

Stepping Forward in Faith: Redeemer University College 1974 - 1994. By Henry R. De Bolster. Guardian Books, Belleville, Ont. 2001. Pb. 283 pp. The book can be ordered from Redeemer Bookstore, 777 Gardner Rd., Ancaster, Ont. L9K 1J4. Reviewed by Johan D Tangelder.

Why should church members care about their students at secular colleges/universities? Are these post- secondary institutions not strictly neutral, without any bias? Contrary to the commonly accepted belief that they are bastions of neutrality, they are value-laden rather than value-free. No one is able to teach from a "neutral" perspective. Christian post-secondary education is therefore not a luxury, but an absolute necessity!

Anyone involved in Christian education in the primary and secondary levels knows full well the problems, dilemmas, questions, obstacles, and fund-raising that must be faced. In his personal account *Stepping Forward in Faith*, which is also the motto of the Redeemer Foundation, Rev. Henry R. De Bolster makes a clear case for Christian education. The latter demands a view that sees all creation and every human endeavour under the supremacy of Jesus Christ - the One for Whom all things were created and in Whom all things hold together. A Christian college/ university is therefore a place where students are instructed in the rudiments of loving God with all their mind, strength, soul and heart. De Bolster is convinced therefore that Redeemer was established in obedience to the Word of the Lord. And he adds that it is based on "the advancement of learning and the dissemination of knowledge on the basis of the Reformed traditions, and perspectives."

De Bolster's narrative covers the years from 1974, when the idea of a Christian university/college was first discussed, prayed about, and planned, to 1994, when he retired as "president emeritus." He writes with passion, clarity, honesty, and commitment. Disappointments, unfair criticism, mistakes, opposition, and his own personal trials on account of serious illness are not glossed over. But the certain knowledge that he was doing the work of the Lord never left him.

The struggle to get official recognition was long and hard. It was not until Dr. Justin Cooper's presidency that the college received government recognition by authorizing it to grant both the B. A. and B.Sc. degrees. A few years later the Ontario Legislature approved the name change to Redeemer University College.

Financing of Redeemer was a constant concern. From the beginning the founders believed that Redeemer should be the college of the entire Christian community, but the fund raising began by first of all visiting and communicating with the primary support community, the Christian Reformed congregations in Ontario. The establishment of a tuition fee that related to the cost of education was applauded by some parents, and misunderstood by others. The plan was "to raise the tuition, but ask parents with a higher income than the average parent to make a donation to a scholarship fund."

Although this idea was abandoned after a few years, it was the forerunner of "Forgivable Loan Program" of the Redeemer Foundation, which has helped many students.

De Bolster does not only describe the tough first years of Redeemer, he also testifies of God's faithfulness, goodness, and provisions. "I was amazed then," declares De Bolster,

"and still am that we never lacked funds." Indeed, the Lord performed miracles in answer to prayer.

Redeemer grew from 97 full-time and 31 part-time students in 1982, its first year of operation, to 640 full-time equivalent students in the academic year 2000-2001. A record of 113 graduates received their degrees on May 26, 2001. All in all, *Stepping Forward in Faith* is an excellent account of the hopes, aspirations, and answered prayers of men and women with a vision for Christian higher education. Warmly recommended!