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Western Theological Seminary

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Abstract

RCA minister, missionary to India from 1926-1933, 1935-1966. The collection contains personal correspondence, sermons, articles, slides, photographs, and books about his time in India by De Bruin. The collection also contains several articles by wife Frances about the education of Indian women, draft and published copies of his book, Four Transitional Decades in India, sermons (some of which are not dated and cover a variety of subjects), articles by De Bruin, several of his Bibles (Dutch and Tamil languages), a tribute to him by Central College, and images of mission work in India. The strength of this collection is the large number of letters and sermons of Rev. De Bruin that detail his time as a missionary in India. Unfortunately, the collection lacks material covering the last three years of De Bruin’s life.

Accession Nos.: W88-0027, W05-1296
Provenance: Cornie A. and Frances De Bruin
Donor: Information Unavailable, James De Bruin
Photographs: 89 images; 41 slides (Boxes 1 and 2)
Processed by: Sarah Scheben, February 1994
Jessica Bodtke, June 2005

Biography

Cornie A. De Bruin was born in Pella, Iowa, on August 21, 1897. He attended school in Pella and later went on to graduate from Central College in 1923 with a B.A. and a certificate in public speaking. He studied Sociology at the University of Wisconsin, and received his B.Th. and Th.M. from Western Theological Seminary in 1926. He was ordained by the Classis of Pella, Iowa, that same year. In 1967, he was awarded a D.D. by Central College.

In 1924, he married Frances Lepeltak (1925-1965). Two years later, they were assigned to the Arcot Mission of India where they quickly learned Tamil language and embraced the missionary life. As a missionary for the Reformed Church of America, De Bruin was involved in many activities: teaching at Voorhees College in Vellore, India, managing high school and college dormitories, and eventually serving as vice principal of the college.

He and his wife returned to the United States in June of 1933 because of a lack of missionary funds. They were assigned to a church in Westfield, North Dakota, where the De Bruins remained until June of 1935. During his time there, De Bruin published a book entitled The Challenge of Matthew’s Gospel, affectionately dedicated to the people of Westfield. When they returned to Tindivanam, India, in 1935, the De Bruins submerged themselves in many missionary activities, i.e. supervising the work of the Bible women, managing the boys’ school and Christian hotel, organizing and leading church services, and serving as pastor for two mission churches. De Bruin was busy also as treasurer of the Arcot Mission for ten years, president of the mission three different times, and chairman of various mission committees.

The De Bruins had one daughter, Joyce, who along with her husband, James W. Dunham,
is a missionary to Bahrain. When the De Bruins retired from missionary life in 1966, they
returned to Pella. Soon after reestablishing themselves in Iowa, Central College offered Rev. De
Bruin a job as Director of Deferred Giving, which he promptly accepted. Mrs. De Bruin passed
away on July 1, 1971, after a second heart attack. Later in his life, De Bruin moved from his
home in Pella to Fair Haven Rest Home. He died on October 1, 1988.

Scope and Content

The collection consists of correspondence, draft and published copies of his book, *Four
Transitional Decades in India*, sermons (some of which are not dated and cover a variety of
subjects), articles by De Bruin, several of his Bibles, a tribute to him by Central College, and
images of mission work in India. The strength of this collection is the large number of letters and
sermons of Rev. De Bruin that detail his time as a missionary in India. Unfortunately, the
collection lacks material covering the last three years of De Bruin’s life. The folders are arranged
alphabetically.

De Bruin’s book, *The Challenge of Matthew’s Gospel*, is available in Western Seminary’s
Library.

Container List

Box 1

Biographical Material, 1967-1977
  Photographs, n.d. (2 images)

Books and Articles
  Articles by Rev. C. A. De Bruin, 1946-1972
  Articles by Frances De Bruin, 1958-1961
  *The Challenge of Stewardship*, 1964
  Draft copy of *Four Transitional Decades in India*
  *Four Transitional Decades in India and Talks on the Christian Faith* in Tamil, 1958
  *Greek New Testament*, 1923
  Journals of Sermons, June 1, 1924-December 31, 1981 (5 books, 1 folder)
  Record Book, Personal and Mission, 1949-1965
  *Bible*, c.1930 (Dutch)
  *Bible*, 1923 (Tamil)
  *Bible*, 1935 (Tamil)
  *South India Diary, A*, by J. E. Lesslie Newbigin (1951)

Correspondence
  Arun, 1968-1973
  Central, 1965-1972
  Church, 1963-1976
  Honegger, 1965-1969
  Personal, 1932-1941 (6 folders)
Box 2

Correspondence (cont.)
  Personal (cont.), 1942-1985 (6 folders)

Photographs
  Education, c. 1949-1960 (20 images)
  Evangelism, 1943-1959 (13 images)
  Indian Life, 1950-1960 (13 images)

Sermons
  1920s-1970s (6 folders)
  Dutch, n.d.
  Funerals, n.d.
  n.d.

Slides of Arcot Mission Work in India, n.d. (41 images)

Souvenir Booklet of Ekambaranellore Centenary Celebrations, May 20 and 21, 1967

Tributes
  C. A. "Cornie" De Bruin by Central College, October, 1984
  Dr. B. Rottschaefer by Rev. C. A. De Bruin, 1967