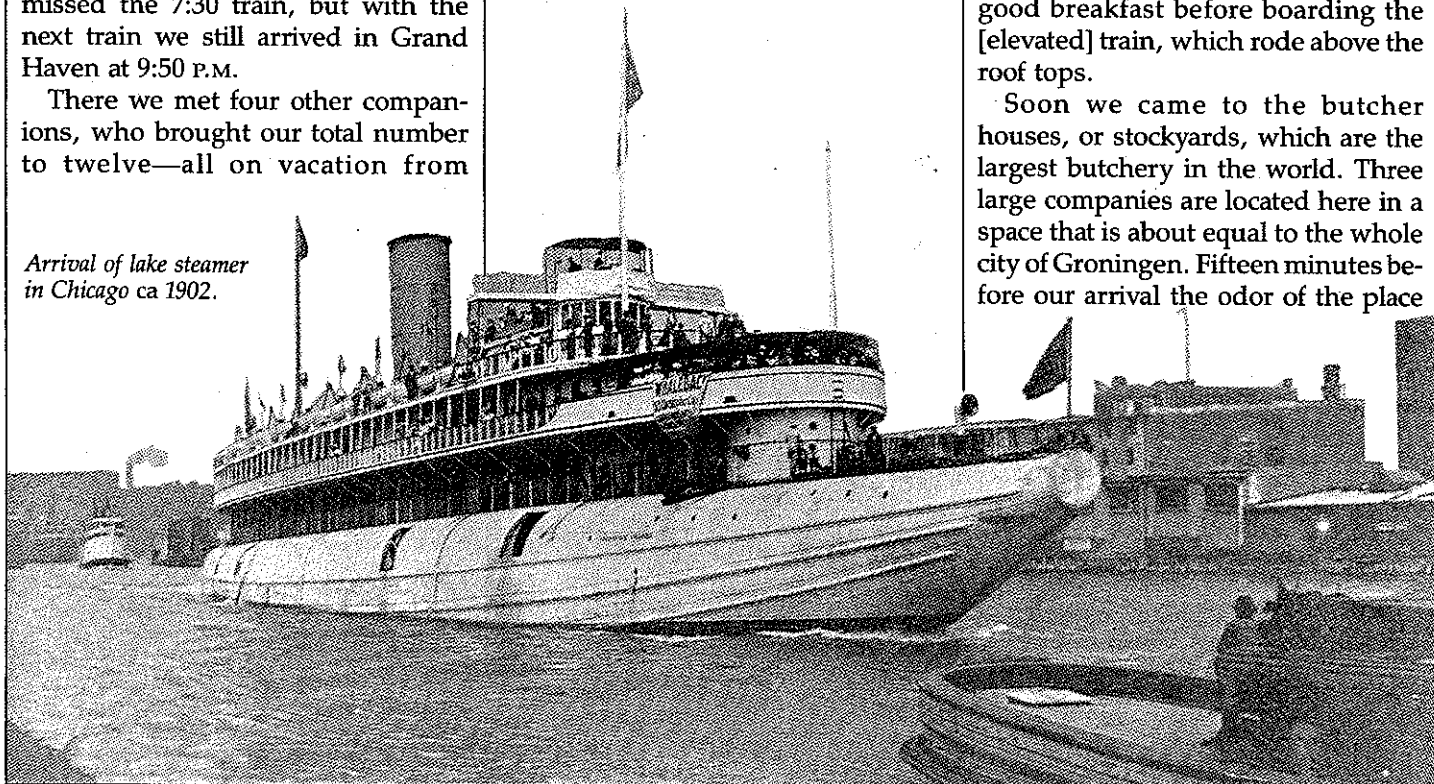
When we were finally all on deck, we could see Chicago on the horizon. Gigantic buildings loomed up into the sky, but they were surrounded by a

curtain of smoke. My first impression was that there was only a little shipping activity and that it consisted mainly of lumber. In addition, the harbor contained great coal pits, old iron heaps, and the like.

At the dock six of our number left immediately by train, and the rest of us remained to see Chicago. We brought our suitcases to a train station about fifteen minutes away and had a good breakfast before boarding the [elevated] train, which rode above the roof tops.

Soon we came to the butcher houses, or stockyards, which are the largest butchery in the world. Three large companies are located here in a space that is about equal to the whole city of Groningen. Fifteen minutes before our arrival the odor of the place

*Arrival of lake steamer  
in Chicago ca 1902.*





hit our noses.

After our arrival we entered an office and waited until our group was large enough to be led about by a uniformed guide. Our first destination was the place where hogs were killed. There the animals were driven into an enclosure near a huge wheel to which iron chains were attached. These chains were secured to the animals' legs, and the turning wheel pulled them up and around. Then the animals first encountered their murderer, who, as each came along, gave it a mortal stab. This he did ten or fifteen times each minute. Then the

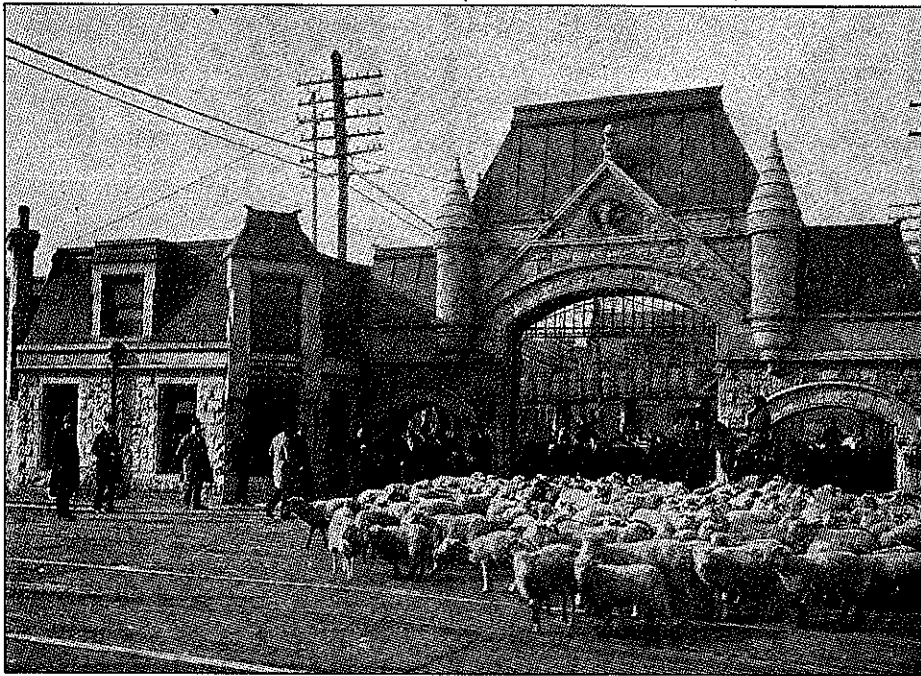
pigs were pulled along by a pulley, which carried them through the entire building. Meanwhile, they were being cut into pieces. The inside meat was removed. Then the hams were dried, packed, and made ready for shipment. All of this occurred in just thirty minutes. Every hour more than six hundred hogs are killed and packed.

After this we were taken to a refrigerator room with a temperature near freezing. It was full of butchered cattle—at least fifteen hundred pieces. Then we came to the sheep department, in which the same scene as that

butchery business, we returned to the elevated train and rode in a northerly direction across the city to Lincoln Park. We quickly visited and admired the large park, a museum of old historical things, a zoo, and a botanical garden. After that "work," for it was more tiring than digging a canal, we did justice to a restaurant. Then, with renewed strength and enthusiasm, we entered a large wholesale business, through which we were led by a guide. The upper floor of this building covers about three and one-half acres, and the highest part is ten stories high. In the busiest times one hundred twenty railroad cars are filled and sent off each day. And every day one hundred bags full of letters are sent away. It is indeed a gigantic business.

Soon the day was spent, and at 4:00 P.M. our group split up—each going to his own destination. After hearty farewells to my companions, I, with help from my map, found the train I needed and was soon riding over and behind buildings to reach my intended destination. After searching for about fifteen minutes, I found the street and house which I needed. Six families lived in the building, and after knocking at the third door, I found the right place.

I recognized Jan Waltdekker immediately. He has scarcely changed in speech, appearance, and action. Then I met the landlady—Derkje van Deel—and other boarders. Harm Korrenga finally came home at about eight o'clock. He had worked overtime. Harm has not changed much in appearance, but standing on his own two feet has been good for his personality. And I must say that he has been very friendly to me and that he has gone out of his way to help me. He has earned my heartfelt gratitude, which I hope to demonstrate in every possible way. I am also much impressed by Derkje van Deel, because she is a good housekeeper for the boys and a friend



Chicago Stockyards ca 1900.

chain moved slowly along and brought the animals to a large kettle for dipping. They moved on to a place where several men worked. One scraped the legs, another the forepart, and one man scraped the head, until there was nothing more to be scraped. Next the hogs were cut open, cleaned out, washed, brushed off, and dried by hundreds of butchers who all stood a little distance from each other. Throughout the whole process the

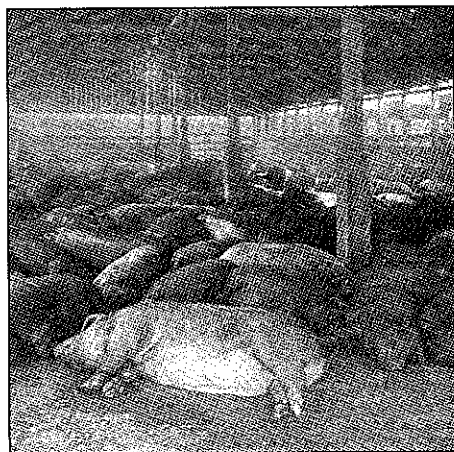
of the hog-butchering department was repeated. It took twenty-five minutes to prepare the sheep for shipment. Next we were led to the cattle section . . . where the cattle were killed with a hammer blow to the head—three hundred in an hour. And within twenty-five minutes these beasts were also ready to be cooked or roasted.

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After we had seen enough of this

as well. It's too bad for them that she will soon marry a vegetable dealer.

On Wednesday morning Harm and I visited Frankje van Deel, who lives with her husband on a small farm just outside of Chicago. En route we rode past a large electricity plant which employs 25,000 men, and the train passed through much beautiful scenery. The damp soil produces a luxurious growth of plants, and the large trees provide shade from the warm rays of the sun. We passed a camp of gypsies. They earn their money with performing bears and by taking what-



*Above photo: Chicago Stockyards ca 1900.  
Right photo: Downtown Chicago.*

ever they need. They are notorious for stealing horses. The women smoke pipes and are as proficient in that as the men. We spent several pleasant hours with the van Deels, ate lunch, returned home for tea, and then went out again.

We visited a twenty-three-story building, from which we had a beautiful view of the city—at least in so far as the smoke was not a hindrance. We saw stores of gigantic circumferences which contained every possible thing. We viewed a cafe, a music hall, a gambling room, and what not. There are stores in which you need only stand on a step and the step moves slowly upward. We also visited a large post office and a beautiful li-

brary. (These can be found in all large American cities and are usually the gift of a millionaire from the city. . . .) Then we visited the art museum. We only had time to walk through it quickly, but we soon realized we could spend an entire day there. But my heart swelled as we passed the paintings of Rembrandt, Rubens, Hals, van der Velde, and others. They outshone the others in beauty of color and clarity of form.

On other days we visited a park where we saw [replicas of] the three ships of Columbus. They are small

made me dizzy to look down into it. That evening we stayed home and had a pleasant time of conversation.

\*\*\*\*\*

The next morning Harm went back to work at nine o'clock, and I left for Grand Rapids on the train. I owe many thanks to my friends in Chicago. The train left at nine o'clock, and by ten o'clock we were out of the city limits, going through woods, valleys, level ground, and hills in the direction of Michigan. At two o'clock we were back in Grand Rapids. I was overcome by feelings of loneliness and quiet.



things—not even as large as a small barge. Then we went to see the [natural history] museum with animals, old things, and the like. It would take two days to see all of that. Then we had a dandy dinner in the city and walked through the streets. We saw a stone quarry which was so deep it

Indeed, I now faced the return of my daily routine. The following Monday I began my new job—selling books and newspapers.

Eisse H. Woldring  
June 2, 1912

# Samuel Volbeda

## AND THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED PULPIT

by Rev. Charles Greenfield\*

**T**he late Dr. Samuel Volbeda and thematic preaching belong together like love and marriage. In the minds of those who were his students, thematic preaching is synonymous with the name Volbeda. Some of his students may have made humorous remarks about Volbedian preaching, citing, for instance, its "Itsitis Syndrome" (the theme divided into three points, each beginning with *its*). Yet most of us, I am certain, agree that Volbeda's enthusiastic presentation of the thematic approach has greatly influenced the ministry in the Christian Reformed Church.

### A Highly Gifted Professor

The esteem he enjoyed in the church is without question. Following Volbeda's death in 1953, Dr. John H. Kromminga wrote, "[He] was one of the most highly gifted and widely known men God has given our church in its history. Dr. Volbeda taught at Calvin Seminary for thirty-eight years. . . . No other man has so influenced the preaching in Christian Reformed pulpits as he. . . . The church may well remember his work with profound gratitude; for in his interpretation, practical theology was a matter of deeply rooted principle rather than mere practical expediency, and the preaching of the Word was a matter of unfolding its rich meaning

in a thorough, logical, and beautiful manner."<sup>1</sup>

So also in *De Wachter* of June 3, 1953, Rev. E. Van Halsema states that Dr. Volbeda "was held in high esteem by our people, and exercised a great influence on our ministers by his work in the School of the churches."

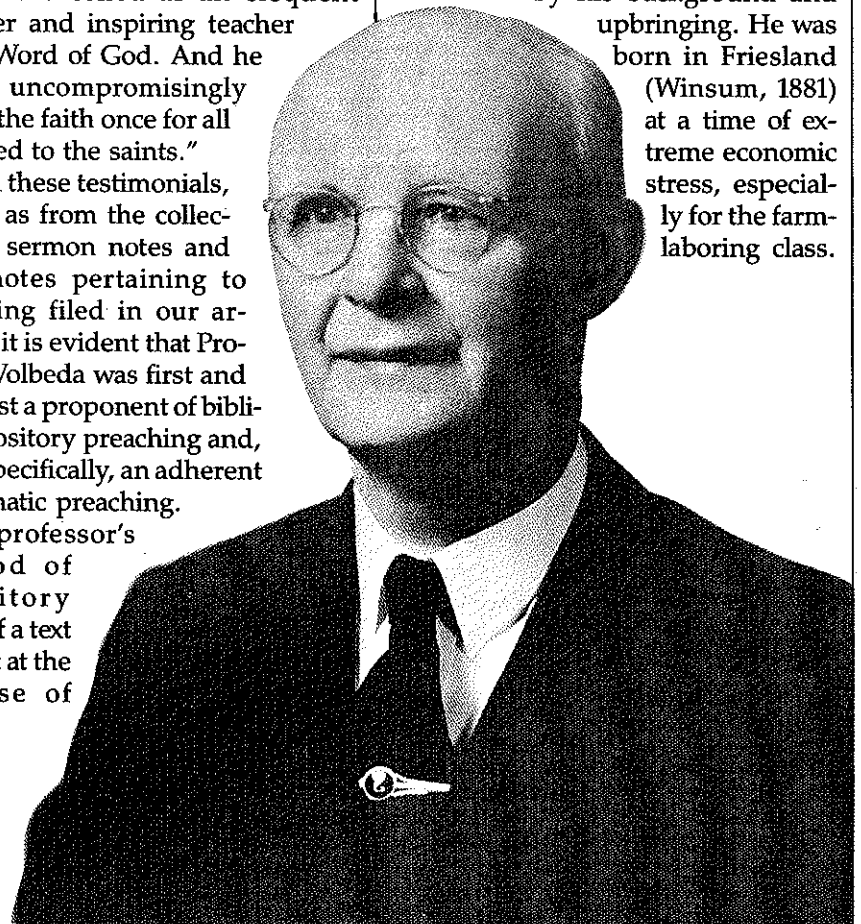
*The Banner* of June 6, 1953, contains a resolution of the Calvin Seminary faculty acknowledging about Dr. Volbeda that "he was indeed a man of God. He excelled as an eloquent preacher and inspiring teacher of the Word of God. And he proved uncompromisingly true to the faith once for all delivered to the saints."

From these testimonials, as well as from the collection of sermon notes and class notes pertaining to preaching filed in our archives, it is evident that Professor Volbeda was first and foremost a proponent of biblical expository preaching and, more specifically, an adherent of thematic preaching.

The professor's method of expository study of a text was not at the expense of

pastoral sensitivity. Preaching must be communicative and, thereby, also pastoral. "The Word of God is a definitely pastoral book. It is the revelation of the pastoral heart, purposes, and activities of God and Christ. It is the preacher's pastoral medium (staff, crutch). With it he can, without it he cannot, shepherd God's flock."<sup>2</sup>

This sensitivity to shepherding God's flock by expository, textual preaching may have been encouraged by his background and upbringing. He was born in Friesland (Winsum, 1881) at a time of extreme economic stress, especially for the farm-laboring class.



\*Following his retirement Rev. Greenfield has volunteered many valuable services to the Calvin College and Seminary Archives.

Although he was only five years old when his widowed mother migrated with four small children to Michigan, he quickly became acquainted with the trials and suffering of the early settlers. When his mother also died, he was taken into the home of his oldest sister. He also must have known about spiritual struggles, for in his youth he had a conversion experience and yielded his life to the Lord. With Frisian tenderness and commitment directed by the Spirit of his Lord, it is no surprise that he saw biblical preaching as pastoral.

class sermons, and his critique of our outlines could be devastating. But he was simply showing us the obvious way to prepare a sermon. Once he said of a class sermon, "This, gentlemen, is an example of what a sermon should not be."

One of the professor's sermon outlines will provide an example of his method.

1 Timothy 1:15

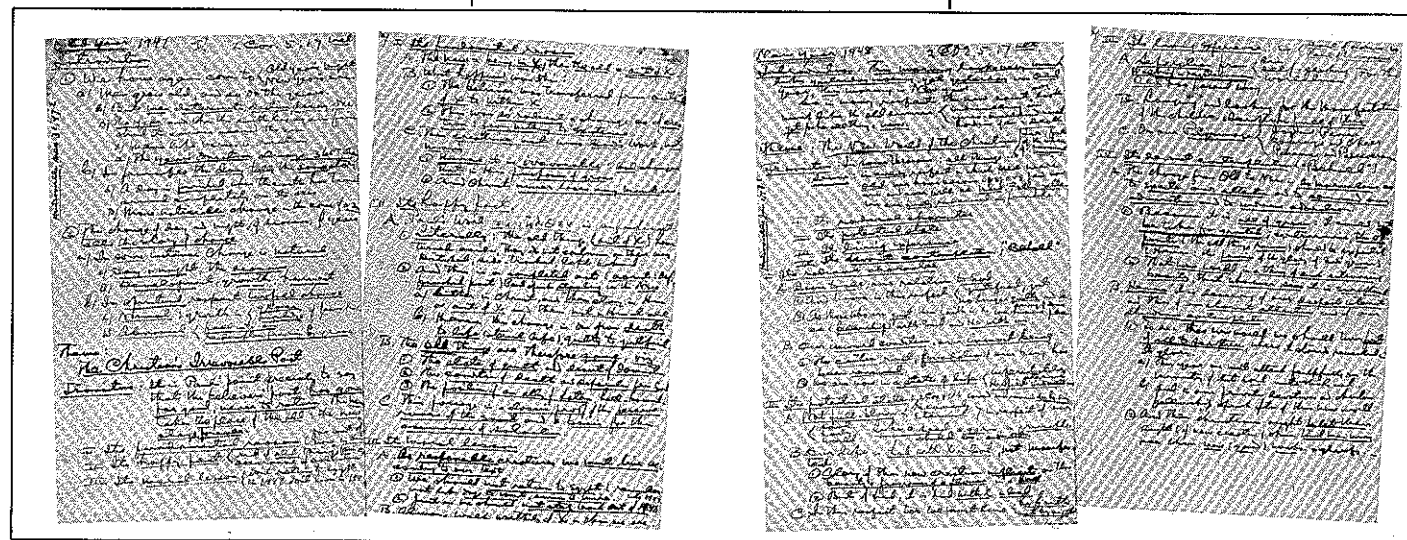
"The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And I am the foremost of sinners."

the reliability is Paul's profession "Of whom I am chief." In the third division, the fitting acknowledgment of the reliability if seen in pronouncement: "The saying is sure and worthy of all acceptance."

**Catechism Preaching**

Volbeda's insistence that we in our sermons honor the Scriptures as the very words of God, doubtless explains a comment I found of his about catechism preaching:

"Catechism preaching is preaching of the Creed; and since the Creed



Sermon outline, 1948.

**His Teaching**

The term "thematic preaching" captures well the essence of Dr. Volbeda's teaching. "His exact exegesis of Scriptural passages and full exposition of the Word inspired his students to begin a ministry of thematic preaching."<sup>3</sup> And that was the ideal he set before us. We were to search for the one basic concept of the text. This one idea had to come out of the larger context as well as the immediate. It meant extreme care and exactness in choosing the words of the theme and of the outline which developed the theme.

Few of us attained this ideal in our

Theme: The Reliability of the Gospel of our Salvation.

- I. Its Great Significance
- II. Its Convincing Evidence
- III. Its Fitting Acknowledgment

For Volbeda the key word that comes out of the passage is *reliability* (*betrouwbaarheid*). The three divisions carefully explicate that concept. Point I, the reliability is great because, from man's side, it deals with deliverance from the very greatest evil—sin—and with the very highest good—salvation; from God's side, there is the absolute certainty of the completion of his gospel program. Hence, the reliability is the content of the "saying." Point II, the convincing evidence of

(Heidelberg Catechism) is dogma (and ethics), it is also dogmatical preaching. . . . It is of the nature of preaching to speak as the Lord speaks (i.e., in his Word: 'thus saith the Lord'). But the Lord does not speak theology: we make theology out of what God says. . . . Theology lacks the resoluteness which preaching needs with a view to the end it serves (faith is from hearing and hearing is from the Word of God)."<sup>4</sup>

**An Order of Worship**

Of interest, too, I trust, is that the professor who insisted on there being one thematic concept in each text also saw a oneness in the worship services on Sunday. His notes contain a sug-



gested order that unites the two services. It was given to a class on February 16, 1951.<sup>5</sup>

The Morning Order  
Organ music "appropriate"  
for worship and private prayers  
Votum  
Salutation  
Gloria Patria (Psalm of Adoration)  
Summary of the Law  
Prayer of Confession  
Declaration of Pardon  
Psalm of Praise and Joy (Baptism,  
Profession of Faith, Announcements)  
Scripture Prelection  
[Scripture Reading]  
Pre-sermonic Prayer  
Sermon  
General Prayer: Adoration,  
Thanksgiving, Petition  
Decalogue  
Psalm of Thanksgiving  
and Offering\* \*\*  
Benediction

The Evening Order  
Organ and Private Prayer  
Votum: (to call meeting to order)  
Salutation  
Psalm of Adoration  
Reading of Scripture (and Sermon)  
Prayer of Intercession for All Saints  
Reading of Lord's Supper Formulary  
Psalm of Fellowship  
before Celebration  
Celebration of Lord's Supper  
Prayer of Formulary  
Decalogue  
Doxology  
Benediction

"The celebration of the Lord's Supper is central to eventide worship," states the professor in explaining why he assigns the communion observance to the evening service.

Should today's pastors give serious thought to Volbeda's thematic emphasis? Is his thematic exposition still worthy of consideration?

It seems that some of us are more

and more using a text as a pretext. Then, instead of giving an exposition of a God-spoken message, we develop a subject touched on in the text and expound that subject by way of personal insight and experience. In so doing, we are very likely being influenced by the style of some popular TV evangelists.

Volbeda recognized that sermon making is hard work. He admitted this to me when, as a senior seminarian, I was ready to present my class sermon. He and I were in the classroom a bit before my classmates. Turning to me, he asked, "How does it seem to you that soon you will have to make two sermons every week?" To this I replied with a deep sigh, "Professor, it seems impossible." "Well," he said, "it is impossible."

To the professor the faithful exposi-

tion of God's Word was a goal and ideal worthy of our very best efforts. He usually gave most of us rather low grades on our class sermons, wanting us not to be easily satisfied with our production and realizing that if we had not attained the goal, we would continue to strive the more earnestly to reach the ideal.

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Yearbook 1945 (*Grand Rapids: Christian Reformed Publishing House, 1954*) 217.

<sup>2</sup>Samuel Volbeda, *The Pastoral Genius of Preaching*, ed. Robert Evenhuis (*Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960*) 77.

<sup>3</sup>Volbeda Papers, Calvin College and Seminary Archives.

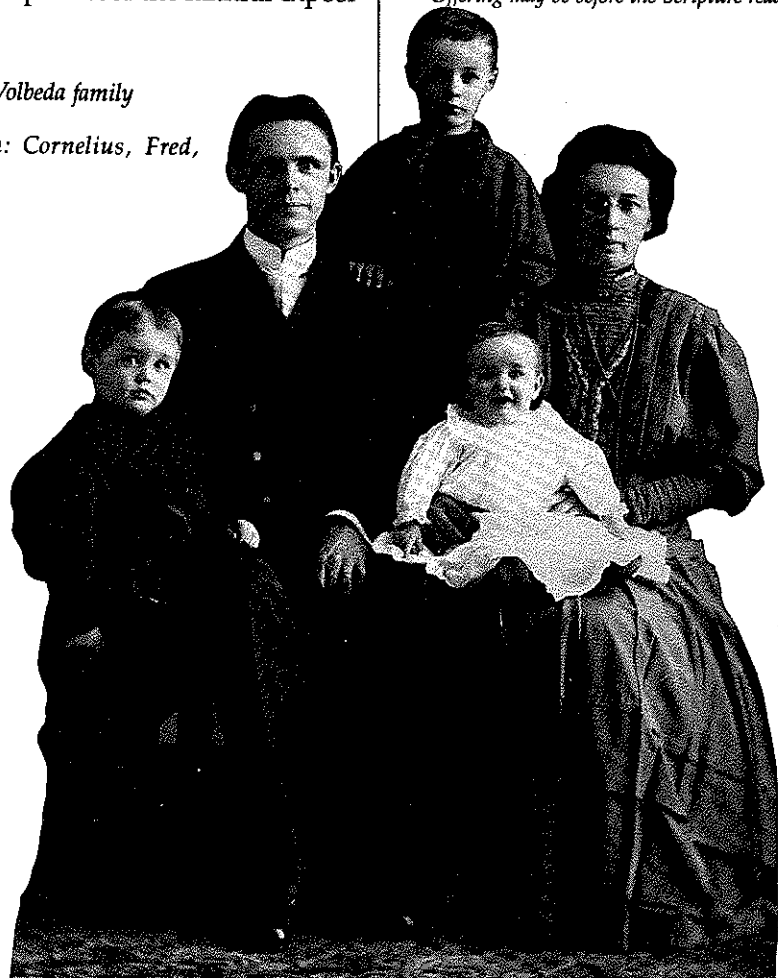
<sup>4</sup>Volbeda Papers, Calvin College and Seminary Archives.

<sup>5</sup>Volbeda Papers, Calvin College and Seminary Archives.

\*Volbeda: "I believe collection should be confined to morning worship."

\*\*Offering may be before the Scripture reading.

Samuel Volbeda family  
ca 1910.  
Children: Cornelius, Fred,  
Anna.



# SIoux CE

**D**uring the Twenties, Sioux Center was working through its puberty. By that time, the incorporated town was barely thirty years old. On the Rand-McNally map it appeared as a hasty flyspeck. Anyone who spoke English, unless he was under sixteen, was viewed with dark suspicion and some resentment. Sioux Center, pronounced by many as "Soox Center," was considered a "Hollanders Only" village.

The small burg straddled Highway 75, running from Omaha, Nebraska, to Minneapolis, Minnesota. Farther south, the road was called Custer Battlefield Highway. My father, Watse, called it "the K.T.," an abbreviation for "King of the Trails." But, then, he called all gravel roads "the K.T."

A town is defined largely by events that occurred there or by its colorful inhabitants, its "characters." Sioux

Center had its full share of unforgettable oddballs, unself-conscious Dutch independents, and "sore thumb stick-outs."

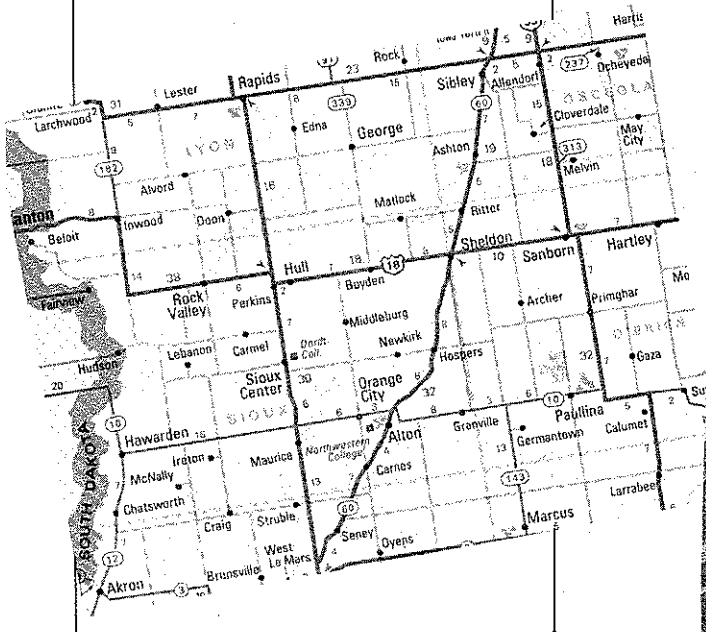
As I squirmed through the interminable Dutch church services of my childhood, my eyes were often drawn to a bulky man seated across the aisle. His face and head were those of Sydney Greenstreet, the actor. His elbows were always firmly planted on the back of the pew ahead, and his athletic jaw moved in sprung rhythm: three chews in quick time followed by three in slow tempo, as if he was carefully meditating.

The man, Hendrikus Prins, was bald and had bloodshot gray eyes; booze-blossoms dappled his alabaster cheeks. The furrows from the corners of his mouth were stained mahogany,

as were the few visible bottom teeth that stood like lonely charred stumps in a burned-out forest. No wonder the rumor spread that he took off his blucher shoes in church and used them as impromptu spittoons. But I kept a sleuth's eye peeled and never saw him spit into his shoe; on the floor, yes. And, yes, he regularly took off his shoes—for comfort's sake.

No self-respecting woman ever sat next to him, nor, for that matter, did anyone else. A wide space always remained empty between him and the pew's nearest occupant.

Hendrikus was known as a "car nut." He loved long, speedy cars. He drove the biggest cars in town—a black Buick and a Hudson Super Six—and he drove like Jehu. Usually in the spring, after the roads were graded and the last frost had left the ground, Hendrikus would challenge any and all dare-devil drivers to a race. He made everyone eat his dust.



Sioux Center, Iowa,  
Christian School.

# ENTER From Knee Pants to Long Pants

by Syne Bierma

Prins lived with his two stepdaughters, the Jansen twins. One was a schoolteacher in a public country school, really a thinly disguised Christian school; the other was a nurse in a two- or three-room hospital in Orange City. The two never sat with Hendrikus—not even close. Instead, they sat on the far opposite side of the church.

The Prinses lived on Kaiser Street, a street made infamous during World War I for having three or four German sympathizers residing on it. One of the extremists who became too vociferous with his partisan opinions was rewarded with a free paint job on his house—yellow. For a bonus his car was daubed with matching paint.

Although some sixty-five years have slipped by, the memory of Dominie De Leeuw is still fresh in my mind. The earliest and deepest remembrance is that of the man's black puckered brow and coal-glinting eyes skewering me to my seat. When he

barked out exhortations punctuated with a heavy fist on the pulpit Bible, I knew instantly they were meant for me.

I had a passing acquaintance with street Dutch, but church Dutch may as well have been Sanskrit. So when I listened to the church Dutch coming from the pulpit, I was a stranger in a foreign land. I depended on my overactive and well-lubricated conscience to inform me that the good dominie had his homiletic blunderbuss loaded and cocked for me alone. Hadn't I, during the previous week, surreptitiously and with malice aforethought stolen fig newtons by the handful from the cookie box, the one with blue Dutch windmills on it? And to make matters worse, hadn't I malevolently stuck out my tongue at my younger sister?

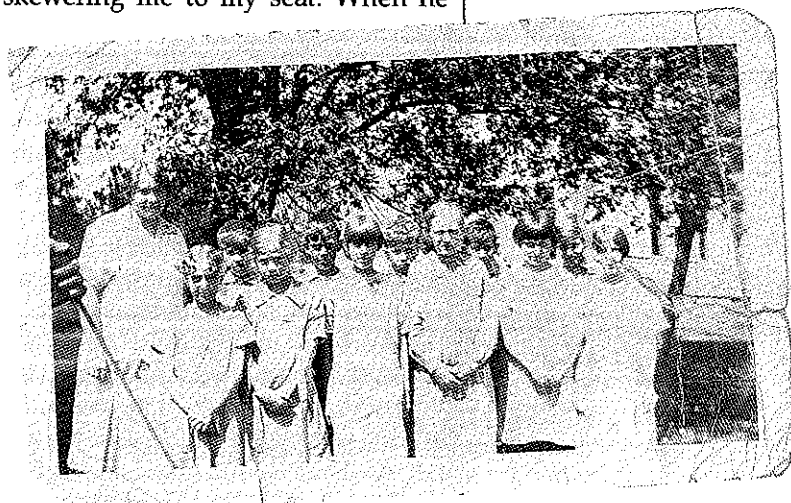
That dominie knew my secret sins didn't surprise me. After all, a minister knows everything. De Leeuw au-

tomatically divined my iniquities, and I knew he knew.

I shall be eternally grateful for a certain woman of ample proportions who was often seated between me and the dominie. She was my shield and buckler, sort of a human barricade deflecting De Leeuw's best shots of wrath. But sometimes the large lady wasn't there, and then I quivered uncontrollably, scrunching myself into the smallest ball of protoplasm imaginable. There I scrotoched down in my mythical foxhole, reduced to a bundle of twitching neuroses. A few times a wizened old lady of eighty sat in the line of fire, but she wasn't much help. It seemed then that every sermonic musketball caromed off my cowering skull with sickening accuracy. After those sessions I slunk up the aisle, quaking with contrition and solemnly vowing I would never again filch another fig newton.

As Dominie De Leeuw poured what seemed to me opprobrium from the podium, all others in the building sat bovine and unmoved. They were mere onlookers, watching me get my

Bierma home, 1936.

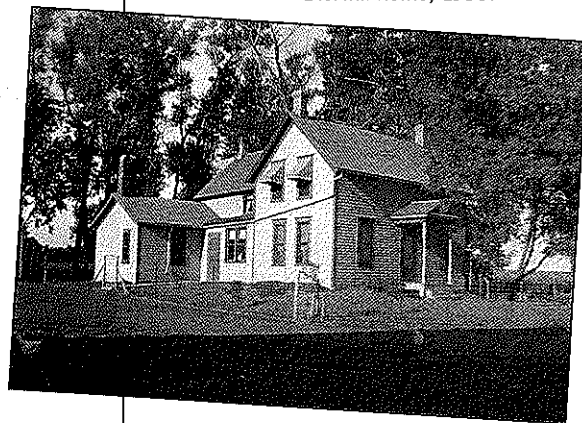


4th Grade Class in Sioux Center Christian School, 1925.

Teacher: Miss De Groot.

1st row, girls: Grace Vanden Bosch, Mary Eshuis, Tena Wassink, Alice Van Voorst, Marie Ten Harmsel, Fanny Calkhoven.

2nd row, boys: Ernest Gerritsma, Lane Visser, Clarence Bouwkamp, Tom De Lange, Syne Bierma.



due Sunday after Sunday. After what I plainly perceived to be a public reprimand, I fully expected my parents to carry me to the woodshed (figuratively) to dish out corporal punishment as soon as we reached home. So, when none came, I concluded that they felt I had suffered enough. However, I was discreet enough never to tell them of the cookie heist.

Incidentally, the Dutch *De Leeuw* is translated "the lion" in English, and that is how I viewed him. Later, much later, when I discussed the matter with my mother, she told me that dominie was really a mild-mannered man and loved peace and harmony. And this leads me into an event that

dominated the speech and thoughts of Sioux Center throughout the entire decade of the Twenties. It was the rupture of the Christian Reformed congregation in Sioux Center.

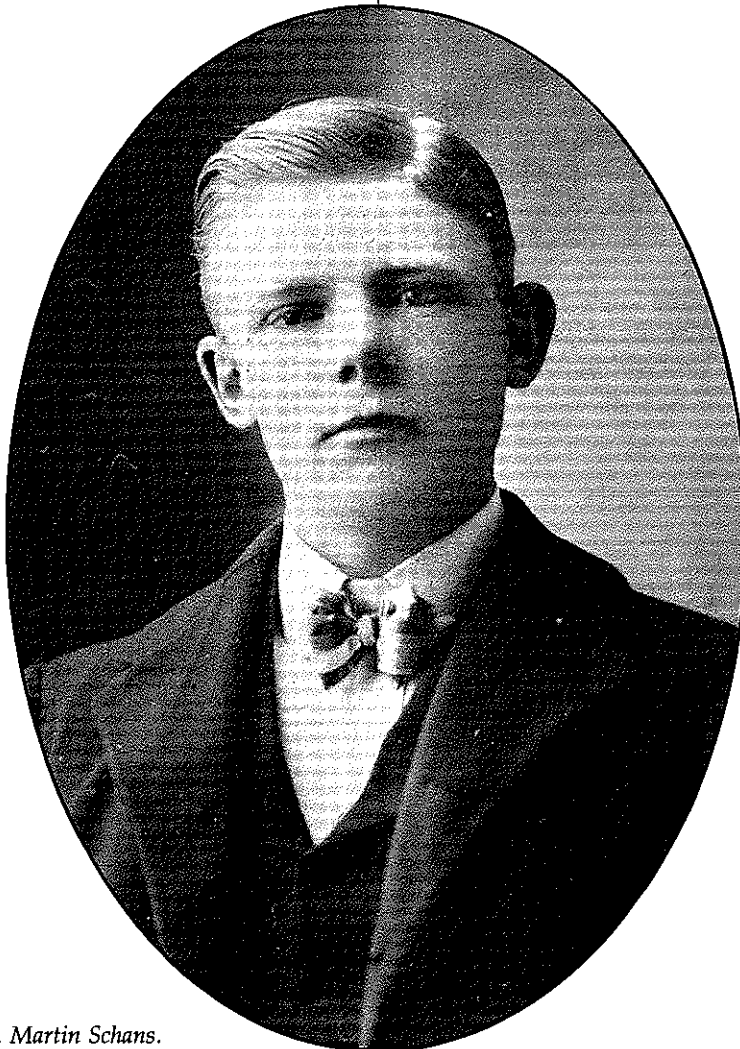
Throughout the Christian Reformed denomination a bitter controversy raged—whether Dutch or English was to be the lingual coin of the pulpit. It seemed that the head of the aching boil festered in Sioux Center. After striving to be a peacemaker between these two factions for some three or four years, De Leeuw got a call from Lansing, Illinois; he packed up and was gone in a month and a half.

Bitterness and rancor over the lan-

guage question bubbled up in daily conversations at the dinner table and on the streets of our otherwise staid town. Teunis Willemstyn, our cream hauler, stopped to discuss the "Sioux Center Zaak" with my father for as long as two hours. This went on weekly and even semiweekly whenever he picked up cream. Both felt that English should gradually be introduced into the catechism classes so that instead of the mumbled Dutch answers there would be intelligible English responses to English questions.

People crossed over to the other side of the road to avoid members who held opposite views. The climax was a court battle: Who was to possess the building? The Dutch element moved out in 1921 and built a shed-roofed structure that reminded farmers of a long hog house, but the court case dragged on until 1928, when the judge decided for the Dutch lovers and the English contingent was given until 1929 to move out. But the settlement also meant that the Dutch lovers were responsible for the debt on the building. While meeting for a whole year in the public high school gymnasium, the American half of the congregation built a frame structure costing \$25,000. Much of the rough work was done by volunteers. In the fall of 1929 the building was dedicated, and services began in 1930. It took fully two generations to heal the breach between the two churches.

The nudge toward English was limited to one English sermon a month. The next pastor, Rev. Martin Schans, a hearty little man with a sprightly sense of humor, preached most often in Dutch. That meant that practically all the youngsters could not participate in the worship. Hence, I studied the people in the pews and the minister's eccentricities. His peculiarity was to roll on the balls of his feet as he preached. I could never figure out whether that was a hint for the rest of us to be on our toes spiritually or just



Rev. Martin Schans.

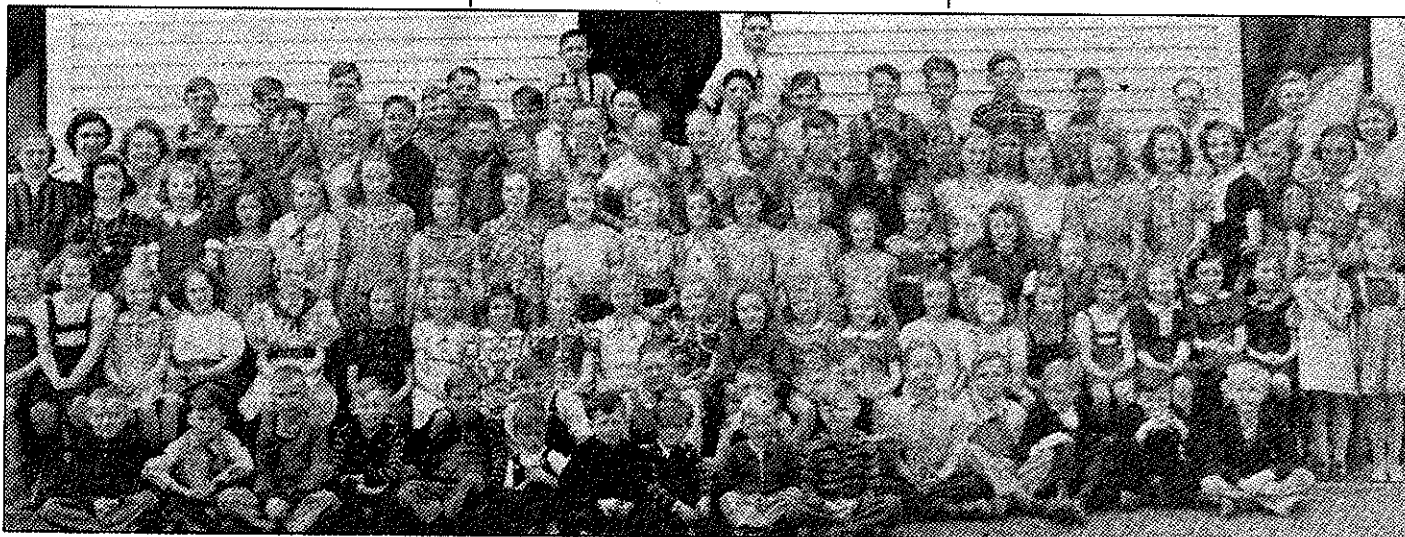


his way of getting exercise.

In one of his frequent visits to our farm (my father was permanent vice president of the consistory, it seemed), Rev. Schans (since we felt we were substantially an English congregation, we graduated to calling our ministers "Reverend" rather than "Dominie") found us in the alfalfa patch standing over eight or nine groaning calves that were lying on their sides, dangerously bloated with gas from overeating wet alfalfa. Clare had just come back from town with a punch, a sharp-pointed stabber in a steel

apulted into the industrial age with the introduction of the Model T Ford. Papa was not a mechanical genius, and when he presided at the wheel, he expected absolute silence so that he could manage all the gadgets without tromping on the low and reverse foot pedals simultaneously. In town on Main Street, backing up from an angle-parking position, Papa would race the motor while inching backward; in order to be sure he didn't bang into a horse and buggy or a heedless car operator to his rear, he activated the klaxon horn with its

Two years later, when we purchased a gear-shift, apple-green Model A Ford, my father was off the hook; he had the best excuse in the world to retire from the steering wheel forever. Oh, he threatened to learn the for-him-unlearnable, to master the complicated gear-shift mechanism, but, as I recall it, he never got beyond the talking stage, and we gave him no encouragement. But that meant we had to deliver him to every consistory meeting and later fetch him. Without fail, he asked us to get him at 11:00 P.M., but we never left the



Students of Sioux Center Christian School, 1940. (Christian Home and School, "Our Schools Report," June 1940, p. 16).

sheath. The trick was to jab the punch behind a certain rib so the gas and undigested alfalfa would swoosh out through the sheath. All of us were leery of playing veterinarian, so Schans said, "Here, let me do it," and do it he did. All nine calves were deflated and relieved. In no time they were back to normal. That was the first time I noticed that preachers were real human beings.

My father, whom we called "Papa" (everyone in Sioux County called his father "Papa" except the Brandes boys, who irreverently called theirs "old man," but they had been transplanted from New Jersey, so what could you expect?), was suddenly cat-

harsh burp-like sound. It was like a public proclamation that the Biermas were on their way. Gangway! In the wide-open country his average speed was fifteen miles per hour. In the village it was closer to ten.

As a sophisticated nine-year-old keenly conscious of public opinion, I was ruby faced with embarrassment when Papa roared down Main Street at five miles an hour, one foot on the foot brake and the other on the "low" pedal, while his right hand manipulated the hand-controlled accelerator. The motor was racing, but we weren't. Little boys with runny noses outran our car while they jeered at our break-neck(!) speed.

church until long past midnight. Cigar smoke curled from under the consistory-room door, and now and again a raised voice informed us that the meeting would last another hour.

Also in the early Twenties there were the Reisma brothers. Sikke, the oldest, was an armchair theologian, self-appointed and imperious. He was clean-shaven and wore a porcupine haircut and a purposeful look. Jerry (pronounced "Yurry," heavy on the r's), the middle one, was the only one of the three bachelors who finally succumbed to marriage rather late in life. His face had a perpetual cherubic smile and a corncob pipe sticking straight out of the front of his mouth.

And finally there was little Harry, the hapless transient who went through life scavenging and begging, especially after Jerry married and Sikke died, and he never had a house to call his home.

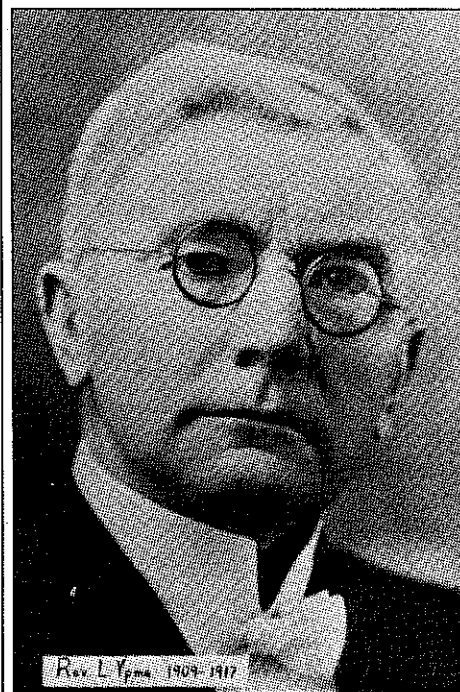
Sikke sat across the church from us when he was not in the council. I noted that when the sermons were thought-provoking, Sikke rubbed his hands and leaned forward to devour every word. However, if the sermon was dull or repetitious or both, Sikke would set his Frisian jaw, swivel his body away from the dominie, and stare at the north wall. His right arm would lean on the back rest. The degree of his disgust was registered in the extent to which he turned away from the pulpit.

Sikke had another side to him. He loved horseplay. Before I began school, I once rode into town with Papa to fetch a load of seed potatoes from the railroad car. Sikke and his brothers were there, either to help load our wagon or their own—I don't remember—but Sikke kept pegging small potatoes at unsuspecting workers. A bit later one of the human targets decided he had had enough and waited for Sikke to bend over for a scoopful of potatoes. He punted him in the pants so violently that Sikke pitched forward with his nose in the potato heap. Then the punter and the puntee tumbled and rolled round and round on the bed of the railway car. I recall thinking they didn't act their age—nearly sixty years.

Jerry married a "lady" twenty years his junior. She was tall and rather attractive by most standards; Jerry was short and amiable and uxorious. The slightest lift of her eyebrow was sufficient to make Jerry scramble to gratify her whim. Not surprisingly, then, the potato farmer moved to town and rented a building which became Reisma's Variety Store. This was entirely her idea. She was clerk, buyer, boss. Jerry sat off to the side in a rocking

chair, smiling and pulling on his corn-cob pipe. Featuring everything from itching powder and firecrackers to fine chinaware, the store lived up to its name. Jerry Junior, an only child, was given free rein, which encouraged his rascally ways. He was always well supplied with chewing gum and candy and, hence, had "friends" galore. But, in addition, he introduced itching powder, mechanical mice, and even wigs into our otherwise sedate classroom. Naturally, Jerry Junior was at odds with Miss De Groot, our fourth grade teacher. Mrs. Reisma was a frequent visitor at our school, bailing out little Jerry.

Harry lived with his bachelor brothers until Jerry got married. Then he became a vagabond on the face of the earth. The new Mrs. Reisma sniffily refused to have Harry in the house. Consequently, whenever Harry would return from his ramblings and visit Sioux Center, he would invariably come to our house. My mother patiently put up with Harry for a week or so in what we called "the attic."



Rev. Lambert Ypma. (100th Anniversary: Prinsburg CRC, 1986, p. 8).

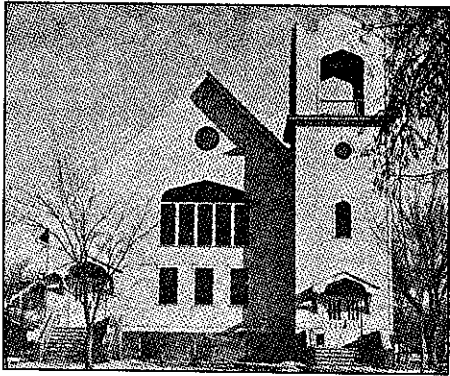
Actually, the attic was an unfinished second-story room that was used for *rummel*. At that time Harry's skin appeared dull with caked dirt and soot. Washing regularly was not part of his personal hygiene. My mother would tactfully suggest where the wash basin was, and Harry would take the hint. When Harry suggested that he should be on his way, no one begged him to stay. By the end of the Twenties all three Reismas had expired.

Entertainment was hard to come by in Sioux Center in the early Thirties, so we made our own. Sunday nights after Young People's Society were made to order for mischief. On one night when Tommy De Lange, Ernest Gerritsma, Lane Visser, and I were still too young to date, Ida Ypema came to mind. She was the only daughter and the housekeeper of Rev. Ypema. Ida was thirty-five and a confirmed spinster with a short fuse. Thinking back, I feel our game must have been Tommy's brainchild. We concocted some story that I (who stupidly had volunteered) was the respondent to her mail-order Discount Date Service letter. Dominie Ypema solemnly opened the door. "Vat do you vant?" he asked, and I told him I would like to talk to Ida.

I never got beyond the word *date* before she physically went for me. Like a ruptured duck, I vaulted over the porch railing into a clump of bushes, and from there I picked up speed, catching up with my partners in crime. Doubling back to Main Street, where the Ypemas lived, we observed that the porch light remained lit until we went home.

Probably one of the earliest pioneers still living in Sioux Center in the early Twenties was Berend Mouw. Trooping from the Christian school to uptown, we had to pass this gruff old ogre. Generally Berend sat magisterially in his wicker lawn chair, viewing the passersby. Leaning his chin on his hands, which were clamped over the

handle of his cane, he would hail us over for a talk. We obeyed like sheep. His usual command was, "Comus herus." When we came close enough, he would firmly grip our shoulder or arm and peer into our eyes. Then he would pepper us with questions about whose boys we were, how old we were, and did we like the girls. The last question was met with a firm negative head shake. Old Berend had



First CRC, Sioux Center, Iowa, 1929.

been around the area since 1875 and was an expert horseman; he even kept a lively young mare in his alley barn to visit his farmer sons west of town. Berend lived with his rather young widowed daughter and two grandchildren. He had two banker sons, one ne'er-do-well son who flirted with trouble all of his life, and several more who were farmers.

Every town worth its salt needs a poet laureate. Sioux Center had one named Case De Vos, bricklayer-rhymester. Case did more for individual publicity than for poetry. *The Sioux Center News*, formerly *De Nieuwsblatt*, had a Poetry Corner that catered to original contributions from reckless word dabblers.

Ideally, poetry is the wedding of sound and sense, but Case effectually and finally divorced them. His attention was zeroed in on sound. In going for the rhyme, he lost all grip on sense. His desperate efforts to make rhyme caused him to commit syntactical mayhem as well. He did show a

loyalty to iambic pentameter that was pathetically admirable.

His poetry sounded like a bad translation of Caesar's *Gallic Wars*, every other line ending awkwardly with a verb. Tortured inversions were his stock in trade. Butchered grammar ran roughshod over the King's English, leaving it unrecognizable and bloodied. For local color Case would slip in a Dutchism here and there. As far as I know, Case never made it into any doggerel anthology. More's the pity.

His versifying generally featured an obscure person in town who was regularly neglected by most people. To be sure, such notice was appreciated by the hero of the day (or week). At other times Case dished out Chinese-fortune-cookie wisdom in rhyme.

Memories have a way of becoming frozen in our minds. I can never recall sitting in the pew, in my preteens, in any other place but on the left side of my mother, next to the aisle. We were regularly given a ration of two peppermints per sermon. She kept the mints knotted in a corner of her large white handkerchief. At the beginning

of the sermon and midway through, she doled out those saintly white lozenges. In order to make them last longer, I adroitly rolled them in my curled tongue like a wheel.

But occasionally there were what I called "the three-peppermint sermons." These were either "reading" sermons laboriously read by an elder or sermons from visiting preachers who had no respect for the clock. In either case, midway in the sermon there was a false-alarm halt to announce a Dutch psalm. After singing seven or eight stanzas, I vainly expected prayer and the end. But, no, there was another half hour to go. In that time Mother would fish out a third peppermint for each of us from her handkerchief. I never sucked it with much enthusiasm. There was always a feeling of being cheated. Perhaps it was those experiences with Dutch that vaccinated me against a love of the Holland tongue.

*\*Mr. Bierma has retired after a lifelong teaching career, of which the last twenty-seven years were devoted to Unity Christian High School, Hudsonville, Michigan.*

Bierma Brothers ca 1935. (from left to right: George, Syne, Clare, Bill, Ed).





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# CHRISTIAN SEAMEN'S HOME IN HOBOKEN

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*by John J. Dahm, Sr.*

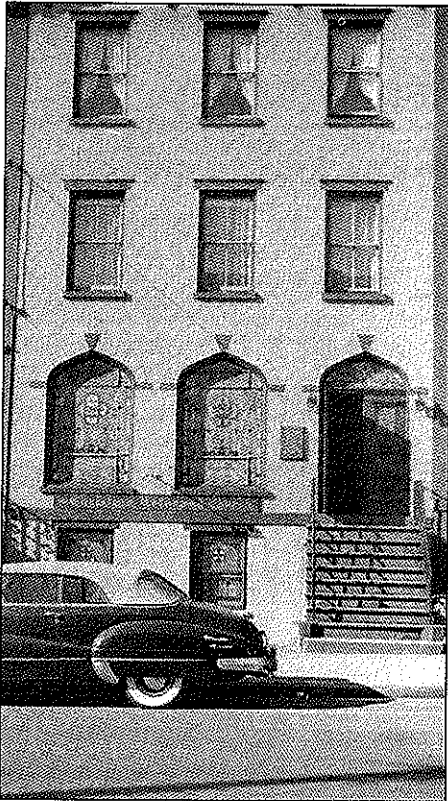
**1915-1962**

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**T**he Christian Seamen's and Immigrants' Home, known first as Het Hollandsch Zeeman's Tehuis, had a unique beginning and an unusual existence. In 1915 the Hoboken Christian Reformed Church initiated the venture to assist Dutch sailors from the Holland-American Line<sup>1</sup> (which docked just two blocks from the church) by altering the basement of the church at 310 Hudson Street to function as a service center.

Although the Christian outreach to



*Holland Seamen's Home located in the church on 310 Hudson Street, Hoboken, NJ, ca 1915.*

seamen eventually became a project of the Eastern Home Missions Committee, Rev. Henry Dekker, of the Hoboken church, had been working toward the organization of a seamen's home since 1913. Rev. John J. Hieminga, pastor of the Northside, Passaic, N.J., CRC, presided at the

opening ceremonies in 1915. Delegates from Classes Hudson and Hackensack, together with representatives from the Dutch Consulate and the Holland-American Line, jointly dedicated the congregation's basement facilities. Rev. Hieminga said, "Our Seamen's Home is not intended to be a Home in the regular sense of the word but a place where sailors, after their hours of duty and stress on the ocean, can relax, read newspapers, converse in their own language, write a letter, buy a stamp, and drink a cup of coffee free of charge. They can talk

though well suited to those objectives, became too small, efforts were made to buy property on River Street directly across from the Holland-American pier. A four-story building on that location was available at a reasonable price because Prohibition had closed the tavern that had been located there. In the meantime, the Rev. T. Jongbloed had become pastor of the Hoboken church, and he spearheaded a \$50,000 fund drive to secure the building. Because the new location required a regular staff, additional funds were also needed to



*1952 arrival of the Van Herp family.*

to the members of our church who are interested in the sailor as a person, rather than associating with the many tavern owners who are interested only in profits." He explained that the real purpose of this home was to wage battle against "king alcohol" and "queen vice," and so it was for the moral, social, and spiritual uplift of Holland sailors. However, he also declared that, since this home was sponsored by the church, its main purposes were to provide evangelical and personal service in a home-like atmosphere and to minister to the sick detained in the hospital.

When the church basement,

replace the volunteers. At first Rev. Jongbloed was released from his regular church work to function as the home's spiritual adviser.

With additional rooms available in the new building, the staff also took on the task of assisting immigrants, an effort which had previously been conducted on a small scale by local volunteers. Rev. J. J. Hieminga, a pioneering enthusiast for this effort, argued that the work of the home required a well-rounded person who could rub shoulders with U.S. officials, customs inspectors, and the personnel of the Holland-American Line. The main purpose of the work with immigrants

was to help them on this side of the ocean. Many stories were being circulated at the time about eager railroad and land agents enticing innocent immigrants with attractive propositions in this "promised land," so an interpreter who knew the ways of the country was badly needed.

A great deal of credit has to be given to Mr. M. J. Broekhuizen, the "all-around man" who put in a tremendous amount of work as the first full-time superintendent of the River Street home. The building had been badly neglected and needed repairs, and rooms had to be furnished with bedding for immigrant families who occasionally were detained for various reasons by the customs inspectors. The church societies of Classes Hudson and Hackensack collected money and furnishings to make the home attractive. When Mr. A. J. Visser became the home's supervisor, Broekhuizen had more time to work at Ellis Island, where many immigrants were detained for more thorough physical examinations. It often took some doing on Broekhuizen's part to convince the "landverhuizers" that our church was there to help them. Completing the staff were Mr. and Mrs. C. Fisher ("Tante Lena"), who served as janitor and matron of the home on River Street for many years. The staff and their families were housed in the building.

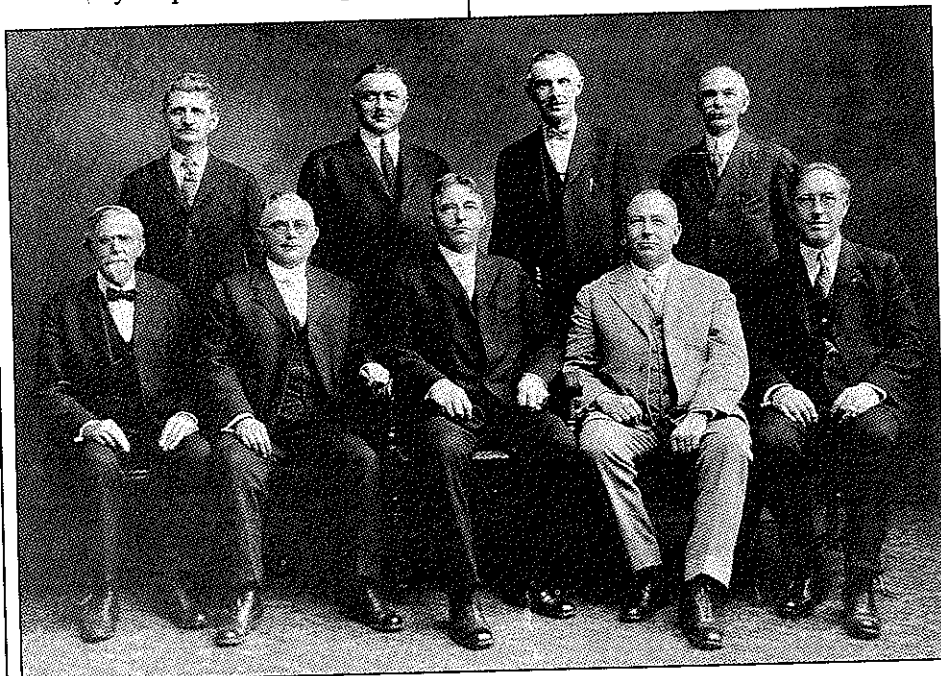
As the immigration aspect of the home expanded, the institution's tasks were redefined. The new priorities included providing guidance for Dutch immigrants, housing the detainees, notifying churches in areas where the newcomers expected to settle, and corresponding with prospective immigrants to prevent their scattering across the United States. Thus, the home became known as an immigration bureau for the approximately 3,000 Dutch immigrants who were permitted access to the United States annually under the quota sys-

tem. Of these, hundreds were aided directly or indirectly by the Seamen's Home. Statistics submitted to the supervising Classis Hudson indicated that the largest number of newcomers were destined for Michigan, followed by California, Illinois, and Iowa.

By 1927 another building on River Street became available. Located at the corner of Fourth and River, across from the park and playground near Steven's Technological Institute, this favorable location was a step nearer to the Holland-American pier. Again, the newly acquired building needed

After moving to the new site in 1927, Mr. Visser resigned. Then Broekhuizen became the home's superintendent with Mr. Edward Apol as his assistant. Mr. Apol did most of the colporteur work on the ships in the harbor. From the New York Bible Society the home received New Testaments printed in the Holland language, and publicity in church periodicals resulted in the accumulation of a large Dutch-language library.

In 1929 the board published a pamphlet entitled *The Christian Home for Holland Seamen and Immigrants*, which



Holland Seamen's Home Board ca 1920.

Top row from left: A. Visser, Supt. Seamen's Home; B. Stap, elder, First Church, Paterson; J. Faber, elder, Bethel Church; J. Bogart, elder, Englewood Church.

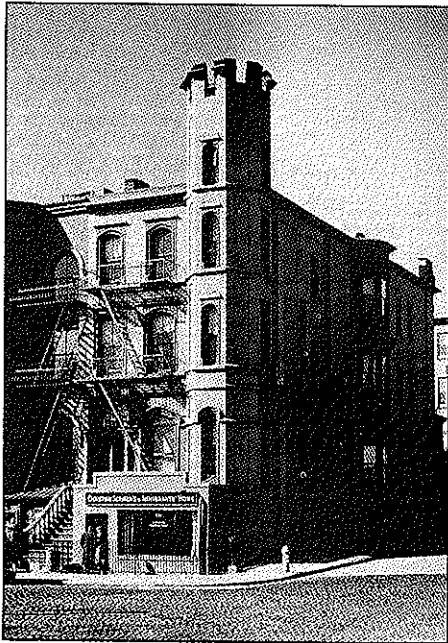
Bottom row from left: P. Pontier, elder, Summer Street Church; Rev. J. Smitter, Madison Ave. Church; Rev. J. Holwerda, Second Church, Paterson; Rev. J. L. van Tielen, Sayville Church; Rev. D. de Beer, Prospect Street Church.

much attention, and, again, its furnishings were donated by the church societies of the East Coast. From the new address, 334 River Street, the home remained as a gospel witness until 1962, when the City of Hoboken razed all the buildings on the street and replaced them with modern high-rise apartments.

explained the work of the institution and solicited donations to reduce a \$17,000 debt. Then, in 1930, Mr. William Van Agthoven, a philanthropist from Cincinnati and a member of the Christian Reformed Church, bequeathed \$25,000 to the Seamen's Home. The Eastern Home Missions Board invested that gift, and its earn-

ings were used to operate the home.

On April 18, 1945, the home celebrated its thirtieth anniversary, which was appropriately observed with a dinner held in its social hall. Rev. Hieminga, president of the Eastern Home Missions Board, served as toastmaster and gave a delightful historical review of the home.<sup>2</sup> At the time of this celebration, World War II was still in progress, and immigration had virtually stopped, but following the war, the home planned to resume normal operations. Soon after the war's end, stranded Dutch seamen



*Christian Seamen's Immigrants' Home located on River and Fourth streets ca 1940.*

who were living at the home rejoined their families. Meanwhile, used clothing was gathered for needy persons in war-ravaged Holland. The Holland-American Line promised to ship these garments free of charge, and several sailors provided addresses to be put on the packets. Other Dutch-American organizations also collected clothing, and the pier looked like a large clothing warehouse. Many letters of thanks and appreciation were received later as a

result of this effort.

After the war the immigration work slowly began again, but it took on an entirely different dimension. The Immigration Processing Center at Ellis Island was closed and converted into a hospital for alien sailors. During this era the applicants for immigration submitted to thorough physical examinations before boarding ships. Moreover, the image of "innocents abroad" became less relevant because most applicants gained an introduction to the language and customs of the U.S. before sailing, and the sponsorship reg-



*Unidentified immigrant family (undated).*

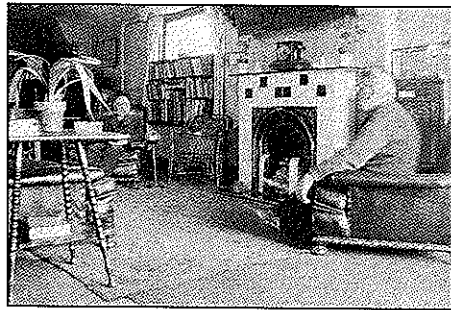
ulations were also tightened. Railroad and bus companies opened branch offices in Europe, and the airlines followed this pattern, so the emigrants could obtain information and tickets in their own country. The New York Immigrant Aid Society also had a representative in Europe to instruct the immigrants concerning their arrival in New York. All of this was a complete turnabout from the days before the Second World War, when little help was available. Still, when a shipload of

immigrants arrived, the personnel of the home had their hands full. They had to be quick and resourceful, with an understanding of human nature and, above all, a sense of humor to carry them through the day. For those with room reservations, the home continued to provide housing. For those in need of help with tickets for further travel, the home provided information and advice.

Because the times and conditions had changed so drastically on the waterfront, the board made plans to modernize the home. The first im-

pulse was to take down the old structure and replace it with a modern, up-to-date building. However, the Hoboken city engineer did not encourage such a move. So the board settled for a structural change. The social hall needed both exterior and interior renovation. Besides being given a more inviting appearance, it got a new tile floor, new toilet facilities (with a shower stall), new furniture, a billiard table in the recreation room, a new serving counter, and window air-con-

ditioning units. A stairway connection to the room above the social hall was made, and this room became the library and writing room, where literally thousands of letters were written. As a gift, Mr. Lewis Krommendijk of the Netherlands stocked the library with contemporary Dutch literature. A good-sized chapel next to the library completed the main interior renovation. The original "rooming house" facilities were changed to better serve detained immigrants and sailors. The "new look" was fittingly commemorated on April 12, 1949,



*Seamen's Home social room.*

with a dinner in the spacious lounge. The main after-dinner speaker was again Rev. J. J. Hieminga. This now-retired board president enthusiastically promoted the "new look," saying, "We must make our place up-to-date and attractive enough so that our sailors cannot resist using [it]."

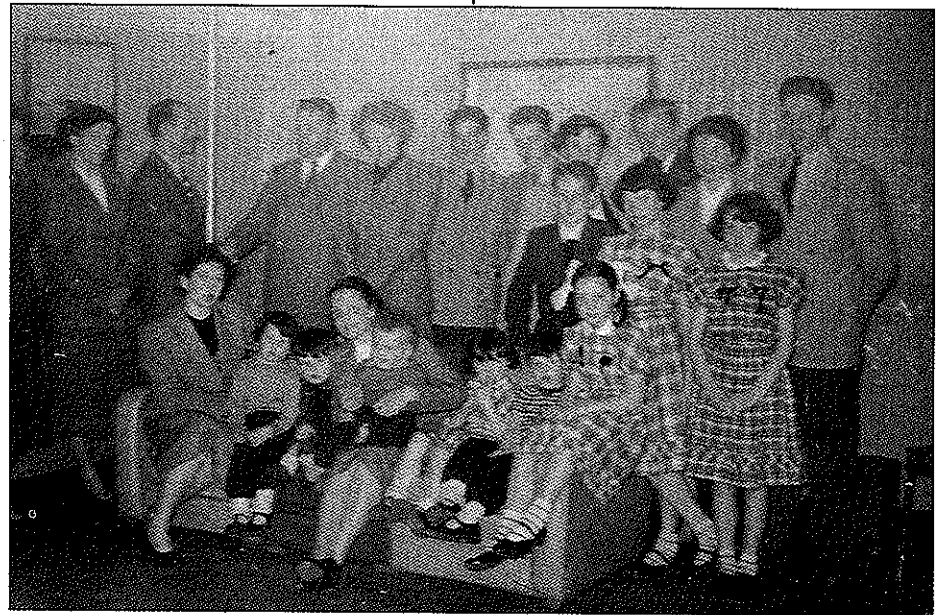
The immigration work was at its peak in the early fifties. At all hours of the day and sometimes at night passenger ships came in and discharged their human cargo. Though the details were seemingly endless, with the cooperation of bus lines, railroads, the New York Travelers Aid Society, and the World Council of Churches, the immigration work moved smoothly. It was not uncommon for staff members to direct as many as forty to fifty people in one group. Some families were large. For example, the Van Herps counted father, mother, and ten or twelve children. The Griffioen family numbered twenty-one in all. Pictures

of that family were published in some newspapers as the largest household that the Holland-American Line had transported to this country in its seventy-five years of existence. Many immigrants went to Canada via the U.S.A., but later, passenger ships made stops at Halifax and sailed inland as far as Montreal.

The home was well organized and furnished with efficient and modern conveniences, and it was running well. Then suddenly the whole picture changed. In 1956 the Holland-American Line decided to build a

senger ships.

In 1964 the Mission Board's last report to the synod of the Christian Reformed Church declared, "Almost fifty years have passed since our Church instituted this work of Christian mercy to immigrants, many of whom were brethren in the Lord. In later years when immigration tapered off, more emphasis was given to the work with seamen. Changing conditions and finally the moving of the Holland-American Line to New York City clearly indicated that we have outlived our usefulness in this phase



*Arrival of the J. Griffioen family in 1952—numbering 21.*

super pier on the New York City side of the Hudson River. This, of course, left the home without any clientele, since it catered exclusively to the Line's personnel on the Hoboken side of the river. It was estimated that moving the home would cost about one hundred thousand dollars, and since the new pier would contain a recreation room for sailors, the Seaman's Home would be less important than before. It became further apparent that the Seamen's and Immigrants' Home had outlived its usefulness when air transportation replaced pas-

of Kingdom work. . . . This then, will be our final report to Synod."

#### Sources

1. *Accounts in De Wachter and The Banner from 1915 to 1962.*
2. *Reports and Requests, Acts of Synod from 1916 to 1964.*
3. *The Christian Home for Holland Seamen and Immigrants.*
4. *My own experience as the home's business manager from 1942 to 1962.*

\*Mr. John J. Dahm, Sr. (1904-1987), wrote this account in 1962.



# A DUTCH JOURNALIST VISITS HOBOKEN

*Holland Seamen's Home  
located on 332 River Street ca 1922.*



1952

In 1952 the Dutch periodical *De Spiegel* (The Mirror) sent Mary Pos on a month-long journey to accompany immigrants who were leaving the Netherlands in large numbers during that era. The articles she wrote included a description of the *Westerdam's* arrival in New York and an account of her meetings with the staff of the Christian Seamen's Home in Hoboken, New Jersey. Mary Pos became well acquainted with John and Jacoba Dahm, who staffed the home, and she also became an enthusiastic proponent of the Hoboken mission. Several excerpts from her articles, translated by Mr. E. R. Post, appear below.—H.J.B.

Manhattan raised its mighty skyscrapers. The sky was dove gray and the water silver gray. . . . Ferry boats, steamers, tugs, and mighty oceanliners occupied the broad river. Sirens sounded, and a ship signaled its arrival with a short, sharp bark. A bit of sunshine appeared through the blanket of suede sky, and it passed over our ship like a faithful smile. Silent gulls guided us like formal escorts, while the shining bell buoys seemed to welcome us—we who for days on end had found our way through hurricanes and mountain-high seas.

Near the wharf where the ships of

find a hearty welcome.

The Christian Seamen's and Immigrants' House was established in 1915 by a group of volunteers from the Christian Reformed Church who were concerned about the plight of immigrants from the Netherlands. Since that time the Christian Reformed Church, whose members are mainly Dutch immigrants and their descendants, has continued to support and improve the Seamen's Home. In 1947 alone more than \$12,000 was spent to renovate the interior of the home.

Mr. John Dahm, who emigrated

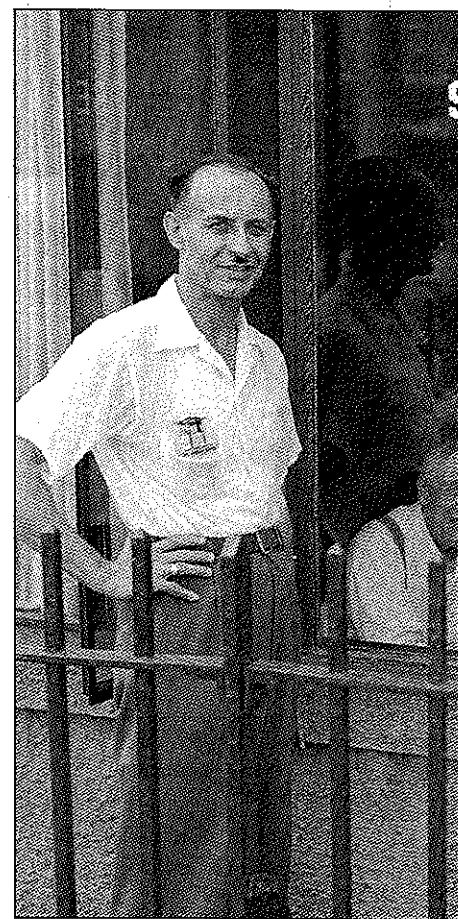


View of the dock from the Seamen's Home (undated).

#### May 17, 1952

After a very rough twelve-day voyage, our ship, the *Westerdam*, sailed proudly through the mirror-smooth waters of New York's harbor. The passengers crowded along the rail to enjoy the first sight of the New World, which was to become a new fatherland for some of them. It was an overwhelming sight. Our goal, Hoboken, was on this side of the Hudson, while on the opposite side, veiled in mist,

the Holland-American Line are moored, one can find a crucial little piece of the Netherlands amid the vast expanse of America. There any traveler from the Netherlands can receive help and information. It is the Christian Seamen's Home, which helps immigrants but also Dutch seamen who are trying to find a place to feel at home. There those who are lost amid the mass of humanity and the tremendous sea of New York's buildings will



Mr. John Dahm

from Holland as a young man, is the current director of the home. He was joined last year by Rev. Oussoren, who left Zeeland to serve as spiritual

counselor at the home, which is located just five minutes away from the landing dock.

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From the Back to God Hour and other sources, the names of inquiring people are passed on to Rev. Oussoren and Mr. Dahm. Together they visit their former fellow countrymen, who often feel lonesome in the very busy city of New York, and at times they travel as far away as Long Island or Brooklyn. Members of the congregation also seek out these people. Immigrants find immigrants, and in that way the bonds are established among



Jacoba Dahm, "An Outstanding Cook,"  
De Spiegel, May 1952, p. 5.

the Netherlanders. But the most important part of this work is bringing souls back to God. Rev. Oussoren, Mr. Dahm, and many volunteers are involved in a great task which requires a great deal of tact.

It would be possible to preach so much that the preaching would drive people away. So the plan is to attract them into a Christian environment and away from the many bars in Ho-

boken, which attract lonely Netherlanders with names such as Holland House, Corner of Holland, Rotterdam, the Dutch Windmill, and more. Mr. Dahm, in particular, boards the Dutch ships regularly to visit with the seamen. In addition, more than a thousand immigrants have received meals at the home and have been escorted to their trains amid the busy confusion of New York.

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I had the privilege of spending the first few days of my visit with John Dahm and his wife, Jacoba Schelling. They live in Clifton, an hour's ride



John also helped in the kitchen, De Spiegel,  
May 1952, p. 5.

from Hoboken. I found myself in a genuine American family which still feels close ties with the Netherlands. The Dahms live in a very lovely street which connects to the business district of Clifton. An adjacent town, Passaic, also contains a large number of Dutch-Americans, and thus the area is populated by many people with Dutch names. John and Jacoba live on the first floor of a large duplex, and

Jacoba's parents live upstairs with their daughter Nellie, who is a school-teacher. In most parts of America people have the strange custom of living behind nearly closed blinds, even when there is little sunshine. But the aged Mrs. Schelling has not adopted this American custom. She prefers, rather, to follow the Dutch custom of having fully opened shades.

In this environment the three children of John and Jacoba are being reared with deep affection for the old country. John, the eldest child, who is also happy to be called *Jan*, has begun to study the Dutch language, and he speaks it remarkably well. American child training is geared toward making children independent early in life and toward instilling a feeling of responsibility. When he was only ten years old, John and three of his friends traveled to New York by train and took a subway downtown.

Wages are very high in America, so much of the work that is done by tradesmen in Holland is done here by fathers and mothers. For example, Jacoba herself arranged the spotless salmon-colored tile in her bathroom. Sometimes she had to use a small saw to fit a circular piece around a pipe. It looks like a professional job.

The kitchen sink and table have a beautiful inlaid covering with a bordering white metal band. That is John's work, as are the carpentry in the kitchen and many other things. He is also an expert in photography and has beautiful colored slides which he shows everywhere to promote the interests of the Seamen's Home.

The Americans have enthusiastically adopted the Dutch saying "Help yourself and God will help you." These people have boundless energy and do mountains of work. But, alas, they live such fast lives that the actual enjoyment of their many American comforts is largely lost. That, in turn, is something the Americans can learn from us in Holland.

# CANADIAN DUTCH CALVINISTS

Neo-Calvinist Social Involvement in Canada from 1945–1980

by Harry J. Kits\*

In Canada, orthodox Dutch Calvinists, largely postwar immigrants, have created their own churches, schools, and other organizations. And in concert with others who have joined them, they have brought to Canadian society a unique approach to social involvement.<sup>1</sup> Their influence has been felt in issues such as abortion, independent school funding, energy development, social assistance, labor relations, and farmland policy.

Dutch Calvinists have participated in Canadian society from within a particular family of world views. The family consists of four different world-view emphases, which are similar to those noted in Dutch Calvinism in the United States by such historians as James Bratt and Henry Zwaanstra. The Dutch Calvinist world view is rooted in the revival of Calvinism in the Netherlands during the nineteenth century, which contributed to

a shift in the social make-up of the Netherlands.

These four world views are held by (1) *the confessional Reformed Calvinists*, who focus on the societal institutions of church, home, and school, consider one's confession and theology to be primary, and tend to avoid contact with culture and society; (2) *the anti-theological Calvinists*, who believe that because of principal differences, Christians must form separate Christian organizations; (3) *the activist radicals* of the late 1960s and early seventies, who sought swift and drastic change in society to make it more radically Christian; and (4) *the engaged Calvinists*, who hold to their Reformed and Calvinist theology and philosophy but are primarily interested in constructive betterment of the society around them. The latter three can be most properly called "neo-Calvinist," since they are actively interested in the society around them, whereas the first group is uninterested in society. The three neo-Calvinist groups took different approaches to social involvement in Canadian society from 1945 through 1980.

Before 1890 there was no substantial Dutch immigration to Canada. The few Netherlands who did enter Canada formed no colonies and only a few churches. Government provi-

sions for settlement of the western provinces in the 1890s, however, provided homestead land for some Dutch farmers.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, immigration from the Netherlands was relatively minor until the end of World War II; only 35,000 Dutch immigrants had come to Canada by that time.<sup>3</sup> It increased dramatically after 1946 and continued through 1958. During that time close to 150,000 Dutch people immigrated to Canada, 38 percent of the total migration out of the Netherlands.<sup>4</sup> These were the peak years of the postwar immigration to Canada. The highest yearly total was in 1952, when nearly 21,000 Dutch immigrants came to make their homes in Canada.<sup>5</sup>

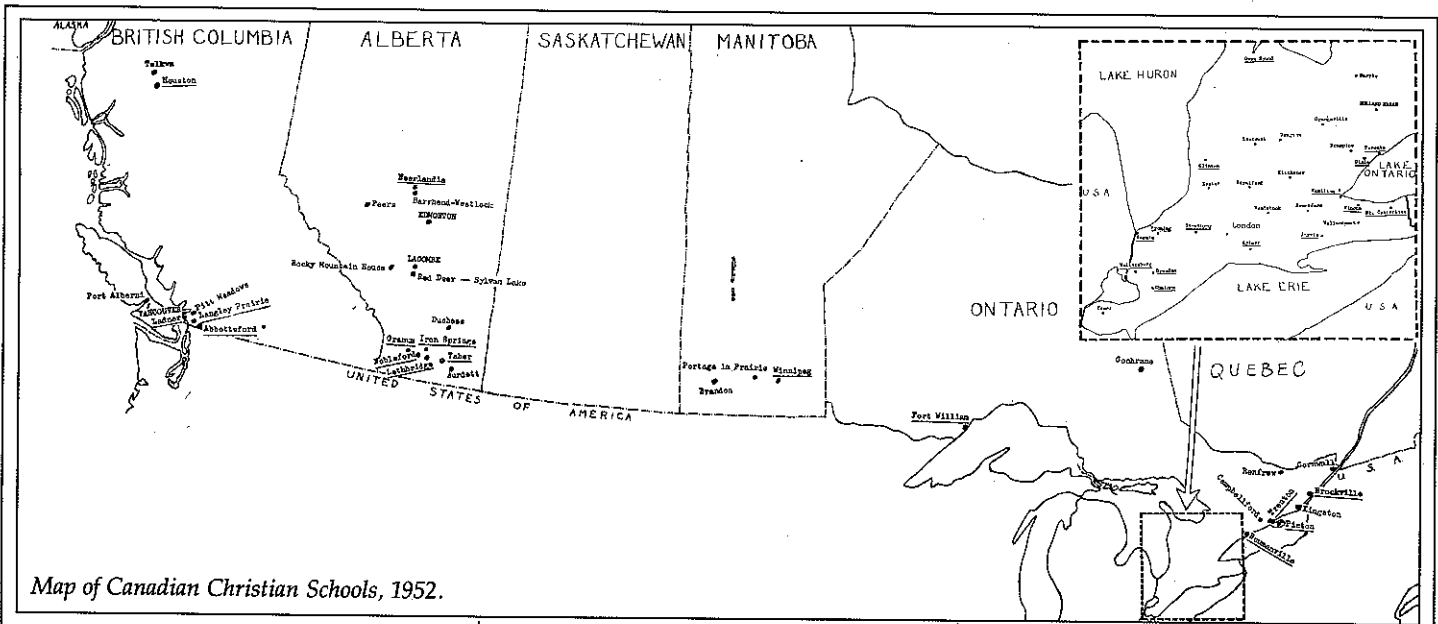
The decision to emigrate from the postwar Netherlands resulted from a combination<sup>6</sup> of economic, demographic, social, political, and religious factors there.<sup>7</sup> It was abetted by the fact that the Dutch faced little hostility from Canadians in their attempts to immigrate to Canada and become Canadian.<sup>8</sup>

The wave of immigration after World War II gave the largest boost to the Dutch Calvinist population in Canada. The number of Dutch orthodox Calvinists who immigrated to Canada at that time was disproportionate to their percentage of the Dutch

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The material in this article was first presented at a conference of the Association for the Advancement of Dutch-American Studies on September 26, 1987, in Chicago. It forms a chapter in the author's Master of Philosophical Foundations thesis.





Map of Canadian Christian Schools, 1952.

population.<sup>9</sup> Henry van Stekelenburg quotes figures which show that 32 percent of the immigrants between 1948 and 1964 were "Gereformeerden," whereas only 9.7 percent of the Dutch population of the Netherlands was "Gereformeerd."<sup>10</sup> Church figures also show the immense growth of Canada's Calvinist population: by the end of World War II there were fourteen Christian Reformed churches in Canada; by 1961 they had multiplied to 137, with over 56,000 members—25 percent of the denomination's total membership.<sup>11</sup>

At first Dutch Calvinist developments in Canada after World War II consisted of immigration, settling in, and an attempt to feel at home in Canadian culture. Much energy was expended on establishing churches and Christian schools. Prior to this wave of immigration there is little evidence of neo-Calvinist social action in Canada. The earlier Dutch Calvinists had established fourteen Christian Reformed churches and three Christian day schools, but there is no evidence of moves to develop other Christian organizations or to be involved in society in a neo-Calvinist manner. With the boost in population in the Dutch Calvinist community after the war, we

see a sharp increase in the development of churches and schools. From the earliest years there were also voices calling for increased social involvement in Canada. As a result, we see the fledgling beginnings of several neo-Calvinist organizations.

In an effort to welcome fellow Calvinists and to encourage them to join the denomination, the Christian Reformed Church in the United States sent home missionaries to Canada, but the congregations already existing in Canada formed the core of the welcoming committee for the new immigrants. The denomination also sponsored immigration societies with field agents who could assist the immigrants with housing, employment, and cultural adjustment. It set up several funds to help establish the immigrants financially, and it organized more Christian Reformed congregations in Canada.<sup>12</sup>

Tensions soon arose, however, between the American home missionaries and their charges, between the recent and earlier immigrants, and between the Canadian part of the CRC and the U.S. part. The congregations were served by American ministers until 1952, when the first Dutch-immigrant pastors began to arrive.<sup>13</sup> The

American pastors, like much of the CRC in the United States, tended to be confessional Reformed in their world view. The Dutch pastors, like many of the new immigrants, tended to be neo-Calvinists. The newcomers had experienced the neo-Calvinist social and theological revival in Holland, particularly in the schools and universities. They had experienced Christian media and had read books written from a Christian perspective on every aspect of life. They had experienced Christian organizations and Calvinist rallies. They favored socially focused sermons and perceived American Calvinism to be weak; they preferred their Dutch ministers. They also moved toward the formation of many different social organizations. Both the American ministers and the "old-timers" resisted these moves,<sup>14</sup> because they believed that Christian life was the sole domain of the church as an institution and that any other Christian activity was to be done by Christians individually.<sup>15</sup>

Many neo-Calvinists immigrated to Canada after World War II with the intention of reforming Canada. These neo-Calvinist immigrants saw Canada as a young country with an unformed identity. It was thus malleable

and open to a Dutch Calvinist, anti-secular influence. Books written by those in the immigration society in the Netherlands and recently arrived Dutch ministers encouraged this perception.<sup>16</sup> Many Dutch ministers came to Canada in order to make "Calvinism a major force in molding Canadian culture" with a goal of nothing less than the "Christianization of Canadian society."<sup>17</sup> Drawing on their neo-Calvinist roots in Holland, they were ready to transform culture in Canada.

Several studies have shown that, while the postwar Dutch immigrants were quite willing to be assimilated into Canadian society behaviorally, most were unwilling to do so structurally.<sup>18</sup> They were willing to be Canadianized or, rather, Dutch-Canadianized, but only in keeping with the religious way of life which they had experienced in Holland. They wanted to "maintain Dutch orthodox Calvinism in a Canadian setting" in order to reform Canada. They wanted to "find a way of integrating into Canadian society which would not threaten their orthodox Calvinist identity."<sup>19</sup> Therefore, in terms of language, citizenship, and social mores, they often readily lost their Dutch ways and became Canadian, but in the societal structures in which they participated they resisted Canadianization.

Almost as important to the immigrants as their churches were the Christian schools which they wanted to develop for their children. There were only three such schools in Canada before 1945, but the Dutch set up over thirty more by 1968. The day schools were strongly supported by the neo-Calvinist community and also by the confessional Reformed.<sup>20</sup>

The Dutch Calvinists understood schools to be religiously directed and believed it essential to set up schools that taught in a way that was consis-

tent with their beliefs. They believed that parents were to be the initiators of education for their children and objected to the role the state played in the public schools. The state should, they thought, facilitate education through financing and some regulation, but it should not determine the direction of education. The Dutch Calvinists did little to press for government recognition and funding for their schools until the 1960s, though Rev. Remkes Kooistra did visit the Al-

berta minister of education in 1957.<sup>21</sup> The Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools was developed in 1954 with a primary goal of establishing schools, but it undertook little political activity until the 1960s.<sup>22</sup>

For the confessional Reformed Calvinists, the schools were a protective place for children to be taught in concert with home and church.<sup>23</sup> For the neo-Calvinists, the schools were part of the "Calvinist mission" in Canada.<sup>24</sup> The immigrants felt that, if

# The Canadian Calvinist

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## REFORMED OR TRANSFORMED

"And be not fashioned according to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God."—Romans 12:2.

In my student days I once met some folks who had left our Church and joined another denomination. In the course of the conversation the man said, "We do not need to be reformed, but the Bible says we must be transformed." He was referring to the words of our text. I have not forgotten his remark, and thought of it when I read in a recent article some excellent comments on Romans 12:2. The author pointed out that the name "Herford" or "Geerford" that is Reformed, has been traced to this passage. The apostle exhorts us not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds according to the will of God. A truly Reformed Christian is one who takes this divine order seriously and makes it his life program by saving grace.

Reformation often means a merely outward change

of life. So too we can be Reformed in name only. Transformation begins within it is a radical change, from the root, and reveals itself in outward conduct. The renewing of our minds, nothing less, that is the source of a truly Christian life. The pattern of that renewal is none other than Jesus Himself. We must become renewed according to the image of God in knowledge, righteousness and holiness. That is a never ending process here below, but it is the goal toward which we press without ceasing.

We Canadian Calvinists glory in the name Reformed. Are we also transformed according to the will of God? The world would press us into conformity with its Godless ways. May we dare to be different, not merely for differences' sake, or out of Dutch conservatism, but because thankfulness constrains us to do the will of God.

—E.H.O.

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### EDITORIALS

#### CIVIC INTERESTS

PRECEDING DISCUSSIONS in our paper have shown, as was pointed out in last month's Dutch section, that our people consider Christian political activity imperative. No one is satisfied with the present political set-up. The C.C.F. (Canadian Commonwealth Federation) looks to them too pitifully; the Liberal party too black, being too close to Rome; the Progressive-Conservative too unpredictable to satisfy many; and the Social Credit party, known for its good government in its stronghold, Alberta, has not been able to apply its distinctive tenets even there, and presents for that very reason a visionary programme not yet shown workable in actual practical civic life. Neither the pink welfare state, nor the red or black totalitarian state of Moscow or Rome appeal to the rank and file of our people. They believe, generally speaking, in free enterprise, fairly regulated by the state; namely, by men of Christian conscience, citizenship and statesmanship. That's why there is need of a real Calvinistic Voice in the Canadian political wilderness, although it does not look as if this voice must ring as of a separate party organization.

THERE IS WORK TO DO EVEN NOW. We are not doomed to complete non-activity in civic matters. Problems of Canada's fast expanding economy, its educational movements, its constitutional development, its interprovincial and dominion-provincial relationships, and that other in-council rule instead of by law require constant attention. They should be watched closely and evaluated publicly even though for the time being, in our modest local witness.

THE GREAT EMERGENCY, however, is not the national development, but the international powderkeg world. Canada is

part of that world, and our people are part of it. It may seem that this emergency is especially one of our Southern neighbour, but that very idea is out of touch with all reality. It may be true what a certain daily opined recently; namely, that Canada is better managed, is practically without debt, and that for various reasons its people should consider themselves "lucky," but it would seem that this "lucky" people of fast and peaceful development should give more serious consideration to its enemies within and without, and take effective measures to protect the country against both. While home defenses are admittedly small, the communistic onslaughts of the north faces Canada's wide open spaces, and as to this enemy's more distant aggression, Canada's part in holding him at bay was shown in a January newspaper headline of this sort: "Canadian troops to battle in about two weeks." While United Nations land forces have been locked in desperate battle for months, Canada's very limited legion might be in action about January 15th.

In view of these things, may this country awake also. International banditry does not stop at borders. The most serious threat of the United States will be that of Canada, and visa versa. In fact, it may very well be that the first inland blows will fall in Canada, and that the encalculated thrusts directed by a fifth column, will be against the most consistent champion of truth and freedom, the Calvinist.

OUR PART IN HOME DEFENSES may soon assume a definite pattern. As in World War II, Canadians and Hollanders may again have to fight side by side, but on different soil. Immigrants of that war experience know what it means. They may be very useful indeed for Canadian home defenses. It has been said on another page

that we Canadian Calvinists should express our Christian political principles at least via a Christian Political Council, and by timely local witness. Who knows but we shall soon be called to make a really worthwhile contribution to the physical defence of Canada's soil which has become home soil to many of us.

—P.D.K.

In connection with this Home Defense, let our readers ask for and study the "Resumé of Civil Defence Broadcast," a summary version of an address by the Hon. E. C. Manning, Premier, spoken January 5 at Edmonton, and presented in "Within Our Borders" to be had free of charge upon request at the Alberta Provincial Parliament offices.

—P.D.K.

#### PARTICULAR SYNODS

The need of introducing Particular Synods is under study these days. Through our church papers the Committee ad hoc, appointed by the latest Synod, asks for pointers and advice from our general church public. This request may have been prompted by a desire to have our people speak now lest they object later. It may also be that the brethren felt that there is a dearth of compelling fact and pertinent reasoning about such Synods among us. Well, to be frank, having read some of the arguments pro and con presented formerly, these do not appear to us as impressive and conclusive either one way or the other. Just now, as the growing Canadian constituency of our Denomination is mentioned in favor of particular synods, it might be observed, that if this argument is valid that we may as well move slowly. We should know where the new and growing Canadian churches shall be, and how their best interests can be served. Our Canadian churches are still too much in a flux for final action re particular synods, as may be even the American churches if the present war-secure turns into war-fare.

—P.D.K.

their children were to be taught properly in the schools and trained to be leaders for the Christian community and for the reformation of Canada, Christian schools were needed at all levels, including a Reformed university in Canada. In 1956 the Association for Reformed Scientific Studies was constituted with the goal of developing such a university.

In other areas, too, the Dutch Calvinists set up their own organizations. From the beginning they developed Christian credit unions, life-insurance associations, hospital insurance, and

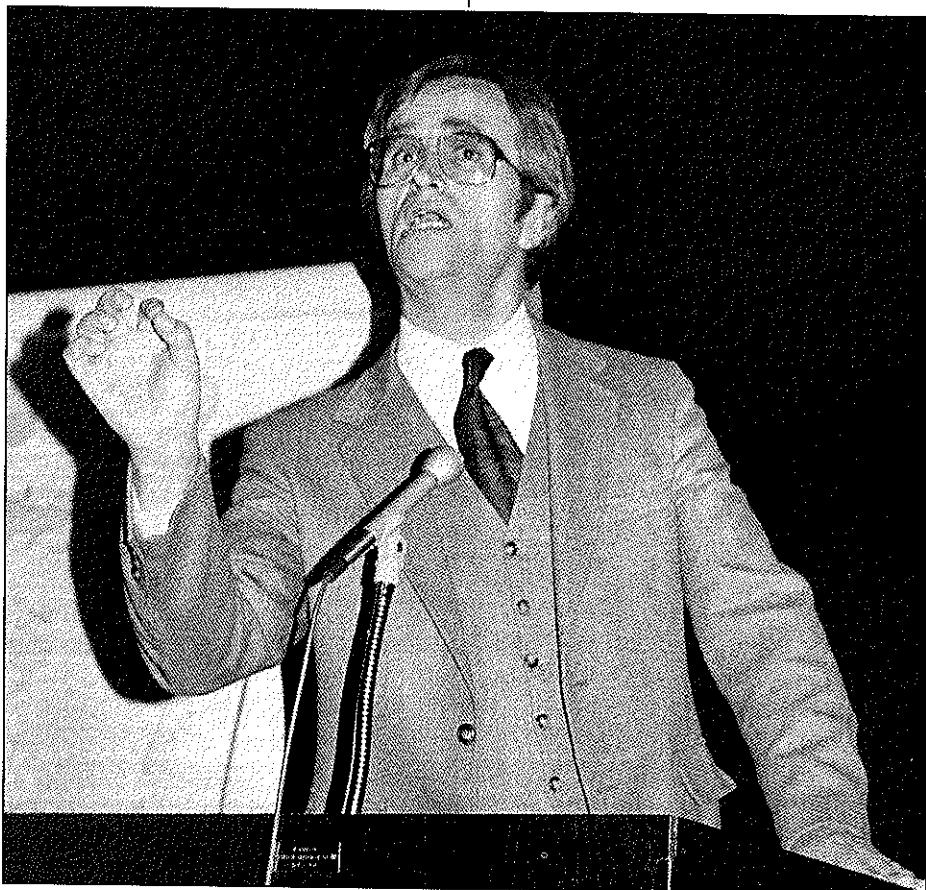
cerned itself with immigration issues. In October of 1951 the two joined to form *Calvinist Contact*, published in Ontario.<sup>25</sup> In 1956 a number of pastors began *Church and Nation*, a Canadian CRC paper which was supposed to be independent of the church structure.

Because of Canadian immigration restrictions, the majority of Dutch immigrants prior to the mid-1950s were rural, but at that time the government lifted some of its restrictions to allow others to enter Canada. They settled in urban areas and entered industrial, unionized work places. True to their

American ministers encouraged the formation of a Christian Labor Institute to help individual Christians witness within the secular unions,<sup>26</sup> the neo-Calvinists responded in a different way. Beginning in 1951, several groups of men in Vancouver, Sarnia, Aylmer, Hamilton, and St. Catharines organized meetings to discuss biblical principles for labor. On November 16, 1951, the first Christian union local with a collective agreement came into being in Vancouver. In 1952 the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC) was formally established, and it grew quickly in British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario. Most of the members were part of general workers locals, locals which undertook study and support of CLAC but which did not work toward collective agreements. The only certified locals were in Vancouver and Terrace, British Columbia. By 1954, thirty-eight local groups had affiliated with CLAC; by 1955 over fifty locals in four provinces in Canada had affiliated. CLAC published *The Guide* and, for a time in the 1950s, *De Gids*, which contained Dutch-language gleanings from *The Guide*.

In 1954, the employees of Bosch and Keuning in Trenton, Ontario, wanted to be represented by CLAC and applied for certification. The Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB) refused to certify the union on the basis of its understanding that CLAC discriminated against any person who could not subscribe to the Christian faith.

A subsequent application in 1958 resulted in another rejection. At this point legal counsel advised CLAC to drop the article in its constitution which described the biblical basis of the union. CLAC was also advised to drop the requirement of opening meetings with Scripture and prayer. CLAC's National Executive Committee unanimously agreed to this advice and proposed the changes at the 1958 national convention, but they were



Dr. Bernard Zylstra.

radio stations. They published newspapers to serve the growing orthodox Calvinist community. From Edmonton came the *Canadian Calvinist*, which was considered a newspaper espousing Calvinist principles. From Chatham came *Contact*, which con-

Calvinist heritage, they judged Canadian unions to be secular, even communist. At any rate, these unions did not allow the "expression of Christian principles," and they often misused their power.

While the confessional Reformed

defeated.

While the debate over this decision raged in *The Guide*, the president of the board of CLAC, Alan Matthews, wrote that there were two types of members of CLAC: the theoretically admirable but not practical members who were supportive purely on principal grounds and those who joined "in hopes that they'll provide a Christian alternative to the present organizations and act as a Christian corrective in our society."<sup>27</sup>

In November 1958, after the defeat of its proposed changes, the executive committee resigned.<sup>28</sup> Several locals in the Hamilton area broke away and began their own union, the Christian Trade Unions of Canada. Those who wanted to retain the biblical-basis clause in the constitution maintained their position and took control of CLAC. They began to rebuild it to prepare it for the next phase of its task in Canada.

Other social-action groups that arose in the 1950s include the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, which began in 1954 with the merger of several local farmers' associations. In 1956 neo-Calvinists set up a Calvinistic Action Association in Alberta, which held Calvinistic rallies and study conferences. It was also called the Alberta Association for Reformed Faith and Action (AARFA).

### The Second Phase—the 1960s

The second neo-Calvinist phase in Canada saw continued development of the work already begun. The main task of the 1960s was the articulation of the need for Christian organizations. Much writing and public speaking went into this effort.

The Christian Reformed Church, to which many neo-Calvinists belonged, continued to receive leadership from the Dutch ministers. They began various local church papers such as *The Bridge* in Edmonton in 1959. They also continued to agitate for a national Ca-

nadian body of the CRC, and in 1967 the Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC) held its first meeting and began a Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG).

Christian education continued to develop among neo-Calvinists during the 1960s. In 1959 the Association for Reformed Scientific Studies (ARSS), later the Association for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship (AACCS), held its first study conference, with Dr. H. Evan Runner as its main speaker.

Runner was, in many ways, the spiritual father of many of the younger leaders of neo-Calvinism in Canada. He inspired them and portrayed for them an antithetical Calvinist vision which dovetailed with their own intuitive neo-Calvinism. He articulated neo-Calvinist philosophical and world-view insights and their implications for a whole generation of young Canadian neo-Calvinists. As Bernard Zylstra wrote,

... in the midst of intense personal and cultural dislocations which immigrants bring with them, Runner took it upon himself to give spiritual direction to the postwar Dutch Reformed settlers in Canada.<sup>29</sup>

Runner's influence began with a lecture in Calgary in 1957 and continued through his Calvin College Groen Club<sup>30</sup> and his philosophy classes, which attracted young Canadian neo-Calvinists. In 1959, at the first ARSS Unionville Conference, he delivered three very influential speeches, which were published and widely distributed. For most of the 1960s and 1970s Runner was a much-sought-after speaker at various Canadian neo-Calvinist functions. His early followers included the new generation of clergy, future professors of the ICS, and the supporters and leaders of the new neo-Calvinist social organizations.

Following the lead of Runner and the ARSS, students at public univer-

sities began the Federation of Calvinistic University Clubs in 1962, which later became the Federation of Christian University Societies (FOCUS). The societies were designed for student fellowship, for developing neo-Calvinist Christian perspectives in the students' studies, and for producing a Christian student newspaper.

The year 1959 saw the continuing restoration and rebuilding of CLAC. "Propaganda meetings" were held in Ontario to re-explain and reaffirm the value of CLAC. It revised its constitution and bylaws, keeping the biblical basis but allowing non-Christian membership more easily. With the reorganization, three CLAC men from Sarnia—Gerald Vandezande, Ed Vander Kloet, and Harry Antonides—became the new editors of *The Guide*. These three were among the most influential neo-Calvinist advocates of social action in central Canada, and Antonides also spent a number of years in British Columbia. In 1961 Vandezande became the first full-time union agent; Antonides followed in 1964, and Vander Kloet in 1966.

In 1961 the Ontario Labour Relations Board once again dismissed an appeal for certification by the Trenton local of CLAC. CLAC appealed the decision, hiring lawyers MacKinnon and Kelsey to help them to gain certification. On March 25, 1963, B. J. MacKinnon argued CLAC's cause before Chief Justice J. C. McRuer of the Supreme Court of Ontario. On May 2, 1963, McRuer handed down his decision, quashing the ruling of the Labour Board. Soon after, CLAC was certified for the first time in Ontario. Certifications and collective agreements rapidly increased after that in Ontario, British Columbia, and Alberta.

The CLAC split of 1958 led to a new type of Christian social involvement by the neo-Calvinists. Many of the disenfranchised locals and provincial



boards began to consider activities separate from the national CLAC. In February of 1959 the board of the Alberta District of CLAC decided to establish a new organization called the Christian Labour Association of Alberta (CLAA). It was broader than a trade union, welcoming anyone interested in Christian social action, but it included the aim of encouraging Christian trade unions and employer associations. Among those active in the organization were Jim Visser, John Olthuis, and Louis Tamminga. In British Columbia the disenchanted provincial board of CLAC formed the

Christian Culture Association of British Columbia (CCA).

As a replacement for *The Guide of CLAC*, CLAA began publishing *Western News*. Its first issue was published in March/April of 1959. In October of 1959 it became the common paper of CLAA and CCA of British Columbia. For the May issue of 1961, the paper was renamed *Christian Social Vanguard*.

In November of 1962, CLAA and AARFA/CCA amalgamated to form the Christian Action Foundation (CAF). With the growing momentum of the Sixties, CAF began to expand,

hiring staff and beginning to actively work more with other organizations. It held conventions and political rallies and presented briefs. The main concern of the Christian Action Foundation was the need for principled Christian action in labor and, after 1962 or 1963, politics and education. Its main project was the publication of *Christian Social Vanguard*, which dealt with many subjects. At first the articles dealt with the rationale for separate Christian organizations, but it soon began to speak to what it considered important issues of the day, including commercialization of Sunday,

*Groen Van Prinsterer Club, 1955.*



lotteries, unions, communism, a bill of rights, the need for joining in Christian education, missions, alcoholism, literature, nuclear arms, the dangers of television, the role and task of government, the place of education, the role of Christian credit unions, the dangers of comic books, the need for Christian media, and the reformation of music. First published in Edmonton, Alberta, *Christian Vanguard* was later published in Ontario and was taken over by Wedge Publishing in 1971, when it was named simply *Vanguard*.

In September of 1965, Rev. Louis Tamminga, one of the mainstays of the Christian Action Foundation in Edmonton, moved to Iowa. There he began a U.S. branch of CAF, which quickly grew, later changing its name to the National Association for Christian Political Action (NACPA) and, later still, the Association for Public Justice (APJ).

In Ontario during 1961, CLAC began the Committee for Justice and Liberty (CJL) and officially incorporated it in 1963 to defend just labor relations in the courts and the legislature. While CAF of Alberta dealt with a wide diversity of problems in society, the CJL of Ontario limited its task to the fight for justice and liberty in labor relations in general, not just specifically for CLAC causes. It opposed compulsory unionism and attempted to gain equality of opportunity for all workers. CJL, like CLAC, made submissions to the government and to government commissions, asking for freedom of association and an end to compulsory unionism. In 1962 it introduced the concept of the right of a union member to send his dues to a charity instead of to a union he found unacceptable.<sup>31</sup> This legislation was introduced in Manitoba and Ontario in the late 1960s. CJL also tried to argue for the pos-

sibility of two or more unions in one bargaining unit.<sup>32</sup>

CJL fought several court cases, sometimes to the Supreme Court of Canada, in its desire for just labor relations. The names of Mostert, Hoogendoorn, and Van Manen were splashed across newspapers in Canada as CJL defended their right to just labor relations.

### The Third Phase—the 1970s

The third phase of neo-Calvinist social involvement witnessed the most controversy and conflict within the

Dutch Calvinist community.<sup>33</sup> The rise of the radical activist world view and the strengthening of engaged Calvinism made more clear the diverse approaches to social involvement.

Much of the controversy of the 1970s arose over education. The entire staff of the Toronto District Christian High School resigned in 1969–1970 in a conflict over methods, materials, and decision-making matters in the school. A number of neo-Calvinist authors wrote *To Prod the Slumbering Giant* in 1972, partially in critique



Dr. H. Ewan Runner.

of the Dutch Calvinist Christian schools.<sup>34</sup> The Curriculum Development Centre<sup>35</sup> and alternative Christian schools<sup>36</sup> were set up in reaction to the traditional Dutch Calvinist schools. Later in the decade the CJL, along with a number of other concerned minorities in Ontario, not all of whom were Christian, helped begin the Ontario Association for Alternative and Independent Schools (OAAIS) to develop strategies for gaining funding from the provincial government for independent schools.<sup>37</sup>

The Institute for Christian Studies (ICS) was opened in 1967 by the AACs and functioned as a boisterous institution in its early years. Some of the people connected with it in the early years published such highly controversial books as *Out of Concern for the Church*.<sup>38</sup> These books were critical of the churches of the day, particularly the CRC, and sometimes contained public criticisms of individuals. ICS also attracted radical activist students in its early years. Some students wrote position papers which were incorporated into an underground newspaper at the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship Urbana Conference in 1971.<sup>39</sup> The students produced a *Survival Handbook for Radical Christians Today* for students active in the world.

ICS students were also active in writing for and editing the revised *Vanguard*. Different world views seem to be apparent in different editors and editorial committees of *Vanguard* from the early 1970s to its demise in the early 1980s.

In the 1970s, the neo-Calvinists, experiencing a renewed desire to be active, started several other Christian organizations. Wedge Publishing Foundation and Tomorrow's Book Club produced many titles. *Credo* magazine and Shalom Productions in British Columbia, and Pulse, in Edmonton, a music and multimedia organization inspired by Shalom Productions, expressed neo-Calvinism in

the arts. In addition, Patmos Art Gallery, which grew out of the earlier Institute for Christian Art in Chicago, opened in Toronto in 1971.

Conflict arose in the neo-Calvinist community regarding labor and social involvement. The tensions formed in the late Sixties and early Seventies seemed to culminate at the end of the 1970s, when more conservative times tempered the utopian reconstructionism of some of the neo-Calvinists.<sup>40</sup>

In the later 1960s and early 1970s several Christian social-action congresses were held in the United States, with representatives from social-action groups in Canada as well as the United States. Because of these congresses, CJL and CAF began to discuss the possibility of merging to form a distinctive political movement in Canada. The proposed organization would

. . . function as a Christian civil rights movement which should increasingly concern itself with and as soon as possible speak out on a wider range of issues from a Christian view of the government's duty to promote and establish justice and liberty for all in every area of life.<sup>41</sup>

The new CJL Foundation, formed in 1971, continued to be involved in labor issues. It also expanded its interest to criticisms of progress and economic materialism.<sup>42</sup> When the Canadian government began to consider allowing the construction of the MacKenzie Pipeline, the CJL Foundation became heavily involved in energy issues. It helped to remove Marshall Crowe, Chairman of the National Energy Board, from his position in the hearings, due to the perceived potential for conflict of interest. In addition, it gained intervenor status in the hearings regarding the MacKenzie Valley Pipeline, and in 1975, along with several other groups, it successfully proposed a ten-year moratorium on the

pipeline. As its next major project in the late 1970s, CJL began work on social policy.

CJL maintained its principled study of public issues but gradually became more actively involved in lobbying and proposing policy options for the government. With these new moves, questions began to arise about the direction of CJL. During the energy debates, questions arose regarding cooperation with non-Reformed Christians and non-Christians,<sup>43</sup> the propriety of church involvement in public life,<sup>44</sup> and the CJL Foundation's lack of clarity on concepts of liberation, oppression, love of neighbor, and self-determination.<sup>45</sup> Further concerns arose later in the decade about CJL's perspective on the role of government in society; the perceived causes of social disharmony, oppression and poverty; and the nature of economic life.<sup>46</sup>

In the meantime, CLAC also continued its pressures on government, arguing for freedom of association and against compulsory unionism. For a time, however, it too experienced troubles when it began a short-lived International Christian Centre for the Study of Public Issues in the early 1970s. Its researchers, however, though prolific in their work and writing, took a direction which the community was not prepared to accept, and they were subsequently let go.

These difficulties were exacerbated in 1977 and 1978 and seem to have been most pointed during the CLAC-organized Social Action Conference of 1978 in Ontario. The conference, attended by the leaders of several Christian-action groups, was the last time that the leaders of these organizations have discussed in a public conference their approaches to social involvement.

An introductory sketch encompassing more than thirty years of social involvement by one community in a country as large as Canada cannot help omitting important events and

oversimplifying the debates which occurred. Such a sketch can, however, serve to introduce the Canadian portion of the CRC to the American portion of the denomination. It can also serve to jog the memory of the participants in the events described above and perhaps can encourage them to begin to fill in the weak spots in the sketch and to paint a more complete picture of Dutch Calvinist social involvement in Canada.

**Endnotes**

- <sup>1</sup>The Canadian Encyclopedia recognizes their uniqueness in its article entitled "Calvinism" by John S. Moir. The Canadian Encyclopedia, 1985 ed.
- <sup>2</sup>Henry S. Lucas, *Netherlanders in America*, (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1955) 459, 460.
- <sup>3</sup>Albert Vander Mey, *To All Our Children*, (Jordan Station: Paideia, 1983) 45-48.
- <sup>4</sup>Aileen Van Ginkel, "Ethnicity in the Reformed Tradition: Dutch Calvinist Immigrants in Canada, 1946-1960," M.A. thesis, Dept. of History, U of Toronto, 1982, p. 11.
- <sup>5</sup>Adrian Peetoom, "From Mythology to Mythology: Dutch-Canadian Orthodox Calvinist Immigrants and Their Schools," M.A. thesis, Dept. of Education, U of Toronto, 1983, p. 10.
- <sup>6</sup>Adrian Guldemond, "Conditions in the Netherlands Following World War II," in Gordon Oosterman, et. al., *To Find a Better Life (Grand Rapids: National Union of Christian Schools, 1975)*, 17-24.
- <sup>7</sup>Henry van Stekelenburg, "Tracing the Dutch Roman Catholic Emigrants to North America in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," *Dutch Immigration to North America*, ed. Herman Ganzevoort and Mark Boekelman (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1983) 70-71.
- <sup>8</sup>Robert Harney, *preface*, *Dutch Immigration to North America*, ed. Herman Ganzevoort and Mark Boekelman (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1983) viii.
- <sup>9</sup>Van Ginkel, 14.
- <sup>10</sup>Van Stekelenburg, 58, 68.
- <sup>11</sup>Peetoom, 11.
- <sup>12</sup>Van Ginkel, 41-45 and Vander Mey, 53-58.
- <sup>13</sup>Van Ginkel, 54.
- <sup>14</sup>Van Ginkel, 61, 104.
- <sup>15</sup>Van Ginkel, 112-13.
- <sup>16</sup>Van Ginkel, 116-18. See also Remkes Kooistra, *Jong Zijn in een Jong Land (Toronto: Pro Rege, 1957)* and *Marten Vrieze, Werker in een Nieuwe Wereld (Toronto: Pro Rege, 1957)*.
- <sup>17</sup>"Zelfportrait," *Church and Nation (18 Sept. 1956)*: 86, quoted in Van Ginkel, 72.
- <sup>18</sup>Van Ginkel, 121-22 and references there.
- <sup>19</sup>Van Ginkel, 95-98.
- <sup>20</sup>Van Ginkel, 145, 147.
- <sup>21</sup>Van Ginkel, 145 and interview with Rev. Kooistra, 22 July 1987.
- <sup>22</sup>Van Ginkel, 151.
- <sup>23</sup>Harro W. Van Brummelen, "Christian Schools in the Dutch-Calvinist Tradition: Isolation, Conformation, or Transformation?" paper distributed by

- the Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia, April 1985.*
- <sup>24</sup>Van Ginkel, 149.
- <sup>25</sup>Contact Aug. 1949, 8 Oct. 1949; Calvinist Contact 16 Oct. 1951.
- <sup>26</sup>Van Ginkel, 136-38.
- <sup>27</sup>The Guide Sept. 1958.
- <sup>28</sup>The Guide Nov. 1958.
- <sup>29</sup>"H. Evan Runner: An Assessment of His Mission," *Life Is Religion*, ed. Henry Vander Goot (St. Catharines, Ont: Paideia, 1981), 11.
- <sup>30</sup>A philosophy club named after Groen Van Prinsterer.
- <sup>31</sup>The Guide Mar. 1962: 1-2.
- <sup>32</sup>The Guide Apr. 1963: 3-4.
- <sup>33</sup>Conflict in the churches eventually led to a split in 1972 in the Second Christian Reformed Church of Toronto.
- <sup>34</sup>John Vriend et. al. (Toronto: Wedge, 1972).
- <sup>35</sup>Harro Van Brummelen, *Telling the Next Generation: Educational Development in North American Calvinist Christian Schools (Lanham: U P of America, 1986)* 217, 227.
- <sup>36</sup>For example, Erin Lane in Toronto, Ontario; Immanuel in Scarborough, Ontario; and Toronto Central Christian School.
- <sup>37</sup>CJL Newsletter Dec. 1978: 15.

- <sup>38</sup>John A. Olthuis et. al. (Toronto: Wedge, 1970).
- <sup>39</sup>Robert L. Carvill, "The Vanguard at Urbana," *Vanguard Feb. 1971*: 16-18.
- <sup>40</sup>Van Brummelen, *Telling the Next Generation*, 224.
- <sup>41</sup>CJL Newsletter 27 Jan. 1971.
- <sup>42</sup>John Olthuis, "Can Less Be More?" *CJL Newsletter Feb. 1974*: 1-2.
- <sup>43</sup>CJL worked with a number of coalitions and called as witnesses during the energy hearings various people who did not share CJL's religious stance.
- <sup>44</sup>CJL joined with church task forces in opposing the pipeline.
- <sup>45</sup>Particularly of concern were various articles in the *CJL Newsletter and Vanguard* and in the book by Hugh and Karmel McCullum and John Olthuis, *Moratorium (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1977)*.
- <sup>46</sup>Stanley Carlson-Theis, "Groping Towards an Understanding of the Roles of Canadian Governments in Promoting and Distorting Well-being: Notes on Some Historical and Systematic Aspects," 172-page paper written for the CJL Foundation, August 1977.

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YOUNG CANADA PAGE

## Giant Awake

All of you know by now who Herbert Norman was. Norman was the Canadian ambassador to Egypt who recently threw himself down from the top of a roof and committed suicide. The Canadians are very angry over this incident. They blame the investigation committee of the United States Senate for this. That committee was doing some investigating in connection with possible communist activity. During those investigations the name of the late ambassador also was mentioned. He was said to have had connections with communism, and that piece of information was made available to the press. The result was that Norman decided to take his own life. That which makes things so bad in the eyes of Canada is that the Canadian government had twice cleared Norman's name.

The incident between these two friendly nations has caused considerable comment, mostly on the Canadian side of the border, but there have been comments in the U.S. as well.

At stake is not only the exchange of some security information between these two neighboring countries. There is also a possibility of disrupting more deeply the bonds of friendship which have existed between the two countries. That danger of losing an old and trusted friend in these days of global upheaval, is, according to one U.S. news information far more vital than the interruption of an exchange of top secret information on each other's citizens and government employees.

The incident serves also to point out the growing awareness on the part of Canadians of their sense of national dignity and international importance. Americans have not fully realized the great awakening which is going on north of their border. "Perhaps even today," according to the American news man William F. Farrow, "too many Americans regard (Canada) as a sleepy giant under complete domination of London." The article quoted continues a little later: "In fact, the United States must regard Canada as an equal."

There is something very challenging about the Canadian situation. Canada is a giant who awakes out of his sleep and stand ready to go to his gigantic task. Giants are people to be respected. Giants also must have a lot of self discipline in order not to abuse their strength. You young people are part of that giant country with its possibilities for good and evil. And you are also part of a church which lies astride this international border across which angry words and messages are currently passing from Canada to the United States.

How easy it is to fan this spark into a flame. How simple to heap scorn and indignation on the head of that powerful neighbor to the south which apparently committed a mistake, resulting in an international incident. There is plenty of food for a wrong kind of nationalism among Canadians. That kind of nationalism would be quite negative. It would seek to vent its feelings by being anti-American. But a movement which is merely anti-something will not have much for a basis on which to rest. There will have to be more than that. This holds true both for the nation and for the church. We are committed in our capacity to the development, guidance and direction of a distinctly Canadian point of view in matters of church and nation. Ours is the challenge to make this thing not merely something negative, but to make every effort to build the Canadian church as well as the Canadian nation into something very good, something of which we can be proud, something to which the world will look, including our neighbors to the south.

Such a thing does not happen automatically. It needs careful planning, hard study, loyal labor, and a well balanced view of the world in which we live. Above all, if we shall make this effort, a Christian contribution to church and nation, we shall have to know and study the Scriptures. How about it? The giant awakes. Are you also awake? And are you willing to work as long as God gives you the light of day? W.

Church and Nation.  
April 28, 1957, p. 303,  
"Giant Awake."




 A large, stylized graphic of the number '150' in a bold, sans-serif font. The '1' is a simple vertical bar. The '5' and '0' are more complex, with the '5' having a thick horizontal top bar and a curved bottom. The '0' is a simple oval. The numbers are white and set against a dark, textured background.
 

## COMMEMORATING A SESQUICENTENNIAL

**Umkehr und Erneuerung: aus der Geschichte der Evangelisch-Altreformierte Kirche in Niedersachsen, 1838–1988** (*Conversion and Renewal: from the History of the Evangelical Old Reformed Church in Niedersachsen, 1838–1988*). By Gerrit Jan Beuker. Bad Bentheim, West Germany: Hellen-doorn, 1988. 542 pp. Reviewed by Gordon J. Spykman.

### The Author and His Work

How are we to measure the ecclesiastical distance from Graafschap, Michigan, to Grafschaft Bentheim? And how are we to trace the roots of the former Classis Ostfriesland in Iowa back to Ostfriesland in western Germany? This handsome volume helps to span those gaps. More importantly, however, it offers a wealth of very valuable resource materials on the history of Reformed Christianity

along the German-Dutch border.

Its author, Gerrit Jan Beuker, is pastor of the Evangelical Old Reformed Church<sup>1</sup> in the town of Uelsen in Grafschaft Bentheim.<sup>2</sup> His interest in church history includes exploring the connections between his church body in Niedersachsen<sup>3</sup> and various Reformed church communities in mid-America. In 1977–78, after completing his studies at Kampen Theological Seminary, Beuker spent four months in the Calvin archives researching these connections, by-products of a century of immigrations. He discovered that by 1900 "a third of all the pastors in the CRC in America came from the EOR church in Grafschaft Bentheim and Ostfriesland." Moreover, "from 1890 to 1900 these churches supplied two of the three professors of theology (G.K. Hemkes and H. Beuker) in Grand Rapids"

(p. 480). Among the other familiar names of North American churchmen whose ancestry hails from EOR circles are G. Broene, N.M. Steffens, J. Timmermann, J. Robbert, the Masselinks, J.H. Schuurmann, W. Bode, and D. H. Kromminga. Even in our times these long-standing ties are renewed nearly every year between Christmas and New Year's by rotating groups of Calvin students who spend the first few days of their German interim in Grafschaft Bentheim (p. 481).

During recent years Beuker has made an intensive study of this family of churches, tucked away into what has sometimes been referred to as "a forgotten little corner of Germany." To bring this work to its present stage of completion, the author was granted a three-month leave of absence from all assignments in his congregation and regional synod. The results of this

venture now lie before us in this impressive book, *Conversion and Renewal*. Its appearance in 1988 marks a double milestone: the four hundredth anniversary of the emergence of the Protestant Reformation in Niedersachsen in 1588 and the current commemoration of the birth of the EOR churches, dating from 1838.

### Historical Overview

With swift strokes Beuker sketches the long development of the Christianized society in Grafschaft Bentheim. Its beginnings reach back to the arrival of the earliest missionaries in 690. By 1328 this area began to achieve its own political identity as a *Grafschaft*. Its present geopolitical status came into clear focus in 1885. Meanwhile, a roughly parallel course of events was taking place in Ostfriesland. Across these centuries, however, Niedersachsen experienced a series of massive upheavals. Repeatedly it fell prey to outsiders, dominated successively by French, Prussian, and Dutch powers. Beuker picks up on these developments around the beginning of the eighteenth century.

More prominent than its political history is the region's church history. In a decisive way, according to Beuker, its entire past centers on the church. Some church buildings in Niedersachsen have stood for nearly a thousand years. These venerable structures, offering a wide range of community services, were the focal point of town life as well as the life of the surrounding villages and countryside.

But church life was not always stable and peaceful. Ecclesiastically as well as politically, the past millenium has witnessed radical and sweeping changes in Niedersachsen. Originally the churches were Roman Catholic, then with the Reformation they turned to Lutheranism, and eventually they joined the Reformed movement. In the nineteenth cen-

tury, as the winds of the 1834 secession blew across the border from the Netherlands, clusters of parishioners in Ostfriesland and Grafschaft Bentheim left the established Reformed church to form new congregations. In time these seceders banded together to constitute the EOR Church. This group of churches, thirteen in all, forming the Regional Synod of Bentheim, is now commemorating its sesquicentennial—a story which began unfolding in Uelsen in 1838. It is their legacy which is narrated and extensively documented in this book.

### A Closer Look

The impact of the Reformation, sparked by Luther in 1517, began to infiltrate Niedersachsen as early as 1544. At that time the *graf* and his family embraced the Protestant cause. In keeping with church-state relations in Germany during the Reformation era, the *graf's* domain followed his lead in adopting the Lutheran position. Shortly thereafter, in 1588, Grafschaft Bentheim took a further step. It officially accepted the Reformed faith, shaped largely by the teachings of the Heidelberg Catechism. From that time on

the [Reformed] Church took its place at the center of town and village life. Its pulpit announcements on Sunday served as the general source of information for the entire parish. . . . The church tower was literally the mid-point where all the streets converged. The marketplace with its buying and selling, and nearly all other community transactions, took place within the shadow of the church buildings. The church shaped life as a whole.

(p. 2)

In a few communities Roman Catholic and Lutheran churches continued to exist alongside the established Reformed church, but the general rule was this: in each community, a single church. This unique situation lasted

about 250 years.

### New Beginnings

In light of these circumstances, the confessional shift set in motion around the middle of the nineteenth century introduced unheard of and almost unthinkable changes. A new Reformed church arose, eventually adopting the name *The Evangelical Old Reformed Church*. The established Reformed church in Niedersachsen, as throughout the western world, had capitulated to the spirit of the Enlightenment movement. The seceders were not familiar with the philosophers and theologians who created the modern mind. But they did recognize their heretical ideas, as when one of their ministers questioned seriously, "Is Christ also God?" (p. 307). Beuker describes this liberalist mind in these words:

Man and human reason occupied center-stage. All life was viewed as scientifically explainable. Miracle and mystery disappeared. Human virtue was proclaimed as the ultimate moral goal for citizens and pastors alike. Pious Christians found it impossible to survive on such a spiritual diet. It left them out in the cold and before long also outside the official church. (p. 57)

Reacting to this loss of Reformed orthodoxy in "the big church," dissenters began gathering as small worshiping communities called "conventicles." Assisted by such Dutch Secessionist pastors as Hendrik de Cock and Albertus van Raalte, these "separatists" (also called "sectarians") gradually organized themselves into independent congregations, often meeting in the homes and barns of sympathizers. A free church movement was underway. These "Cocksians" paid dearly and repeatedly for their courageous stand, enduring social ostracism, reprisals by church bureaucrats, and penalties and imprisonment at the hands of civil au-

thorities. Where the established church was adamant in refusing to attend to the appeals of the dissenters, there the secession took root most strongly.

These fledgling congregations also suffered from a lack of ecclesiastical leadership. Early on, to fill this gap, they relied heavily on laymen serving as "catechists" and "exhorters." The pastoral tactics and limited talents of these uneducated leaders sometimes created problems for the seceders. They were also a source of great irritation to civil and ecclesiastical magistrates. Whatever their shortcomings, however, they rose to the occasion, and their noble efforts in recovering the biblical message and Reformed doctrine went hand in hand with highly pietistic patterns of spirituality. Therefore, to establish and maintain good order in church life, these EOR churches, meeting in synod in 1861, acted to place their lay pastors under closer supervision of local consistories.

All the while, members of these "daughter churches" were obliged to continue paying quotas in support of the "mother church." Around the turn of this century, however, a more amicable spirit of cooperation began to mark the relationships between these two churches. As Beuker puts it, an "against-each-other" policy made way for an "alongside-each-other" attitude (p. 32).

A growing maturity among the EOR churches is also reflected in their century-long process of forging a church order true to Scripture and the Reformed confessions and at the same time suited to their own unique situation. Beuker identifies three stages in this development: an original emphasis on ecclesiastical independence, followed by accommodation to the polity of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, and, more recently, a cautiously renewed sense of self-determination (p. 47).

### Stirring Episodes

Beuker's work includes a brief history of each of the thirteen congregations in the EOR Church. Each case study touches on the impulses which led to secession, the names of the founding families, trends in church membership, a listing of past and present pastors, and some key issues in ongoing church life. These sketches are adorned with illustrative photos past and present. Along the way Beuker interjects helpful comments, reflections, and interpretations. All this is amply reinforced with original documents, many of which had previously been hidden away in regional archives.

The book also opens up some very interesting but often forgotten chapters in the development of Reformed Christianity in western Germany, for example, the widespread influence of pastor-theologian H.F. Kohlbrugge in Wuppertal (pp. 405-76). Especially moving is the section (pp. 455-76) describing the crisis into which the EOR churches were thrust during the Hitler era—the pressures exerted by National Socialist politics, the compromises struck by the German Christians, the valiant stand taken by the Confessing Church, and the resulting ambivalent involvement of the EOR churches in the resistance movement. As Beuker puts it,

heroes are made, not born. The EOR congregations and their members were not heroes during the years between 1930 and 1945. But they are not on that account to be blamed. He who points a finger of accusation, or even worse, he who lifts his arm to defend these horrors, shows that he is not prepared to take his stand among the guilty. No one is innocent, not even those born since 1945. . . . We must take our place on the side of the guilty, which is the place for every Christian. He who tries to cover his tracks hides his own guilt or at least

a bad conscience. It is not a matter of fingering the guilty parties or declaring heroes. . . . (p. 455)

With these remarks Beuker leads us into the narrated and documented history of those very troubled times.

### A Tale of Two Beukers

In addition to original documents, Beuker also draws upon a number of relevant secondary sources. Among them is the booklet by Henricus Beuker (no close relative) entitled *Tubantiana: Church and State Struggles in Grafschaft Bentheim*.<sup>4</sup> H. Beuker served several pastorates in the Netherlands and Germany, including Emlichheim in his native Grafschaft Bentheim. Around 1890 he migrated to America, accepting a call to First Christian Reformed Church in Muskegon, Michigan. From 1894 until his death in 1900 he taught church polity at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In 1897, as retiring rector, he delivered the address entitled "Tubantiana" (derived from the name of the original inhabitants of Bentheim), which was subsequently published as a booklet under the same title. Given the checkered history of church-state relations in Niedersachsen, it is understandable that H. Beuker should cite Abraham Kuyper's comment from 1881 to the effect that, however Reformed in doctrine, "the old church of Bentheim is not Reformed when it comes to church government" (p. 4). This is a matter of serious concern to H. Beuker since a basic thesis in his work is that, in the name of biblical consistency, the Reformed confessions call for a Reformed church order.

The work of the younger Beuker complements that of his older namesake. In *Tubantiana* the older Beuker delves into the political struggles in the earlier church history of Grafschaft Bentheim from Reformation times to the turn of this century. Though there is some overlap be-

tween the two works, *Conversion and Renewal* is a more rigorous study, concentrating on developments over the past 150 years. Together, however, they shed helpful light upon many German-American church connections, especially upon the "old country" background of one significant strand in the CRC heritage (which I also claim as mine).

#### A Dramatic Turn of Events

In this commemorative year fresh winds of reconciliation are stirring in Niedersachsen. On June 14, the officers of the established Reformed Church, meeting at the old monastery, Frenswegen, now an ecumenical center, issued a public statement congratulating the EOR Church on its anniversary and offering heartiest best wishes for God's blessing. This declaration was then read from Reformed Church pulpits and published in the secular press and church papers. In it they openly deplore past abuses inflicted upon the EOR Church and its members. They commend the seceders for their faithful proclamation of the Word, for upholding the Reformed confessions, and for regulating church life in keeping with these confessions. "We Reformed people," they go on to say, "simply cannot reflect on the beginnings of the EOR Church without recounting our own guilt. . . . By way of this declaration we acknowledge that the criticisms of 150 years ago were in many respects legitimate: the interpretation of Scripture in the established Reformed Church was often capricious, the church order was often violated, the Reformed confessions were often depreciated, and psalm singing and other important elements in the Reformed tradition were often neglected."

These spokesmen for the established Reformed Church then speak directly to their EOR brothers and sisters:

1. We are sorry that the admonitions and warnings expressed by confessionally faithful members of the church were ignored or despised and that the churches failed to pursue open, patient, brotherly discussion.

2. We are sorry that for years the police and other magistrates were enlisted to oppose the worship services and meetings, as well as the preachers and leaders of the EOR Church, instead of choosing the way of joint discussion around the open Bible.

3. We are sorry that for decades members of the EOR Church were obstructed in church building and that they were hindered, repressed, and insulted in the use of church buildings and cemeteries and in gaining access to church records.

4. We are sorry that for decades our brothers and sisters in the EOR Church, corporately and as individuals, were despised and insulted by members and officers of the established Reformed Church by calling them "separatists," "sectarians," and using similar abusive language.

5. We are sorry that it took Christians from our circles so many years to accept and understand the fact that the EOR Church as well as the established Reformed Church sprang up from a common Reformed tradition.

This declaration may well mark a very significant turning point in the future church history of Niedersachsen. It certainly serves as a fitting close to a 150-year-long chapter of strained church relations by seizing this time of commemoration as an occasion for reconciliation.

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Translation of Evangelisch-Altreformierte Kirche—henceforth: "EOR Church."

<sup>2</sup>Grafschaft is roughly equivalent to "county," a territory traditionally ruled by a graf, or "count."

<sup>3</sup>An area in northwestern Germany, including Ostfriesland and Bentheim.

<sup>4</sup>Translated and published under the auspices of the Historical Society of the Graafschaap, Michigan, CRC, 1985, 25 pp. The Dutch original was published by J. H. Kok, Kampen, in 1897.



# FOR THE FUTURE

The topics listed below are being researched, and articles about them will appear in future issues of *Origins*.

The China Mission 1920-1944

Quincy, Illinois: Bitter Years *by* Henry Ippel

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# BOOKS

**R. B., Prophet in the Land.** By Edward Heerema. Jordan Station, Ontario: Paideia, 1986. \$9.95.

Rienk Bouke Kuiper's father, Dominee Klaas Kuiper (1841-1921), immigrated to America in 1891. He had accepted a call from First Christian Reformed Church in Grand Haven, Michigan. Among the family members accompanying him was Rienk Bouke (1886-1966), his five-year-old son, whose somewhat peculiar first and middle names were those of rich relatives of the Kuiper family. His parents hoped to receive an inheritance from Rienk Bouke's namesakes, but according to author Rev. Edward Heerema, this parental expectation was never fulfilled. In 1896, R. B.'s father left Grand Haven to become the minister of Second Christian Reformed Church of Roseland, Illinois. Here, Heerema states, R. B. Kuiper, "developed an earthy, street-wise sharpness that would stand him in good stead in dealing with complex issues."

Rienk Bouke, and his brothers Barend Klaas (1887-1961)<sup>1</sup> and Herman (1889-1963)<sup>2</sup> attended the University of Chicago, an institution considered by their father far superior to the theological school in Grand Rapids, which at the time had only a fledgling literary department. After graduation from Calvin Seminary in 1911, R.B. served as pastor in Overisel, Michigan, West Leonard Street, Sher-

man Street, Second Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, and LaGrave Avenue.<sup>3</sup> After 1930, his remarkable and illustrious career as a professor-preacher-administrator included three years as president of Calvin College (1930-1933), two decades (1933-1952) as professor of practical theology at Westminster Seminary, and four years (1952-1956) as president of Calvin Theological Seminary. R.B. is the only person among Christian Reformed Church notables who has served in both its institutions as president. This feat sets him apart from all other luminaries in the denomination, and if he did nothing else, this achievement would be an adequate claim to fame.

Heerema's conservative views parallel those of his father-in-law, R.B. Kuiper, who is portrayed as a man who considered Calvinism and Christianity to be one and the same. R.B. championed his beliefs in the pulpit, in print, and in the classroom. Although not overtly seeking controversy, he did not mince words concerning the infallibility of Scripture, lack of appreciation for the Reformed heritage, the need for sound biblical preaching, the errors of Fundamentalism, and decreasing doctrinal discernment found among a growing number of Christian Reformed Church parishoners.

Rarely, if ever, does Heerema criticize R.B. Kuiper. Often he offers the reader extensive quotations from one or more of R.B.'s books or magazine

articles. Frequently following the quotations, we find Heerema's appreciative comments about Kuiper's prose, and we note how Heerema cherishes R.B.'s ideas and hopes they will remain relevant for the Christian Reformed Church of today and tomorrow. Furthermore, Heerema praises R.B. as a pulpiteer:

In his preaching one detected the intense earnestness of a Savonarola, the clarity of thought of a John Calvin, the rugged directedness of a Martin Luther, the dramatic power of a George Whitefield, and the personal urgency of a John Wesley.

Almost a generation has passed since the death of R.B. Kuiper. The Christian Reformed Church is not the same as it was during his lifetime. Perhaps for R.B. and his biographer, the past is better than the present. After reading this book, you will better understand a gifted man who is one among the few whose thoughts and deeds have molded the history of both the Christian Reformed and Orthodox Presbyterian denominations.

<sup>1</sup>Barend Klaas Kuiper was professor of history and sociology at Calvin College (1900-1903, 1907-1918) and professor of historical theology, Calvin Theological Seminary (1926-1928).

<sup>2</sup>Herman Kuiper was a minister in the Christian Reformed Church and served as professor of systematic theology at Calvin Theological Seminary during the years 1953-1958.

<sup>3</sup>Sherman Street, West Leonard Street, and LaGrave are Christian Reformed churches located in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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