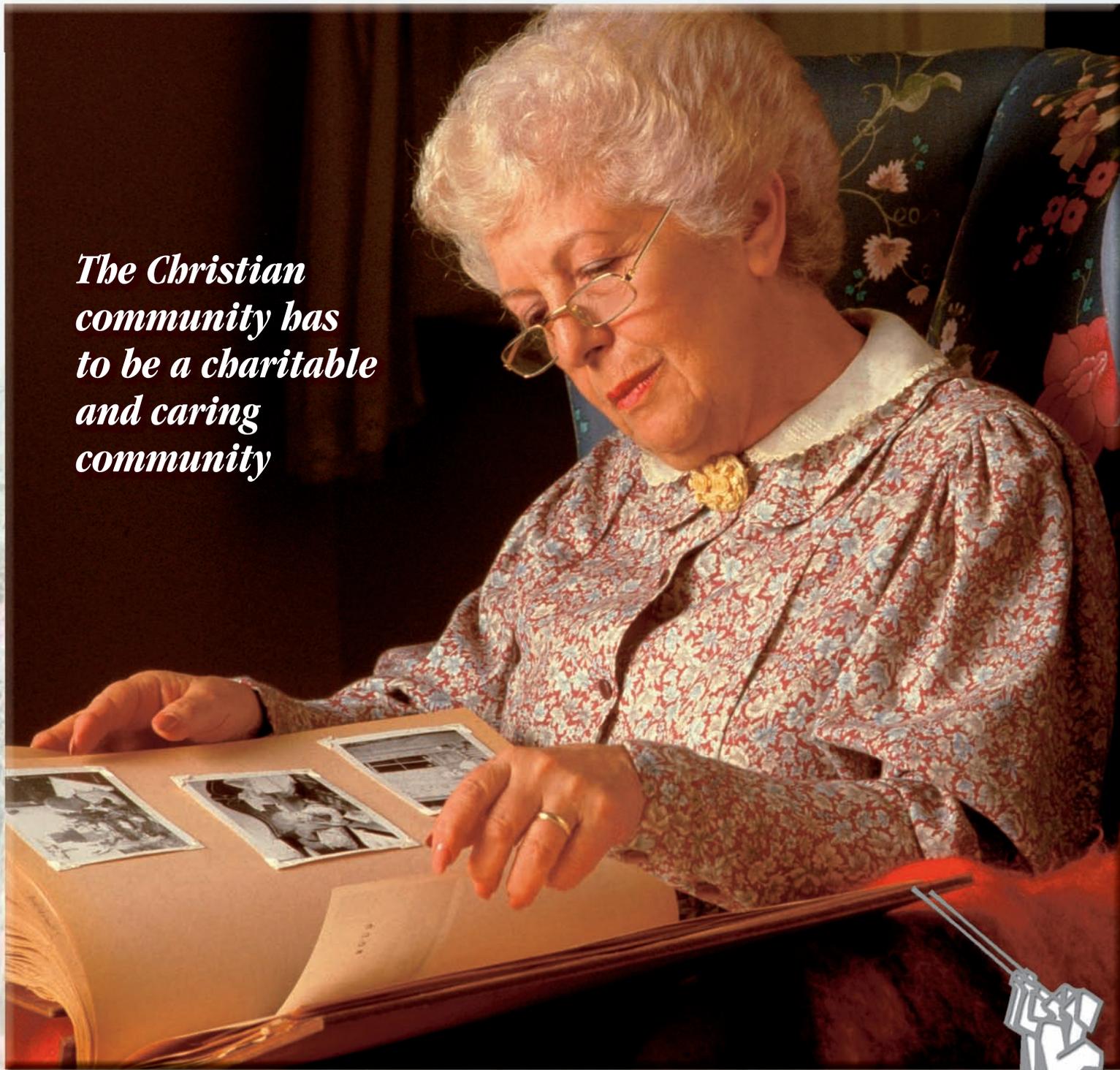


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*The Christian
community has
to be a charitable
and caring
community*



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- Where Have All the Deacons Gone? ■ The Power of the Ascended Christ
- Modern Science and the Christian Faith





J. Visscher

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Where Have All The Deacons Gone?

The office of deacon is almost extinct today

An assignment

Here is an interesting assignment for catechism students. Give them instructions to survey or investigate the churches in their communities and find out just how many of these churches have deacons among their office bearers? Oh, and if some of these churches say that they have deacons, the students are to ask them "what do they do? What kind of a task do they have in the congregation?" For you see, in some churches the name "deacons" is used for men (and women) who take care of matters that have to do with church finances and property. They do the work of a committee of administration or a board of management.

All in all it will not take these students long to discover that the office of deacons, at least as the Bible describes it, is almost extinct today. Only in certain Presbyterian and Reformed churches does this office still exist and function. In others it has either never existed or it has been lost along the way.

How sad

And that is a sad development for a number of reasons. For what is it that keeps the church and its members in tune with the awareness that the material side of life calls for diligent Christian stewardship? What highlights the fact that the Christian community has to be a charitable and caring community? In addition, what insures that the members of the church need not worry about whether or not they will have bread on their tables? Also, what illustrates more beautifully that our God is Lord of all of life and ministers not just to the needs of the soul but also to those of the body?

A needed office

The church needs this office. It needs it for the sake of its health and well-being. It also needs it for the sake of its reputation. For what is one of the most common and distressing accusations made against the church? It is that the church is money hungry. How often have I not been told over the years that the only thing that church wants from people is their money? Indeed, many think that the church has made a specialty out of finding ways of getting older widows and other lonely and vulnerable people to part with their money. The church, therefore, needs this office to counteract the popular impression that it is a greedy institution.

The church needs this office

Still, there is more at stake here than reputation. There is also the matter of biblical vision. How is it possible that even churches that pride themselves on their commitment to the Bible and its teachings appear to be blind when it comes to this office?

Biblically-speaking

Now, of course, I realize that Acts 6 remains in dispute when it comes to the office of deacon. The traditional interpretation is that here we find the origin of this office. A more recent view stumbles over the fact the actual word for "deacon" is not used here and thus prefers to speak about some sort of precursor to this office. In the end whatever approach one takes



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no one denies that Acts 6 describes the fact that the early Christian church set aside seven men to take care of the daily distribution of food. In other words, these men were designated as diaconal workers.

But then if Acts 6 speaks about the rise of this office in one way or another, it is also readily apparent that in 1 Timothy 3 the Apostle Paul speaks about its qualifications. There he refers to men who are "worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine and not pursuing dishonest gain" (v 8). He also describes them as men who "must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience" (v 9) and urges that they be tested men. In addition, Paul also has something to say about their wives being "women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers, but temperate and trustworthy in everything" (v 11).

It should perhaps be added that some see the reference to "wives" in 1 Timothy 3:11 as not really referring to the wives of deacons but rather to female deacons. Hence they render the text as "In the same way, deaconesses are to be women worthy of respect. . . ." So did they have both male and female deacons in biblical times? We shall leave that debate to another time. The point to be made here is that in 1 Timothy 3 we come across the qualifications of a particular office, an office that had the concern of the Apostle Paul. Why would he bother to list these qualifications and pass them along to Timothy and all the church if he was merely describing something peculiar and limited to a particular time and place?

The proof that these qualifications are not limited but have a bearing on church life elsewhere is also to be found in Philippians 1:1. For there in his opening words Paul states that his letter is addressed "to all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons." Surely, the impression that we receive in this form of address is that the apostle is simply mentioning one common office and two special offices in the church. In Philippi and elsewhere the church was noted for the fact that it not only had "saints" but also "elders and deacons."

A job description

Yet the question may also be asked, "Where is the job description for these men? Why does the Apostle Paul not supply that as well?" In all honesty, we have

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to say that we do not have answers to these questions, except to say that in some ways the entire Old Testament gives us a diaconal job description. If a deacon went back to the Old Testament and studied how God wanted his people then to deal with the widows, the needy, and the refugee in their midst, he would have lots to go by. If, in addition, he studied the various Old Testament laws having to do with reaping and harvesting, as well as the regulations governing the sabbatical year, and the Year of Jubilee, he would find more principles to implement.

Furthermore, if a deacon paid attention to the ministry of the Lord Jesus, he would discover all sorts of instructions about how to treat the down and out, as well as a vivid illustration of what it means to serve and to be a servant.

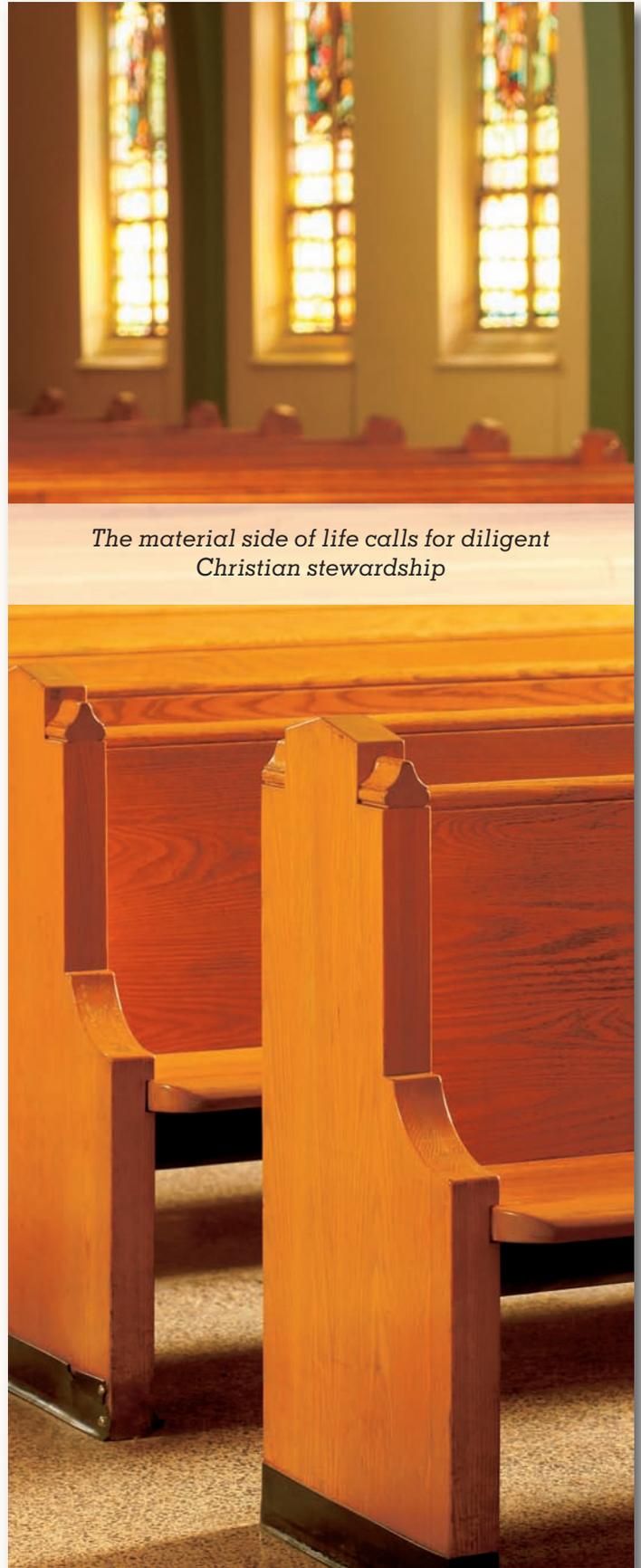
Add to all of that any number of apostolic instructions and injunctions and the stage is set. It is set for a full-orbed office and a task that reaches far and wide in the church.

But it reaches not just into the church; it also extends into the world. If the references to sojourners in the Old Testament and the parable of the Good Samaritan mean anything in the New Testament, then they underline the fact that mercy and charity are to be shown not just to the household of God. True, these qualities are to be exhibited first to "the family of believers," but they are also not to exclude doing "good to all people" (Gal 6:10).

In a most striking manner the Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons used in our churches describes the task of both the deacons and the diaconal congregation when it says, "Also today the Lord calls on us to show hospitality, generosity and mercy, so that the weak and needy may share abundantly in the joy of God's people. No one in the congregation of Christ may live uncomforted under the pressure of sickness, loneliness and poverty" (*Book of Praise*, p 631).

A final appeal

Suffice it to say then, there is ample reason for us to maintain the office of deacon today, to pray for those who have been invested with it, and to encourage churches everywhere to give serious consideration to the creation and promotion of this most beautiful biblical office.



*The material side of life calls for diligent
Christian stewardship*

D.Ph. Poppe



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The Power of the Ascended Christ



MATTHEW 13:52

“ . . . far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.”

Ephesians 1:21

Do you struggle against temptation? Or do you mourn because you have a child or close friend who has been deceived by wrong teaching or is caught up in what this world has to offer and has turned his back on the Lord? Or do you grieve because of the way others have sinned against you, or because of the havoc and destruction caused by sin in the church? As believers we are certainly being attacked in many different ways.

In Ephesians 1 the Lord encourages us in our struggles by reminding us of the power of our ascended Saviour. In the last verses of this chapter the Apostle Paul prays that the Ephesians may know the power of God which He exerted in Christ in his resurrection and ascension.

So what kind of power does Christ have? Since He ascended into heaven and sat down at the right hand of the Father, He has been given a place “far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come” (v 21).

To understand what is meant here, we need to realize that this is an allusion to Psalm 110:1, where it says, “The Lord says to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’” Christ has been given power over his enemies. We know from Ephesians 3:10 and 6:12 that the

terms “rule, authority, power, dominion and title” refer to the spiritual forces of darkness and other angelic beings. And from Ephesians 1:22 we learn that Christ’s power extends not only over the spiritual forces, but over all creation. He is the Lord and Master over everyone and everything!

The fact that our ascended Lord has authority over the spiritual forces of darkness and over everything else in this world is a great comfort for us who believe in Him. Certainly the Ephesians were greatly comforted in the knowledge of Christ’s power. According to the Hellenistic worldview of the time, many people believed that the spirit world exercised influence on every aspect of life. Thus they greatly feared the evil spirits! By knowing the most powerful spiritual forces and worshipping or appeasing them, the people attempted to secure their own well-being.

It is in this context that the power of Jesus Christ came as a stunning revelation. In Acts 19:11-12 we are told that during the three years that Paul was in Ephesus, God did extraordinary miracles through him, so that even when handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them. Further, in Acts 19:13 we read of how the evil spirits were willing to obey Jesus but wouldn’t submit to the seven sons of Sceva. As a result, the name

of Jesus was highly honoured among all in Ephesus. In fact, in verse 19 we read that many of those who had practiced sorcery renounced their evil deeds and publicly burned their scrolls, turning instead to Christ.

Now that Paul has left these Ephesians for a time, he writes to remind them of the incredible power of the ascended Christ. Jesus Christ is supreme. Everyone is under his authority. No matter how hard the devil rails against Him, and no matter how many evil spirits join together, their collective power will never match that of the Lord Jesus.

The real comfort of our text lies in the message of how Christ promises to use this power. In verse 22 we are told that “God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body.” Christ uses his great power for us, his church!

If ever you fear the forces of evil, or struggle under temptation, deception, or sin, know that Jesus Christ has the power over your life and over all that attacks you. The ascended Christ is using his invincible power to gather, defend, and preserve his church and He will accomplish his goal in our lives. Let us then pray the prayer of the apostle: that we may know the power of God which He exerted in Christ, so that we may take comfort in Him.



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Modern Science and the Christian Faith (Part 1 of 2)

This is a slightly adapted version of a presentation I gave at a conference for science and math teachers held at the Teachers College in Hamilton on February 29-March 1, 2008.

At this conference we will be dealing with the question how we are to teach science in such a way that our students learn to integrate their scientific learning with their Christian faith. That topic can be approached from a number of angles. For this paper I have chosen the following three: (1) acknowledgement of the subjective element in knowing, (2) the Argument from Design with reference to natural theology, and (3) the Argument from Design with reference to twentieth-century discoveries.

1. The subjective element in knowing

The growing realization of the subjective element in knowing coincided with the rise of *postmodernism*. Under *modernism* the immense success of modern science had given rise to the belief that the scientific method led to absolutely objective truth; that science was capable of solving every mystery, and that in the end it would make possible the establishment of a heavenly city on earth.

The disasters of the twentieth century, however, destroyed this

faith. They opened people's minds to the fact that science and technology are not omnipotent after all and that the modern trust in the objective ideal had been an illusion.

In this same period studies in the history and philosophy of science substantiated that conclusion. They did so by showing the role of *extra-scientific* factors in the formation of scientific theories. Chief among these factors are the prevailing worldview and the presuppositions of the individual scientist. In brief, it is now realized that although dealing with an *objective* reality, science does so in a *subjective* and therefore a *fallible* manner. As Einstein once said: "The sense experiences are the given subject matter. But the theory that shall interpret them is man-made. . . never completely final, always subject to question and doubt."

At this point I have to warn against two possible misunderstandings. Firstly, the intrusion of the subjective element does not mean that a scientific theory is simply the product of a scientist's imagination and has nothing to do with the world "out there." It is true that theories are provisional, that they are often modified and sometimes replaced altogether. Nevertheless, they serve their purpose. In the words of C.S. Lewis, "Each is a serious attempt to get in all the

phenomena known at a given period, and each succeeds in getting in a great many. But also, no less surely [he adds], each reflects the prevalent psychology of an age. . . ." For these reasons, Lewis suggests, we should look at scientific theories in the right way, respecting each and idolizing none.

The second possible misunderstanding is that the intrusion of the subjective element means that scientific knowledge is stagnant. In fact, it means no such thing. Common sense alone already shows that there is progress – witness, for example, the very great advances that are made in science-based technology. Indeed, it appears that rather than preventing scientific progress, subjective factors such as the scientist's beliefs and the prevailing worldview facilitate and expedite it. Historians of science have shown this in a variety of instances. Among them are the rise and acceptance of the Copernican hypothesis, Darwinism, and quantum physics. Extra-scientific factors related to the worldview of the period, the historians showed, played a role both in the rise of the scientific theories in question and in their acceptance. It is this human element, incidentally, that makes the history of science so interesting.

The acknowledgement of the subjective factor has been

welcomed especially among Christians and understandably so. After all, it was the widespread belief in the total objectivity of scientific pronouncements that caused such great problems for them. It led to the suggestion, for example, that if science pronounced the Bible to be in error, then it was in error. More than one Christian student has lost his or her faith because of this. Let us rejoice that this stumbling block has been removed.

Teachers must be aware of the subjective element in knowing. Should they teach it to their students as well? That depends. I myself have taught it for years, but only at the senior secondary and the postsecondary levels. For younger students it is probably too difficult and confusing and even with older ones we must take care that they do not consider it a gateway to subjective relativism. As I already indicated, such a conclusion is absurd, but in this relativistic age it is necessary to be on guard. Our students must remember Lewis's advice that they should respect all scientific theories, even though they are not to idolize them. They must also learn, as Anglican theologian N.T. Wright expressed it, that while our human *knowledge* is never independent of the knower, it deals with *realities* that are independent of the knower.

And again, that makes sense. Reality – that is, nature, creation, the world we study – is the work of an omnipotent, all-wise Creator and is not in the least affected by our thoughts or wishes. Our *knowledge*, however, is human, finite, and fallible, coloured by the “worldview glasses” we wear. The hubris of modernism was to believe that the human being is able to see reality as God sees it.

Reacting to this arrogance and its consequences, postmodern relativists fell off the other side of the horse and concluded that since we can't know as God knows, we can't know at all; that knowledge and truth are just social constructs. That conclusion must be rejected: our knowledge can be reliable, even if it is limited. It has been my experience over the years that once students understand the difference between the *subjectivity* of human knowing, the *objectivity* of the reality we study, and the apparent possibility of reaching true knowledge of that reality, they experience the defeat of the objective ideal as altogether liberating.

2. The Argument from Design – with reference to natural theology

The Argument from Design is as old as the Bible. Already in the Old Testament, in the Psalms, the prophets and elsewhere, we read in a multitude of contexts that the heavens declare the glory of God and the skies proclaim the work of his hands. As Arnold Sikkema reminds us in one of his papers, the Old Testament often speaks of a *covenant* that God has made with the heavens and the earth; a covenant on which we may rely, also in our scientific work. The best-known text in the New Testament telling us that creation gives witness to God is found in Romans 1, where Paul writes that what may be known about God is plain to man, because “since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse” (1:19, 20).

2.1 The “Book of Nature”

Taught by the Bible, Christians have from early times therefore spoken of two sources or two “books” of revelation. Augustine already used the metaphor of the two books. That same metaphor became familiar to us because of its use in Article 2 of the Belgic Confession. There we read that we know God by two means: “First, by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe; which is before our eyes as a most beautiful book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many letters leading us to *perceive clearly the invisible qualities of God, namely, His eternal power and deity . . .* Second, He makes Himself more clearly and fully known to us by His holy and divine Word. . . .”

As Dutch philosopher Dr. Gijsbert van den Brink has pointed out in a recent paper, the metaphor of the two books provided an important stimulus for the rise of modern science in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. People reasoned that if nature is indeed a book written by God for our instruction, then we have the duty to investigate it. In that sense Guido de Brès, the author of the Belgic Confession, may indeed have influenced the rise of modern science, at least in protestant countries.

The Reformation, Van den Brink suggests, had yet another influence on the scientific revolution. He writes: “Just as the Reformation set aside the allegorical method to explain the *second* book, Holy Scripture, because it wanted to stay close to the literal meaning – so this same Reformation stimulated people to stay close to *nature* in their investigations, and therefore to

follow the experimental method, rather than approach nature on the basis of preconceived notions." This speculative approach was of course common to Aristotelian science, which continued to dominate much of the Middle Ages. A well-known example was the assumption that the orbits of the heavenly bodies must be exactly circular, because circularity symbolized perfection and, unlike the earth, the heavens were perfect. It was when Johannes Kepler in the early 1600s began to observe and measure and calculate – that is, when he began using the experimental method – that the *elliptical* form of planetary orbits became known. And this is only one example of many. Think also of the use of the telescope by Galileo, Kepler's contemporary.

2.2 Natural theology: questions and pitfalls

The confession of God's revelation in nature proved fruitful in subsequent centuries. It stimulated not only scientists but it also played a dominant role in apologetics, the reasoned defence of the faith. Because the evidence of design in creation was a central element in that defence, this type of apologetics is sometimes referred to as "natural theology."

Eventually, however, questions were raised about its use. I am describing them because they continue to be relevant for us today. Firstly, in the course of time the first book (i.e., nature) began to be seen as the most important source of divine revelation. The second book, Scripture, was more and more ignored; it became increasingly common to base knowledge of God on the book of nature alone. In view of this danger, some Christians have rejected natural theology, declaring that we can know God only by his special revelation, the

Bible. Well-known among these opponents of natural theology are the nineteenth-century philosopher Søren Kierkegaard and the twentieth-century theologian Karl Barth. They are called fideists, because they rely on faith (*fides*) alone, rather than on faith and reason in matters of religion.

Although Reformed Christians have not gone as far as Kierkegaard and Barth, they are aware of the danger to which these men pointed. They are careful, for example, to avoid the mistakes of some earlier Christians, such as the medieval philosopher Thomas Aquinas,

Our knowledge can be reliable, even if it is limited

who spoke of nature and reason as giving *proofs* of God's existence and even of some of his attributes. Reformed apologists stay closer to John Calvin, who insisted that arguments from nature and reason can be "useful aids" in showing the credibility of Scripture. But rather than calling them *proofs*, he spoke of the *testimony* creation gives to the work of God. He also made clear that neither nature nor reason can ever reveal to us God as He has made Himself known in Jesus Christ. Nor can these arguments lead to saving faith. That is the work of the Holy Spirit alone.

In this connection it is interesting to note, incidentally, that Dr. J. Faber used to tell us that he always used the word *revelation* only for God's written Word and spoke of *manifestation* to indicate how He has been and continues to be active in creation. It's another reminder that, important as the book of nature is

(and I want to keep underlining this), we must confess with Article 2 that "God makes Himself more clearly and fully known to us by His holy and divine Word. . . ."

The second problem that arose in connection with natural theology is often described as the *God-of-the-gaps* error. It too came to the fore with the scientific revolution. The model of the world that this revolution adopted was a mechanistic one. The earth and the entire universe were seen as one gigantic machine that ran in accordance with unchanging, eternal natural laws. It was clockwork and more and more God was seen as the Great Clockmaker or the Great Engineer. Once He had made the clock or machine and set it going, it ran by itself; no further overseeing was necessary. For many, God was becoming the God of deism, who had nothing to do with the world any more. And soon the question arose whether He had been necessary in the first place. Perhaps, scientists and philosophers reasoned, the universe had had no beginning; perhaps it had existed from eternity. Deism easily led to agnosticism and then to atheism.

Christians became concerned about these implications of the machine model and tried to find ways and means to bring God and divine providence back into the picture. A well-known example, which I have mentioned before, is that of the great Isaac Newton himself. Newton noted irregularities in the planetary orbits and used this fact as a guarantee of God's continued presence in nature: God, he said, had to intervene repeatedly to stabilize things. The German philosopher Leibniz, Newton's contemporary and rival, disagreed, accusing Newton of diminishing God's majesty by assuming that his work was so

haphazard that it needed constant repair. Soon the Frenchman Laplace was able to provide a scientific refutation of Newton's theory by showing that the irregularities were self-correcting so that, as he told Napoleon, he had no need of the "God hypothesis." There was a natural, mechanistic explanation.

Newton's error, which has been repeated by others, should serve us as a warning. When we refer to God as a means of filling gaps in our knowledge, the result is a dishonouring of Him whenever a scientific explanation for the phenomenon in question is found after all. At the same time it is good to keep in mind, however, that

Christians are not the only ones to be hasty in their conclusions. As Dinesh D'Souza reminds us in his apologetic work *What's So Great About Christianity* (2007), there is also an "atheism of the gaps" – which holds that "even where there is no explanation, we should be confident that a natural explanation is forthcoming."



Book Review

Reviewed by W.L. Bredenhof

***Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Foundations and Principles of Evangelical Biblical Interpretation*, Graeme Goldsworthy (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006).**

Additional Information: Hardcover, 341 pages, \$20.15.

There is nothing more important than rightly understanding the Bible. In its essence, we believe that the Bible is a clear revelation from God. Yet because of the fall, what should be clear is many times clouded by human sin and weakness. For this reason, when there are difficulties in understanding the Scriptures, it is the divine Scriptures themselves that must shed light and lead the way.

One man from our own tradition who understood this was Dr. Seakle Greijdanus (1871-1948). Greijdanus was a professor of New Testament in the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands. In 1946 he published his most important work, *Scripture Principles for Scripture*

Interpretation. In this book (a summary of which can be found at my website, www.bredenhof.ca), Greijdanus drew out in detail what it means to believe that "Scripture interprets Scripture." We call this a presuppositional approach to hermeneutics; this approach to the science of Scripture interpretation says that we have to begin with the presupposition that the Bible is the authoritative Word of God that also speaks to this science.

In *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, Graeme Goldsworthy (a retired lecturer from Moore Theological College in Sydney, Australia) follows the same presuppositional method of Greijdanus, develops it further, and applies it to our contemporary situation. In the first four chapters, Goldsworthy lays out the presuppositions for a biblical way of interpreting the Bible. While not mentioning Greijdanus, he does give credit to another Reformed theologian from our tradition who promoted presuppositional methodology, Cornelius VanTil. In the following section, the author goes through the history of hermeneutics and illustrates the various ways in

which the gospel has been eclipsed through different theological and philosophical developments. In the final section, using what he developed in the first section and taking the cautions of history to heart, Goldsworthy proposes a reconstruction of "evangelical hermeneutics" along biblical, gospel-centred lines. He concludes with a helpful section on "hands-on hermeneutics," a "proposed list of some important ingredients in understanding the Bible."

This is an important book for our age, an age (not unlike others) in which proper understanding of the Scriptures is under attack. While it is a technical book that would serve well as a text for college and seminary students, informed "laypeople" would also benefit from Goldsworthy's gold. This is the third Goldsworthy book that I've read in the last year (*According to Plan* and *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* being the others) and, while the other two are also worth recommending, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics* is the best.



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How Could I Be Happy In Heaven With A Loved One In Hell?

As pastor I know from church members who have relatives who are non-Christians or uncommitted Christians that the matter of the eternal future of those relatives can be a very real source of struggle and sadness. There are so many questions and prominent among them is the question of how one could be perfectly happy in heaven while knowing that someone you loved so much in this life is enduring eternal torment in hell? Randall Rauser, associate professor of historical theology at Taylor Seminary in Edmonton, addressed this matter in the January/February 2008 issue of *Faith Today* magazine of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. His article carried the title above and dealt with that question in quite a biblical way.

This question, which is surely one of the most wrenching that a Christian faces, arises from two New Testament teachings: some people will face eternal punishment in hell (Matthew 25:46, 2 Peter 1:17) and the saved will one day enter a state where sorrow and tears will cease (Revelation 7:17, 21:4). But how can our tears be transformed into joy while countless others,

including perhaps many of our own loved ones, face the excruciating horror of eternal damnation?

One possibility, suggested by theologian Millard Erickson and philosopher William Lane Craig, is that God may protect the inhabitants of heaven from knowledge of the fate of the damned. For instance, God may erase memories of a wayward son from the mind of his mother so that she may enjoy the full bliss of heaven unaware that she even had the son who is now damned. To say the least, this scenario fits poorly with Paul's promise that in eternity "we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known" (1 Corinthians 13:12). And what about a man who was saved while all his friends and family rejected Christ? Will God wipe virtually his whole memory clear? A further difficulty with this proposal is that passages such as Isaiah 66:24 ("they will... look on the dead bodies of

those who rebelled against me") appear to assume that the redeemed will indeed be aware of the lost.

I can't help but agree with professor Rauser's biblical evidence against the idea that in heaven our memory of experiences with loved ones in hell will be erased. In the Belgic Confession, Article 37 we confess concerning the righteous in the last judgment: "Their innocence will be known to all and they will see the terrible vengeance that God will bring upon the wicked who persecuted, oppressed, and tormented them in this world." Our confession agrees with the biblical evidence presented above, even citing as proof texts passages such as Revelation 15:4 and 18:20. But how then can the dilemma mentioned in the title be resolved? Rauser mentions another solution that has been proposed.

A second possibility boldly suggests that this awareness

Church News

will be a cause for joy rather than pain. Shocking though it may sound, this position has been defended by many theologians including Thomas Aquinas, Jonathan Edwards and, more recently, J.I. Packer. As Edwards puts it, the redeemed "will not be sorry for the damned; it will cause no uneasiness or dissatisfaction to them; but on the contrary, when they have this sight, it will excite them with joyful praises." Grisly though this may sound, it has some impressive scriptural support. The imprecatory psalms (such as Psalm 139:21-22) seem to anticipate with great relish the demise of the wicked. And one might reasonably infer that the saints who plead for their blood to be avenged (Revelation 6:10) will extract satisfaction once this judgment "on the inhabitants of the earth" is underway. Finally, in Romans 9:23 Paul seems to suggest that God might use the lost as object lessons for the saved to illustrate both his justice (to the lost) and mercy (to the saved).



Such tentative biblical precedents do little to soften the image of the redeemed host delighting in the agony of the lost. How could a mother possibly delight in the damnation of her child? How could Paul, who expressed his willingness to be damned so that the Jews might be saved (Romans 9:3), derive satisfaction some day from their damnation? Such a picture seems both counterintuitive and deeply distasteful.

Proponents of this second view might argue that our perspective in the future will be radically transformed, leaving us so wholly focused on God's holiness that we will leave behind finite relationships (as suggested by Jesus' teaching in Matthew 22:29-30 that there will be no marriage in heaven). After such a radical transformation, could something that now seems abhorrent (deriving joy from the suffering of the lost) become delightful? Perhaps.

In his article professor Rauser wisely leaves the matter open-ended, but suggests the only other possibilities would involve denying the reality of eternal punishment. He obviously believes, though, that the second possibility has biblical support. He concludes, however, that ultimately we need to trust God in this matter of our joy and the eternal condemnation of those we loved in this life who did not embrace Christ: "It seems likely that the final resolution of this problem, like so many others in Christian theology, will remain frustratingly beyond our understanding. But that admission can also turn the question back to us: Do we trust God?"

Declined the call to Elora, Ontario:

Rev. J.E. Ludwig
of Grand Rapids, MI, U.S.A.

Examined by Classis Northern Ontario on April 4th, 2008, and received consent to speak an edifying word in the churches (C.O.Art. 21) upon successful completion of the current academic year (May 25th):

Student Ken Bergsma
and
Student Ryan deJonge

Declined the call to the Free Reformed Church of Australia at West Albany, WA:

Rev. S. 't Hart
working in Papua New Guinea as missionary for the church of Toronto, Ontario.

Accepted the call to the Free Reformed Church of Australia at Baldvis, WA:

Rev. S. 't Hart
working in Papua New Guinea as missionary for the church of Toronto, Ontario.

Accepted the call to the church at Ottawa, Ontario:

Rev. G.Ph. van Popta
of Ancaster, Ontario.

Wisely said! I lean towards the second solution to the dilemma. But ultimately I agree that we shouldn't let our worries and reasonings get in the way of simply leaving things we can't understand in God's just and merciful hands. He will work out everything to the everlasting joy of his elect!

roadside assistance

the magazine for Reformed young people

How can a young man keep his way pure?
By living according to your word. Ps 119:9

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Still-Fire

Ashley Rypstra

A girl is trying to start a campfire on a trip out with friends. Now, she doesn't really want to start this fire for her best friend, who is shivering and shaking like a leaf, but because the boy she has had a crush on for a while is there watching. And what's more impressive to a guy than a girl who can make a fire? She frantically grabs some kindling and dumps it in the fire-pit on top of some crumpled balls of newspaper. She strikes a match, her hands shaking, and lights a corner of one of the balls. The flame flickers a little, and catches onto one of the strips of kindling. Excited at this grand development, she blows on it, because, like, hello?, that's what they do on T.V. But she blows so hard she snuffs out the flame. So, out comes another match and she tries again. Blow, blow, blow, snuff, snuff, snuff. She wasn't taking the time to think about what she was doing, or why she was doing it. Now she is left with a guy who's tearing up, not only from the smoke, but from silent laughter at how silly she was being. And her best friend isn't all that happy; seeing as how best friends have telepathic abilities, she knew exactly the motives behind this new and sudden interest in fire-building

at her expense. She's also cold. . . and, let's face it, girls can't stand being cold.

Would this girl have rushed through this fire building procedure if her real motive was to warm everyone around her? I don't think so. . . but because her crush was watching she felt the need to rush everything and try to be impressive with a "look at me" attitude.

Now, while the above example is a bit far-fetched (at least, I hope it is), it does hold parallels to the Christian life. The girl represents us, as youth, as humans, just trying to get through life. We are urged to make our fires as hot and bright as we can, so we may give off light and warmth to the world around us. We have been urged to be hot Christians all of our lives. Each of us should be a person who does all that he or she can do to live for Christ, being constantly active for the Lord. Not just acting, but living in a way that will show the rest of the world that you have a purpose in your life; and that purpose is to glorify God. The lifestyle which accompanies this mindset is, at first glance, a busy lifestyle. We have our everyday lives: homework, normal work, college, music

practice, sports practice, drama practice, catechism class, aerobics class, party time, down time, family time, quiet time, relationships, and – gasp for air – our friends (the God-given gifts who are meant to help us get through all of this). Even our Sundays are busy with fellowship, Bible studies, and other congregational up-building events. The "on fire" Christian doesn't have the time or the need to rest, right?

Going through life with this value instilled in my mind, I was confused when I saw a seemingly small sentence in my Bible readings. "Be still, and know that I am God" (Ps 46:10a). Be still? I almost fell off my chair when I read that. Almost an oxymoron, how can you be "living" for God and yet stop yourself long enough to "be still"? And why?

As time has passed, the philosophies of the world and the pressures on the church have changed. Today's topic: how powerful am I? It's on the radio, in books, on television. "Unleash the power inside you." You, us, me, I. No mention of God anywhere. God has been pushed out of our lives, because we want to do it ourselves. While this is the way that the

outside world thinks, it doesn't mean that it isn't present inside our own circles. Honestly, how often on our good days do we stop and praise God for it? When things are going right, do we stop and thank God for this blessing? I know I don't as often as I should. We do not want to praise ourselves for things going right, but when we do not praise God for it, we really are saying that we do not know where these blessings are coming from. We are forgetting "from whom all blessings flow." We are building our fire not for God, or our best friend, but for the world, the world which we are feeling pressured to impress.

But what does it mean to be still? One important thing to realize is that this isn't just a one part command. God tells us to "be still and know that [He is] God." In the hustle and bustle of life it is wise to rest and rejuvenate ourselves, obviously. But this command is not just for the physical body, it speaks to our spiritual life. Those who do not live with God as their absolute priority lead empty lives. They can be busy, sure. They can do good things, yes. But when there is no purpose, no foundation, or patience behind their actions, nothing really matters; their life is a wandering cloud of black smoke. Before we delve into our kingdom work, we need to first stop and acknowledge that He is the basis for all this. Only in this way will our fire burn bright and anything we do be blessed.

This command is one that should be applied to any, every, and all situations that any Christian will face in this earthly life. When your mind is racing, frantic with worry, "be still and know" that the One who watches over you, the one and only God, will keep you and guide you through all your troubles. When standing at a major crossroads, or any crossroads for that matter, "be still" and know that your decision should be based upon



the Lord. When being pressured by peers "be still and know" that your God will accept you when the world doesn't. When you are depressed, "be still and know" that the Lord does everything in his own time and uses all events to make you a stronger person. When you are sitting on top of the world, enjoying the warmth of your fire, "be still and know" that these joyous feelings and the blessings that surround you are from the Lord alone.

I urge you to take time each and every day to literally "be still"

Brothers and sisters, I urge you to take time each and every day to literally "be still." Only in this way will you ever be able to really "know," and receive all the comforts and blessings that come with this knowledge. Your personal Bible study and prayer time are so important in your relationship with

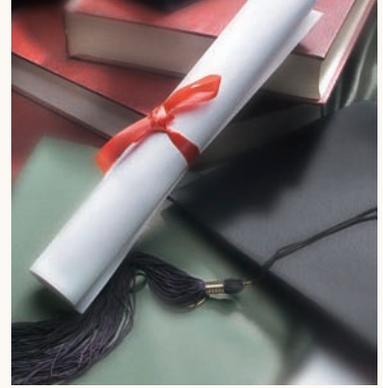
the Lord. Just as you cannot build a fire with a messy heap of kindling and newspaper, you can not have a growing relationship with Him without these moments. Anything, from quiet moments of meditation that occur throughout the day, to our Bible reading and devotional time, are what refresh us and help us to go on, fight through, and shine in this darkened world. "The Lord your God will fight for you, you need only to be still" (Exod 14:14).

One is never too busy to be still. In fact, you need to be still to be busy. In order for our fire to burn and give off any good warmth, it must be built with patience and on the right foundation. Before your fire can explode into a fury of lights, sounds, laughter, love, thankfulness, and joy, you must first remember who placed the still, small flicker of light into your soul in the first place. Pray to God to fuel the fire within your soul and be ready to feel the warmth in your heart. See the beautiful, intense flame in your life that God saw when He created you.



Derek Stoffels

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Contrast Community

It was reported in this column (Volume 56, Issue 10) that at the October 2006 CRTA-West conference the keynote speaker, Mike Goheen, said that as Christian parents/educators we ought to educate our children to form a “contrast community.” This was defined as “aim to instil a sense of hope over against despair and consumer satiation, a sense of justice over against economic and ecological injustice, awareness of truth over against pluralism and relativism, and of selfless giving over against a culture of selfishness.” As I read this I thought, “Yes, Mike Goheen is correct about the need to be a contrast community, but wrong to suggest we make that aim our goal.” Setting the contrast community as the goal or aim of education can, and I think will, lead to other than the intended results. As I thought more about this statement I recalled two other articles I read around the same time: one which was apparently from *GQ Magazine*, the other from the most recent *CCRTC Newsletter*. These three articles, along with a chapter from Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s book *The Cost of Discipleship*, all came together. Hopefully in what follows I show the intersection clearly.

Goal of school?

The question that started my musing was, “As parents, supporting members, and staff of Ebenezer Canadian Reformed School, do we seek to educate God’s covenant children so that they form a ‘contrast community’?”

What is the purpose of your school?

Obedient disciples or cultural transformers?

Are we aiming for a community that makes social justice, care for creation, and confronting the world with the truth its goal? Are we a community that stands out in contrast to the unbelieving world because of these goals? I absolutely agree that we must be a contrast community, that we must practice and demand social justice, encourage hope, care for creation, giving/serving, and the proclamation of the truth. I am convinced, however, that by making this our goal, we will fail to achieve it.

Instead, we are to set out or aim to educate covenant children to be obedient and faithful to God’s Word. As we do, we will, by no merit of our own, become a contrast

community. Rather than being driven by the world, we are to be driven by the Word, by obedience to Jesus Christ. Bonhoeffer says,

Of course [righteousness] has to be visible, but [Christians] must take care that it does not become visible simply for the sake of becoming visible. There are, of course, proper grounds for insisting on the visible nature of Christian discipleship, but the visibility is never an end in itself; and if it becomes so we have lost sight of our primary aim, which is to follow Jesus. And having once done that, we should never be able to carry on again where we had left off; we should have to begin all over again at the beginning. And that would bring it home to us that we were no true disciples. We are therefore confronted with a paradox. Our activity must be visible, but must never be done for the sake of making it visible (p 157). (Compare Matthew 5:16 and Matthew 6.)

We do not want to create an “ark” (the Christian world created and parallel to the unbelieving world) as author Walter Kirn apparently wrote in the September 2002 issue of *GQ Magazine*. He described the Ark as follows:

The old Ark, the biblical Ark, constructed to save the chosen

from the Great Flood, had two of every creature in existence. The new Ark, the cultural Ark, built to save the chosen from the Great Media Flood also has two of everything I'm learning. You say you're a Pearl Jam fan? Check out Third Day. They sound just like them – same soaring guttural vocals, same driven musicianship, same crappy clothes, just a slightly different message: Repent! You say you like Grisham and Clancy style potboilers! Grab a copy of Ted Dekker's Heaven's Wager – same stick-figure characterizations, same preschool prose, just a slightly different moral: Repent! Your kids enjoy Batman, you say? Try Bibleman. Same mask, same cape, just a slightly different...

That's the convincing logic of the Ark: If a person is going to waste his life cranking the stereo, clicking the remote, reading paperback pulp and chasing diet fads, he may as well save his soul while he's at it. Holy living no longer requires self-denial. On the Ark, every mass diversion has been cloned, from Internet news sites to MTV to action movies, and it's possible to live inside the spirit, without unplugging oneself from modern life, twenty-four hours a day.

Kirn sees the creation of the new Ark as a result of a lack of faith. He writes, "The problem is a lack of faith. Ark culture is a bad Xerox of the mainstream, not a truly distinctive or separate achievement. Without the courage to lead, it numbly follows, picking up the major media's scraps and gluing them back together with a cross on top." Right there he hits the crux of the matter, which is that Christianity cannot work as a reactive force:

Christianity must be proactive, it must courageously lead in this world. If we follow God by focusing on obedience to his Word we will end up leading in the world without even realizing we are leading!

Biblical imagery

Then we will be a "contrast community" in the sense so beautifully portrayed in Zechariah 8:23. "In those days, ten men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, 'Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.'" When we live lives of obedience people will see and hear about something wonderful and come because they want to learn more. I remember a sermon by Rev. Pot, I think, in which he asked, "When is the last time the town council came to your church to ask for advice on a matter?" This is a striking and surprising question that clearly points in the direction of Zechariah 8:23 and in the direction of being a contrast community. So yes, I fully agree that we are to be a contrast community, but I don't think we will get there if we make that our goal or target, because we would be allowing the world to become the motive force in our lives. We would, in essence, hand over control to the world rather than to God.

This is because when we think in terms of consciously developing a "contrast community" the focus shifts away from God or Christ as our centre, our all in all. We too easily end up trying to "transform the world" instead of ourselves. Or, in that strange and impossible phrase, we try to "redeem" aspects of the world. We respond to evil instead of leading unswervingly in truth. We become too easily focused on works and our efforts. The line between these two approaches is fine and not always

clear. The line is easy to cross and hard to return. It is better to focus on active obedience and leave the transformation and redemption with God where it belongs.

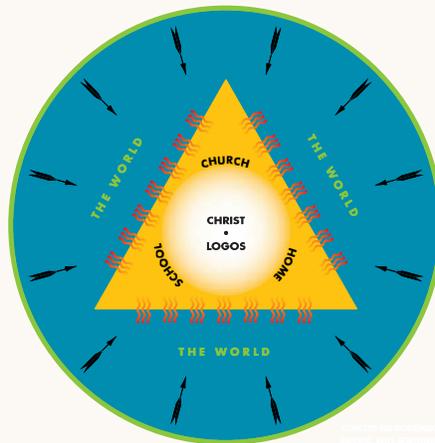
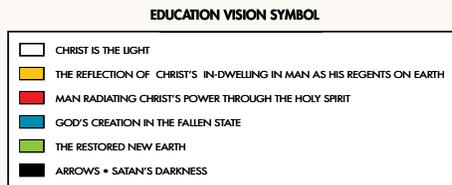
The Bible teaches us that to be a successful contrast community we need to "die to sin" so that we might have everlasting life. We need to submit so totally to God's Word that our entire life, thoughts, and conduct are saturated with obedience. Think of Abraham rising early in the morning to journey to Moriah to sacrifice Isaac. Think of the apostles hearing Jesus say, "Come, follow me" and actually doing that. The demand for that kind of faith saturated life is not something that has passed away. God demands it of us today! Our goal is to glorify God. To know what that means we have only to read passages like Micah 6:8, Psalm 24, Isaiah 58, and James 1. When we live the way that is described in those passages the world will take note of God's work. Our goal is not to see what the world is doing and then try and do it better or in a more Christian manner, as in "The Ark" as Kirn describes it. That would be starting at the wrong place.

Home, church, school

This is where the CCRTC article comes in. In this article Bill Gortemaker introduced a new graphic to represent the well-known church, home, school triangle. He highlights that our Lord Jesus Christ is the centre or unity of the triangle. What I think is especially good is how this graphic has pulsating arrows moving out from the triangle into the world. The light of Christ shining through the church, home, and school moves out into the world. This is the right order. In living in obedience we shine brightly into the dark world. We do

not react to the world but rather we shine brightly like lamps on a hilltop. We may be guilty of having viewed the triangle as a fortress that we should never move out of, sort of like an old style walled fort like Louisburg or old Quebec City.

So in conclusion, yes, Christians have to speak up in their communities and not leave it to secularly based organizations to promote economic justice and stewardship of creation. Without the Word to guide them, these organizations go astray and distort God's intentions. If we as Christians are living as we should, then we would have been there before Amnesty International, The World Bank, Grameen Bank,



Greenpeace, or locally, One Sky. We as true disciples should have been so blessed by God, that people should have been coming and grabbing the hem of our robes and asking us about God as described in Zechariah 8:23. The goal of education must be obedience, not contrast. By being obedient, contrast will follow because God is in control.

The Education Matters column is sponsored by the Canadian Reformed Teachers' Association East. Anyone wishing to respond to an article written or willing to write an article is kindly asked to send materials to Clarion or to Otto Bouwman obouwman@cornerstoneschool.us



Book Review

Reviewed by W.L. Bredenhof

God With Us: Knowing the Mystery of Who Jesus Is, Daniel R. Hyde (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2007).

Additional Information: Paperback, 157 pages, \$10.00.

In Philippians 3:10, the Apostle Paul says, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death. . . ." "I want to know Christ" – that should be the cry of every Christian's heart. To that end, books like this one are very valuable. We need books which lay out the Bible's teaching about who Christ is so that we may rightly know Him.

Daniel Hyde (pastor of the United Reformed Church in Oceanside, CA) doesn't buy the

adage that "doctrine divides, love for the Lord unites." Rather, "doctrine. . . is simply biblical teaching that is good for the soul" (p 3). An essential part of that biblical teaching is the doctrine of Christ – who He is (his person) and what He does (his work). In this book, Hyde focuses on Christ's person. He does that on the premise that unless we understand who He is, we will be left confused about what He does.

This book is an excellent primer on the person of Christ, particularly dealing with his two natures. Hyde points out and explains the biblical evidence for the humanity and divinity of Christ. He works out how the two are related to one another. He rightly insists that knowing the doctrine of Christ is not simply an interesting intellectual exercise: "We must not be involved with

Christ as mere spectators or abstract questioners, but must personally be involved in studying who He is and what He did because He is the One who will affect our lives for eternity as our Saviour" (p 96). Finally, as in all his books, Hyde has an eye for history, bringing in the witness of the church through the ages.

A couple of appealing features of this book: a chapter dealing with the differences between the Islamic view of Jesus and the Christian view; and four appendices which lay out the historical witness to the doctrine of Christ. The book includes a Scripture text index, but would also benefit from having a subject index. Some readers may find *God With Us* a challenging read, but all who read it eagerly seeking to know Christ better will not come away disappointed.



**Press Release for Classis ON
West held in London, Ontario
on March 26, 2008**

On behalf of the convening church of London, the Reverend R.E. Pot opened the meeting by welcoming the delegates and those in attendance as visitors. He gave a special welcome to Rev. A.W. DeJong, who was present for a colloquium according to Article 5 C.O. for the approbation of the call from the church at Hamilton-Cornerstone. Rev. Pot requested the assembly to sing Hymn 32:1 and then read from Ephesians 1:15-23. Following some appropriate words in relation to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, he led the assembly in prayer.

The church at London, having examined the credentials, declared that all the churches were lawfully represented and instructions were taken note of. The following officers were appointed: As chairman, Rev. G. Ph. van Popta; as clerk, Rev. D. Vandeburgt; as vice-chairman, Rev. J. Slaa.

When the executive took their places, Rev. van Popta made the following remarks in matters of memorabilia. The church of Hamilton-Cornerstone was remembered in thankfulness to the Lord with the filling of their vacancy. The church of Hamilton-Providence was wished God's blessings in their time of vacancy. Rev. Slaa has accepted a call to the church at Smithers, BC. He and the church at Kerwood were wished the Lord's blessings with the pending move and time of vacancy. The following ministers have received calls and were remembered: Rev. Pot received a call to the church of Lincoln, which he declined. Rev. J. Ludwig is giving consideration to a call he has received from the Elora

church. Rev. van Popta has recently received a call from the church at Ottawa. It was noted with thankfulness to the Lord that Dr. N.H. Gootjes has received positive news concerning his health. Rev. van Popta then welcomed the fraternal delegates who were present: Rev. J. Ferguson of the Presbytery of Michigan-Ontario of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and Rev. H. Zekveld of the Classis Southern Ontario of the United Reformed Churches of North America. The agenda was adopted.

Rev. DeJong, who has served as pastor of the Covenant Reformed Church of Kansas City, Missouri (URCNA), then presented himself for a colloquium according to Article 5 C.O. After it was determined that all the necessary documents were presented and in order, Classis proceeded with the colloquium. Rev. Pot led in a discussion with Rev. DeJong on matters of doctrine. Some of the topics the brothers covered were the importance of doctrine, sanctification, election, assurance, justification, the connection between justification and works, and paedocommunion. Following that, Rev. D. Vandeburgt conversed with Rev. DeJong on matters of Church Polity. They covered topics including the biblical principles for a Church Order and perceived or real differences in the Church Orders of the CanRC and the URCNA. In closed session Classis decided to sustain the colloquium. In open session Classis informed Rev. DeJong of this and approbated the call of Hamilton-Cornerstone. The chairman read the Subscription Form, which Rev. DeJong signed. The church at Ancaster was appointed to send a delegate on behalf of Classis to the installation

of Rev. DeJong (March 30, 2008). Psalm 119:17 was sung and Rev. van Popta led the assembly in thanksgiving prayer. Opportunity was given for the delegates of Classis and the visitors to congratulate Rev. and Mrs. DeJong.

Br. Rodney Vermeulen of the church of Hamilton-Providence presented himself to Classis to be examined with a view to speaking an edifying word in the churches. After it was determined that the necessary documents were in order, Classis proceeded to examine Br. Vermeulen. He first delivered a sermon proposal on Luke 5:12-14. After discussion in closed session, Classis deemed the sermon proposal sufficient. Next, on behalf of Classis, Rev. H. Versteeg examined Br. Vermeulen in Doctrine and Creeds, particularly in "the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ as confessed in the Reformed Creeds and Confessions." Once more, Classis deliberated in closed session and determined that the examination was sufficient. In open session, the chairman, with appropriate remarks, informed Br. Vermeulen of the joyful news. When Br. Vermeulen promised to speak an edifying word only in accordance with the doctrine of the Word of God, as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity, Classis permitted Br. Vermeulen to speak an edifying word in the churches, for the period of one year, effective from May 25, 2008, conditional upon the completion of his third year of study at the Theological College. After Classis sang Psalm 119:37, Rev. van Popta led the assembly in prayer, after which opportunity was given to congratulate Br. and Sr. Vermeulen.

After the members of Classis enjoyed a hearty lunch, Classis resumed and invited Rev. Ferguson, of the Presbytery of Michigan-Ontario of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, to address Classis. He brought greetings and spoke of his gratitude for the ecumenical relations that exist between our churches and also expressed his thankfulness for what he had thus far observed during this day. Rev. Ludwig responded with well chosen words, wishing him personally and the OPC the blessings of the Lord.

Rev. Zekveld, of Classis Southern Ontario of the United Reformed Churches in North America, was invited to address Classis. He was grateful for the opportunity and expressed his wish for the Lord's blessings on our churches and on our ecumenical relations. Rev. Slaa spoke words of thankfulness in response.

Question Period according to Article 44 of the Church Order was held. All the churches answered positively to the first two questions asked. Also there were no matters that the churches needed the help of Classis for the proper government of the church. The chairman expresses thankfulness for the answers given.

The church of London proposed two changes to the classical regulations. As proposed by London, Classis decided first to include the church of Hamilton-Providence in article 1 (Region), reflecting the fact that this new church was instituted in our classical region and is part of Classis Ontario-West. Classis also decided, in connection with Article 8.6 (Ecclesiastical Examinations), Appendix 2, footnote 3, to make more clear what the required course of study is for students who present themselves to a classis for examination. Classis made this clearer by including the wording of

a reference to Synod Orangeville 1968, Article 171, as well as adding the wording of Synod Smithers 2007, Article 78 regarding the Pastoral Proficiency Program. Article 171, Orangeville, 1968 reads,

To be admitted to the ecclesiastical examinations, candidates shall submit proof that they have completed their studies at our own Theological College. Candidates who took their theological training at other institutions shall present a Certificate issued by the Staff of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches stating that they have followed and/or completed a course of studies conforming with the training provided by the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Article 78, Smithers, 2007 reads,

That the Pastoral Training Program become mandatory for all students aspiring to the ministry of the Word among the Canadian Reformed Churches in accordance with the document entitled "Guidelines for the Pastoral Proficiency Program."

Grounds: For these guidelines to be most useful, it would be helpful to make the decision of Synod Orangeville 1968 more explicit and also to make explicit reference to the recent decision of Synod Smithers 2007 to make the pastoral proficiency program mandatory. It must be clear to the churches and to students requesting to be examined exactly what the required course of study is.

Br. Cornelis Kleyn, who is currently completing his fourth and final year of training at the Theological College, corresponded with Classis. He requested that Classis extend the time period in which he has permission to speak an edifying word, for a few months. Granted.

The church of Kerwood requested Classis to grant Rev. Slaa a classical release as per Article 5 and 9 of the Church Order, since he has accepted a call to the church of Smithers, BC. When it was determined that the proper documents were in order, this request was granted. The church of Kerwood also requested Classis to appoint a counsellor for the Church of Kerwood as per Article 45 C.O. Classis appointed Rev. Pot as requested by Kerwood.

The church of Kerwood requested Classis to grant pulpit supply once per month. Granted. The church of Hamilton-Providence requested Classis to grant pulpit supply once per month beginning in the month of July, 2008. Granted. The clerk was instructed to be in contact with these churches to facilitate the pulpit supply.

The church of Ancaster presented an auditor's report for the Fund for Needy Churches. The audit covers the period from January 1, 2007 to December 31, 2007. Classis received the report with thankfulness.

A church visitation report to the church of Kerwood on March 17, 2008 was read in closed session and received with thankfulness.

Appointments for next Classis were made. The convening church will be the church of Ancaster. Classis suggested officers: Chairman: Rev. H. Versteeg; Clerk: Rev. van Popta; and Vice-chairman: Rev. Vandeburgt. Date of Classis: June 18, 2008 in Ancaster, at 9:00 a.m.

Question Period was held. With thankfulness, censure according to Article 34, C.O. was deemed unnecessary by the chairman. Rev. van Popta led the closing devotions, which included the singing of Psalm 133:1, 2 and prayer.

*For Classis ON West,
March 26, 2008*

*Rev. James Slaa
Vice-chairman at that time*

Press Release of Classis Pacific West, April 1, 2008

1. **Opening** On behalf of the convening church at Smithers, Br. H. Penninga opens by reading Ephesians 3:14-21 and asking everyone to sing Psalm 138:1, 2. He then leads in prayer. All the delegates are welcomed and a special welcome is extended to Rev. J. Van Spronsen who is able to attend yet before departing to Brazil.
2. **Constitution of Classis** The delegates from Langley examine the credentials. Everything is in order and all the primi delegates are present. Classis is declared constituted. The executive is as follows: chairman – Rev. H. Alkema, clerk – Rev. W. Bredenhof, vice-chairman – Rev. J. Van Vliet. The agenda is adopted after a few alterations.
3. **Memorabilia** The chairman takes note of the following: Rev. J. Witteveen was ordained on December 16, 2007; Rev. J. Slaa accepted the call extended to him by the church of Smithers; Rev. A. Souman accepted the second call extended to him from the church at Willoughby-Heights; Rev. Van Spronsen and his family have completed the pre-field training and plan to depart on April 8, DV; Rev. Th. Lodder, who has not been able to fulfill his pastoral duties for some months due to health, is beginning to feel better again; Dr. N.H. Gootjes' health concerns and the Theological College.
4. **Approbation of the call from the church at Smithers to Rev. Slaa** The necessary documents are perused and all is in order. Therefore, Classis decides to

approve the call. Rev. Alkema is delegated to represent Classis Pacific West at the installation of Rev. Slaa, which is scheduled for April 27, 2008.

5. Reports

- a. *Classical Treasurer* – The treasurer, Br. K. Bulthuis, reports that sufficient funds were received for all the necessary expenses. The treasurer is discharged from his responsibilities for the year ending December 31, 2007. An audit of the books is also received from the church at Cloverdale.
- b. *Report of Church for Inspection of Classical Archives* – The church at Houston reports that the classical archives, kept by the church at Smithers, are in order.
- c. *Church Visitation Reports* – Visits to the church at Cloverdale and Willoughby-Heights are reported on by the church visitors, Rev. J. Visscher and Rev. Van Vliet. These reports are received with thankfulness for the Lord's care over his congregations in those places.

6. Question Period ad Art. 44 CO

The chairman asks the delegates the questions from Art. 44 and the delegates answer in turn. Advice concerning two situations of church discipline is given to one church. After each discussion, prayer is offered for those involved.

7. Appointments

- a. *Next classis* – Convening church: Surrey Maranatha; place: Surrey; date: June 10/08 (or October 7/08).

Suggested officers: Rev. Van Vliet – chairman, Rev. Visscher – vice-chairman, Rev. Alkema – clerk.

- b. *Examinations* – Organizing deputies: Revs. Van Vliet and Visscher; OT – Rev. Slaa; NT – Rev. Lodder; Doctrine & Creeds – Rev. Van Vliet; Knowledge of Scripture – Rev. Alkema; Church History – Rev. Visscher; Church Polity – Rev. Bredenhof; Ethics – Rev. Bredenhof; Diaconiology – Rev. Lodder.
- c. *Church Visitors* – Revs. Visscher (convener), Van Vliet, Lodder (alternate).
- d. *Church for taking care of the archives* – Smithers.
- e. *Church to inspect the archives* – Houston.
- f. *Treasurer* – Br. K. Bulthuis, 17383 60A Ave, Surrey, BC V3S 6X9.
- g. *Church to audit the books of the treasurer* – Cloverdale.
- h. *Committee for Financial Aid to Needy Churches* – Brs. H. Leyenhorst, P. Vandergugten (convener), R. Van Oene
- i. *Deputy for preaching arrangements in vacant churches* – Rev. Lodder.
- j. *Deputy for coordinating ecclesiastical contacts* – Rev. Visscher.

8. **Adjournment** Personal question period is used by a few brothers. The chairman judges that censure ad Art. 34 is not needed. The acts of Classis are read and adopted. The press release is approved. We sing Hymn 64:1, 2. The chairman leads in prayer. Classis is closed.

J. Van Vliet
(vice-chairman at that time)

