

PERSPECTIVE

INSTITUTE FOR CHRISTIAN STUDIES

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HARRY FERNHOUT
DEPARTS ICS

ICS President Chosen To Lead Christian College

Fifteen years is a long time in the life of an institution. As President, Harry Fernhout has been with ICS through change, expansion, renewal, visioning, re-visioning and even renovations.

And now it's Harry's time for change. After 15 years as President of ICS, Harry will be stepping down from his position at ICS to become President of The King's University College in Edmonton, Alberta in July, 2005.

"The position at The King's represents an important new challenge and opportunity at this point in my life and career," said Fernhout in an e-mail to staff and faculty when the announcement was made in August. "My wife Hilda and I believe that this is where God is leading us in terms of my calling in Christian higher education."

The news was greeted with a mixture of sadness and excitement. "Obviously a moment like this is greeted with mixed emotions," said ICS Vice-President of Advancement John Meiboom. "We're excited for Harry that he is going into a new position, with new challenges, well suited to

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STUDENT PROFILE: DANIEL ODURO SEM

Interpreting Freedom

By **Tanya Weber**
ICS MPhilF Student

ICS attracts students from all over the world, and this year, Daniel Oduro Sem has come from the Ashanti region of Ghana, Africa, to pursue a PhD in political theory. Daniel brings both experience and international perspective to his studies. He completed his BA at the University of Ghana in 1999 before fulfilling his national service with the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice. This work involved mediation, investigations, dispute resolution and the defence of human rights, all of which foreshadowed Daniel's move to the University of Saskatchewan in 2002 to pursue an MA in social and political philosophy.

Now at ICS, Daniel plans to examine how Christian political views can respond to contemporary demands. In his words, "At ICS, I am likely to be an interdisciplinary scholar who will be exploring secular social and political theories for the fulfillment of the mission of Christ's church on earth." While here, Daniel aims "to help promote the tenets of ICS" and to "bring the African perspective" to intellectual, political and religious issues.

"'African perspective' is a very broad term, perhaps ambiguous," Daniel admits. "For instance, when we talk about the role of religion in human life or the connection between life and society, the response from the West may be slightly different from the

African context. To the 'traditional' African, religion plays a remarkable role in everyday life. So, how a North American Christian will interpret 'freedom' in liberal democratic society will be quite different from the traditional African perspective."

Daniel notes that this view spills into other paradigms within the church. "What constitutes 'holiness' from the African perspective encompasses a wide range of aspects of human life than what one may think of in America or in the West." It's the unravelling of part of these social and religious worldviews in class that Daniel feels will bring some important variety to discussions.

Daniel's hope, as a Christian scholar, is to contribute to the ongoing theological and intellectual debate while

in Canada and then to return to Ghana and apply the ideas he has developed here. While not sure exactly what he will be doing when he returns home, he sees his vocation including some type of service in the church: "It is a must, for 'necessity is laid upon me if I preach not the gospel,'" he says. "I am not sure if it will serve as an economic venture—a source of my daily bread. In other words, other things equal, I would like to do that as non-economic venture and make teaching and research my profession."

Daniel has brought his wife Grace Danful, with him to Toronto. They have found the transition a relatively easy one, as

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INSTITUTE FOR CHRISTIAN STUDIES
Christian Graduate Education since 1967

Unfinished Business

As I write this column, most supporters and friends of the Institute for Christian Studies have already heard the announcement that I will be leaving ICS next June to take up an appointment as the president of The King's University College in Edmonton, Alberta. Since this column provides my first opportunity to communicate directly about this with the ICS 'family,' I want to share a few thoughts about my decision and the 'unfinished business' I will be focusing on in the remaining year.

First, let me share some lines from the letter I wrote to ICS Board of Trustees Chair, Rev Mark Davies, in August:

Dear Mark,

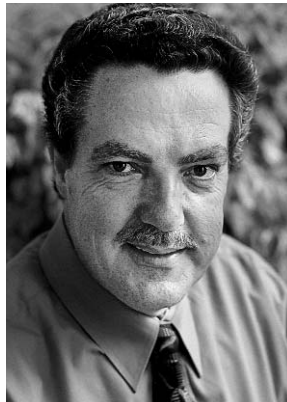
It is with very mixed emotions that I wish to announce my resignation from the position as President of the Institute for Christian Studies, effective June 30, 2005...

My mixed emotions arise from my ongoing commitment to the Institute's mission in Christian higher education, and my respect and appreciation for ICS's faculty, staff, students and supporters. My decision to leave ICS does not arise from unhappiness with my work at ICS, and is not a reflection of my assessment of the importance of Christian higher education at the graduate level. In fact, my commitment to this mission and concern for the ongoing development of ICS were weighty considerations in my decision-making process.

I went on to say that this decision was easily the most difficult one my wife Hilda and I have ever made together, but that after 15 years in the ICS presidency I felt that the compelling challenge and opportunity presented by The King's was one I needed to take seriously, under God's leading.

I also assured the Board that I will "continue to do everything I can to enable ICS to flourish during the remainder of my tenure." And that brings me to the 'unfinished business.'

Near the very top of my agenda this year will be an effort to secure a favourable resolution of the Institute's quest for amended and expanded degree-granting authority. Last year we invested immense amounts of time, energy and money in this quest. The result was an overwhelmingly positive external assessment of the academic quality of



Harry Fernhout
PRESIDENT

I will do whatever I can, this year and in the future, to ensure that graduate Christian education, particularly at ICS, continues to grow and flourish.

our programs, and strong support from the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board for our degree-granting application. This summer the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities signaled her intention to consent to our application, provided ICS meets certain Ministry regulations and provides guarantees concerning tuition refunds (should they ever be required) and long-term student access to academic records. Within the next month we plan to satisfy the Minister's requirements, so that she can issue her consent. Then will come the process of amending the *ICS Act*, hopefully in the fall session of the Ontario Legislature, to include authority to grant Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy degrees.

A few years ago, when I first raised the possibility of securing the right to grant the PhD, a long-time friend of ICS said to me, "That will be your retirement legacy at ICS!" Well, I'm not exactly ready to retire, but the

successful completion of our degree-granting quest will a great moment for ICS, and one for which I will be deeply grateful.

My other major piece to unfinished business is (surprise!) ensuring that ICS meets its financial goals for 2004-05. Last spring we celebrated the success of the *reGeneration!* campaign, and with good reason. But much of the *reGeneration!* funding will come to ICS in the long-term (through bequests and other pledges), and the need for short-term stability is crucial. I'm determined to leave ICS in good financial shape for my successor, and I trust that, with God's blessing, ICS supporters will join me in that quest.

Frankly, I now have an added vested interest in the successful resolution of these items of unfinished business. Next year, in my new job, the most critical challenge will be faculty development: finding professors who are capable scholars and who understand, in their bones, the mission of Christian higher education. From my new perch, I'd like to be able to look to ICS for prospective faculty members, because I know the spirit and mettle of these people first hand. That's why I will do whatever I can, this year and in the future, to ensure that graduate Christian education, particularly at ICS, continues to grow and flourish. That's the 'unfinished business' we all share. 🙌

DANIEL ODURO SEM *Continued from Page 1*

they have lived in and experienced foreign cultures before. When questioned why he picked Canada for graduate studies, Daniel explained, "When I was at college the common maxim among the youth was that 'There are three countries in the world - Britain, North America and Other countries' (of which Ghana was one). This is funny but it continues to echo in one's thoughts even when one is mature. The overwhelming rate of students acquiring degrees from outside my country and the positions some of them hold in the economy (perhaps due to the quality of

their degrees) coupled with the above maxim explain why I am fascinated about degrees from abroad. That does not answer 'why Canada?' I am comfortable in studying in Canada because of its reception to multiculturalism. Above all, Canada is neat and peaceful."

Daniel and Grace have already enriched the ICS community with their warmth and humour. Daniel does admit there are some things to which it is hard to adjust. He finds the informal atmosphere between junior and senior members at the ICS different and struggles to call his professors by their first names. Conversely, he also has also learned the

hard way that public displays of male affection often mean something quite different in Canada than they do in Ghana!

While it is unlikely Daniel will use the adjectives "neat" or "peaceful" to describe what happens within the ICS's classroom walls, he will undoubtedly find a safe and challenging place to do his scholarship and his unique perspective will certainly make a significant contribution to the ICS. Daniel admits it is difficult to be so far away from his home country for so long, but says ruefully, "We can endure." 🙌


him. However, we're sad to see him leave ICS."

Faculty, students and staff extolled Harry's unique qualities, even if tinged with sadness at his coming departure. "Harry is a person of utmost integrity," said Senior Member Lambert Zuidervaart, who has known Harry since they were undergrads at Dordt College. "He has a very deep sense of personal responsibility for an institution's welfare. At the same time, he has never let go of the vision of Christian higher education as a mission to help transform contemporary culture and education in a redemptive direction."

"There's not a lot of people in the world like Harry," commented PhD student Michael Nyhof-DeMoor. "He's not only a good administrator, he's a good fundraiser and he's got academic vision as well. It's our loss and The King's gain."

ICS Board of Trustees Chair Mark Davies listed some of the accomplishments made by Harry since becoming ICS President in 1989. "Over 15 years, Harry has accomplished some tremendous things as President of ICS—increased financial stability, transition to a new generation of faculty, an excellent relationship with the Toronto School of Theology, a successful capital campaign, and, most recently, substantial inroads toward increased degree-granting capabilities which will come to fruition later this year."

Nonetheless, Davies is quick to point out that in the midst of change there are excellent opportunities for ICS. "As Harry greets new challenges, so does ICS. ICS is about to enter an exciting new world of opportunity that was given birth during Harry's tenure," said Davies. "In the coming year, ICS will begin to develop its own PhD program and to refine some of its other programs, and will be furthering its work in distance education and in developing a significant voice in the university. As a graduate school, there has never been a better time for ICS than the next few years."

Harry's term as ICS President ends in June, 2005. The Institute's Board of Trustees has begun a process for selecting a new President for ICS. 



Harry Fernhout

Community and Change

By Jenny Krabbe

ICS Western Canada Advancement Officer

Crossing thresholds and blurring boundaries are part and parcel of our life experience. The ICS Worldview Conference in Surrey, BC, in mid-September considered the meaning of this change for our lives.


Keynote speaker George Vandervelde explored change in both the Christian's and the culture's experience of community, demonstrating through word, image and music how community is thinning and fragmenting. The spiritually attuned are not alone in recognizing our need for belonging, he explained. Marketers are selling us a kind of imitation community, in the form of Gap clothes that promise unique identities in the security of shared clothing styles, while gated communities give us physical security in artificially constructed neighbourhoods.



While acknowledging some negative results of loss of community, such as anonymity, loneliness, meaninglessness and restlessness, Vandervelde highlighted the enormous opportunity for recovery of community. "There is a hunger for community, spirituality and transcendence to which the Christian community can respond," he said Outreach must be the vital heart of the church. In fact, as Vandervelde points out, "If outreach is merely a hobby on the side, then the church dies."

Change in the nature of the communities to which we belong may also bring positive possibilities along with negative challenges. Thinning boundaries enable experiences of various Christian traditions, whether they are the practices of third-century Christians, the use of icons, or communities such as Iona. Conference workshops explored the contributions of each of these traditions.

So are falling boundaries in our culture something to be lamented? Perhaps not. Our postmodern context and its openness to many paths does enable the Christian to find common ground, common grace we share with others. Workshop presenter John Van Sloten, pastor of New Hope Community Church in Calgary, shared about his church plant's connection with the heavy metal band Metallica. He later noted: "It's funny, but I don't know of a place where my talk has been as warmly and excitedly received. I was not expecting this. Odd that a talk about Metallica can unite a different kind of church plant's communication strategy with a deep thinking group of academically minded folk. Our efforts to preach from a distinctively Reformed doctrinal base, especially as it is espoused in teachings on general revelation, the doctrine of common grace, and the *Imago Deo*, seemed to really resonate with the audience that day. Very cool!"

God is nudging us all along, in our being, reflecting, thinking and doing. This world is God's project, and there are plenty of pieces in the puzzle of creation and redemption. Let's get strength from God's gifts to the ancients, the moderns and the postmoderns. Let's know him among the Orthodox, the Roman Catholic, the evangelical and the reformational. Let's care for those weighed down by responsibility, those caught in a technological whirl, those who suffer injustice, those unheard, those who are lonely. Let's be a community to our neighbour: the one who makes your walls shake with deep rhythms, as well as the one looking for the reflective way. 

Upcoming Events

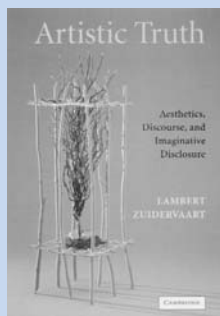
ICS Worldview Conference

Crossing Thresholds, Blurring Boundaries: What Next for Christian Community in the Emerging World?

Woodbridge, ON
October 30, 2004

Book Launch of *Artistic Truth: Aesthetics, Discourse and Imaginative Disclosure* by Lambert Zuidervaart

ICS, Toronto, ON
November 5, 2004



George Vandervelde Exaugural

Location TBA, Toronto, ON
November 19, 2004

www.icscanada.edu/events/

“Love is the Oxygen of the Universe”

By Natasja VanderBerg

ICS MPhilF Student

Jim Olthuis' exaugural celebrations on Friday, September 24 could be said to have been gift-giving event: from Jim to the ICS community and from the community to Jim, out of love. Through his exaugural speech, Jim gave the attendees a glimpse into his current thought and indicated paths of thoughts he hopes to pursue in the years to come. In celebrating with Jim, the community witnessed to Jim's many years of teaching and gifts.

More than 200 people gathered to celebrate Jim Olthuis' contributions during his 36-year tenure at ICS at an event that began with a convocation at Victoria University and concluded with a celebration dinner at St. Michael's College. In the company of his colleagues, his family and friends, Jim presented his Exaugural Address, which marks the close of Jim's official tenure at ICS. In his speech entitled *Ex Amore*, Jim spoke of love and creation, of a God who created out of love and calls us to participate in the redemption of the world by creating the spaces for love. “If God creates *ex amore*, then created reality not only lives out of love, but love is the cosmic energy of creation, the glue and fire of creation,” said Jim in his address. “Love is the oxygen of the universe, without which we cannot live even though we cannot see it. At the same time, when it is not there, we know it, we grasp for death, we slowly die.”

To speak of God as creating out of love (*ex amore*) rather than out of nothing (*ex nihilo*) is to shift our understanding of God, thinks Jim. He suggested that “we shift our understanding of God as a creator who works by omnipotent power over and divine intervention in creation to a God whose power is God's enduring, unconditional love

which births creation into being, invites creation into a partnership of love and care, and redeems and renews creation.”

Throughout his speech, Jim intertwined his thoughts with biblical themes, poetry and postmodern philosophical thought. Through this intertwining, the listener witnessed the space within postmodern thought in which Jim has found the room for faith-filled

philosophy. According to Jim, “The rise of postmodern philosophy is not the ‘end’ of philosophy, as some people fear, but the inauguration of a new kind of philosophy . . . , something especially promising for the endeavor of Christian philosophizing because it emphasizes the limits of rational knowing, calls attention to the prime place of faith, makes the central concern not freedom from, control and mastery, but mutuality, interdependence, responsibility, respecting and honouring of difference.”

To conclude his speech, Jim put the paper aside and thanked those who have supported him, with love, over his many years at ICS: his colleagues, his friends, his “wonderfully gifted” students, his family, and, in a special way, his wife Jean.

During the dinner, members of the community had the opportunity to thank Jim for the love he shares with the ICS community. Amongst the evening's speakers were Jim's ICS colleagues, Bob Sweetman and Henk Hart; a colleague from Villanova University, Thomas Busch; family members John Olthuis and Doug Olthuis; ICS President Harry Fernhout; student Dianne

Bergsma and two of Jim's former students, Jamie Smith and Henry Venema.

The speeches attested to the inseparability of Jim's theory from practice, work from relationships and learning from teaching. “Integrity, wholeness, and healing tell me your work's story,” said long-time colleague and friend Henk Hart. “Christian scholarship, for you, exceeds the integration of faith and learning. Embodied wholeness calls for more. . . . Your theory and practice were inseparable.



Jim Olthuis sits in the chair given in his name for the ICS Emeritus Faculty Office at his exaugural convocation

You taught by learning from your students. . . . Faith, emotions, justice, thought, relationships, partying, study, indeed, all of life, fuelled your engine.”

The evening concluded with one final gift: a book, edited by and contributed to by Jim's students, in honour of Jim. Entitled *The Hermeneutics of Charity: Interpretation, Selfhood and Postmodern Faith*, the festschrift is co-edited by Jamie Smith and Henry Venema and features contributions by many of Jim's former students as well as colleagues from universities across North America. The book, like the evening on which it was presented to Jim, is “a tribute to a mentor and dear friend who has left an indelible mark on each of us.”

Beyond an evening of gift-giving, the event, as a celebration-with, was evidence of the incarnation of love which Jim spoke about. ☺

“For God so loved the world that creation came forth. Creation as the first incarnation of love. *Ex amore*. For God so loved the world that God gave us the Son. The Word becoming flesh in Jesus Christ for our redemption as the second incarnation. *Cum amore*. For God so loved the world that God sent us the Spirit. The Spirit of Love aflame in the hearts of God's people as a third incarnation. Such incarnations of love both in suffering-with and celebrating-with each other and the whole family of God's creatures help us fill up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ. From before the foundations of the world God destined us in love, says Ephesians, to be God's sons and daughters. *Cum amore*. For God so loved the world that in the end God will be in all, the fourth incarnation, we could say. *Ad amorem*.”

-From Jim Olthuis' exaugural lecture, *Ex Amore*


Postcard from Mexico

In July ICS Senior Member Jonathan Chaplin spoke at two significant gatherings of Reformed Christians in Mexico, both held in Villahermosa, Tabasco, in the south-east of the country. The National Presbyterian Congress held its third annual educational conference from July 28-31. Chaplin spoke twice on the theme of the Bible, justice and politics. At the same time, the Institute for Higher Education – a private educational institution with a Presbyterian foundation - held its annual faculty development series, at which he addressed the theme of Christian scholarship.

Participants at the Congress responded positively to the lectures, showing how they are already engaged in reflection and action on the theme of social justice at local levels.

Mexican Christians have to work in a heavily secularized public culture where there is deep suspicion of mingling religion and politics (complicated by continuing mutual suspicion between Protestants and Catholics). Chaplin's talks were aimed at encouraging them to work both with confidence and prudence.

The Institute for Higher Education cannot officially describe itself as 'Presbyterian' for legal reasons: with the exception of church seminaries, even private educational institutions may not offer confessional education. Under such constraints, the institution is seeking creative ways to boost the Christian character of its offerings. I encouraged participants to work together wherever possible with Catholic educators – an invitation welcomed by the Catholic Principal of the undergraduate division!

With possibly one million adherents in a country of 100 million, the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico has the potential to make a vital contribution to Mexican public life. The recent decline in power of the heavily secularist 'Institutional Revolutionary Party' could soon open up greater political space for this to happen. The Institute of Higher Education is also positioned to become a leading Reformed institution serving Christians throughout Central America. Not surprisingly, it is in great need of educational and financial resources. As part of ICS's commitment to globally accessible education, ICS can offer the occasional services of a faculty member. Perhaps some readers may be able offer other kinds of support. (Contact Jonathan Chaplin for further information.) 

Compass for a Fallen World



(L-R): Jim Olthuis, David Naugle, James Sire, Richard Middleton, Al Wolters, Cal Seerveld

By Neal DeRoo
ICS MPhilF Student

What does it mean, in today's postmodern world, to be "After Worldview"? This was the topic of the Civitas conference held September 16-18, 2004 at Cornerstone University, Grand Rapids, MI. "After Worldview: Christian Education in Postmodern Worlds," showcased many of the leading Christian scholars working on the issue of worldviews, including ICS's own Jim Olthuis and Calvin Seerveld.


In fact, the distinctive Reformational vision of ICS was prevalent throughout the conference (organized by ICS alumnus Matthew Bonzo) with many presenters having strong ties to the ICS. In addition to Olthuis and Seerveld, ICS students Ruthanne Crapo, Brad Wortz and Carlos Bovell and ICS alumni and former faculty including Brian Walsh, Richard Middleton, James K.A. Smith and Al Wolters had an opportunity to speak.

The conference began Thursday evening with Cal Seerveld's lecture, entitled "The Damages of a Christian Worldview." In it, Seerveld talked of the importance for Christians of deciphering the Spirit that moves a worldview in a particular direction while calling on Christians, and Christian scholars in particular, to become critical detectors of that Spirit and direction in their own worldviews and also the worldview of others. This can be especially important in dialogues where one encounters a worldview that is different from one's own.

The next afternoon, Richard Middleton had the conference abuzz with his talk, "Before Worldview: From Biblical Story to Christian Vision." Middleton traced the Scriptural development of themes such as the

necessity, at times in our fallen world, to go "west" when it may appear that Jesus calls us to go "north" but sin blocks the way. In the struggle to find a "compass" to orient ourselves by in this fallen world, Middleton called us back to the biblical narrative as a story of what to do when we're lost.

Building on certain aspects of Middleton's talk, Jim Olthuis, in Friday evening's lecture, stressed the importance of personal testimony as a means of placing us all on an equal footing, before each other and before God. As Olthuis explained, by being honest with ourselves, and with others, about ourselves, we make it easier to form connection with other people, through talk, touch, and other bodily modes of knowing, as a way of struggling through this disorienting world. Peppered throughout by personal anecdotes from his own history and the history of ICS, Olthuis' lecture was an entertaining, and illuminating, end to the second day of the conference.

For many, the highlight of Saturday was the roundtable discussion between Seerveld, Olthuis, Middleton, Wolters, David Naugle and James Sire that served as the last session of the conference. The spirited discussion that characterized this roundtable was perhaps manifest most clearly in a back-and-forth between Olthuis and Sire in which Olthuis gave a reformational interpretation of the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. To many, it was a perfect microcosm of the conference as a whole—different Christian traditions coming together to learn from each other and discuss an issue of utmost importance to contemporary Christian education. 

The Ethics of Love

In honour of our retiring senior members, *Perspective* is interviewing each of them, asking them to look back at both their career and their particular discipline. Each interview will be conducted by a faculty colleague. In this issue, **Jim Olthuis** is interviewed by **Bob Sweetman**

You were hired to teach ethics. Most of your career you have officially gone under the label senior member in philosophical theology. For quite a while you were heavily involved in hermeneutical philosophy but the last few years I've watched you focus more and more on the ethical side of postmodern philosophy. So you might say that in your end is your beginning. In other words, you've gone from ethics to ethics, what is the same and what is different?

I was first given the position in philosophical theology and ethics and when I first came here I discovered that the supporting community related to practical ethical concerns—marriage, family, friendship—and that went very well and so I started branching out practically with that one leg. Theoretically, the science of ethics—philosophical ethics and theological ethics—in modernism had often become demoted or was a second-rate concern. In theology, you first had to have the dogmatics straight and then you decided what you were going to do. So ethics became one of the less important sciences when it was considered a science, in that that it concerned itself with every normative activity in the world, which was from the old tradition. So my idea that ethics should be the study of truth, which I still think is a good way to look at ethics, didn't seem to find much entrée into the general academic world at the time.

My thesis was on facts, values and ethics which again made ethics the philosophy of normativity and in a way I think, if it's God that is calling world into being and asking the world to do certain things then you have to deepen ethics right away to a divine ethics which makes it a theology. So then I started emphasising theological studies in terms of word of God for creation, in Jesus Christ and in scriptures and trying to then work on human or anthropology which was in response to the call and gift of the love of God. That meant every detail in the science of ethics in a certain way was submerged or disappeared. Suddenly the whole idea that responsibility is more important and comes

before freedom brings a turn in philosophy which meant that philosophy itself has become ethics and right now we're still wandering, working on the edge of what does it mean to honour the other. There are different ways of seeing how truth, style, different commitments as well as relating to God plays in all of this.

It is easily possible that in future that there will be a much more defined special science of ethics again but right now I found an entrée with postmodern philosophy's concern for the other to reintroduce or refashion some concerns I had right away from the beginning which is to honour God and neighbour. That's our task in the world and that was my goal in my studies and teaching here.

Would you say that that interest in practical issues was what moved you to an analysis of how you read the bible?

My response will be from the side in this but I think it approaches your question, Bob. When I was in seminary I remember being taught, implicitly rather than explicitly, that there's probably one interpretation of the text. We would make a sermon and we would have a stable and then you would ride the horse again and again. The situation might be different but it would be the same sermon. One of things we feared though was that one of our peers or another minister would preach a sermon on the same text

the week after we did and it would be different. Because it was very obvious the way we were raised that either my exegesis was wrong or the other person's exegesis was

wrong. That always bothered me because, on the one hand, it felt to me that the scriptures were clear and they spoke to our heart, and yet so often so many people of the same faith ended up exegeting and interpreting and sermonizing in ways that were very different and that struck me as both right and wrong.

And so as I on one level began to be more concerned about honouring the other and giving space to the other, on the other hand, I was more and more aware that we never start from a neutral place. Even when we start from the same position in the faith, our individual differences of tradition, gender and upbringing meant that we listened to the text in different ways. I became very interested in the ethics of reading: how can you listen from your own position and honour the other person's position and so then hermeneutics became not so much 'what does the text say' but 'what do we bring to the text and then how can we open ourselves so that the text can then speak.' It's a partnering, a two way process. That has developed and that meant that hermeneutics also partnered with my concern for anthropology—who we are as people of God, what does it mean to be human, how does God ask us



(above) Jim adopts a pose circa 1973; below Jim giving his Inaugural Lecture in 1968



to be part of the creational process of ministry and how can we hold hands in our differences and be one body of Christ in the process.

When you started working on hermeneutics and anthropology, you had been working on our whole sense of the creation, creation theology, a doctrine of creation theology. How did that fit in and how does it continue to fit in, if it does to the work that you've been doing ever since?

From the very beginning the thing that really strikes me as the distinctive gift of Calvinism—and probably neo-Calvinism—is the goodness of creation in spite of the brokenness, in spite of the fall. What I've never forgotten and I continue to emphasize is that creation is revelation that the very 'creaturely-ness' of chairs, stones, stars, trees, flowers, people means that God is speaking in and through them, that God is with us and God is so close that its closer than close. It's the other side of close. This is a very postmodern theme again, but to me I think what's really important is that creation is not neutral. That also means that we are mandated, called, graced to read everything in creation as a sign of God and a sign of God's love. It also means that we have a responsibility to say often we've messed up so badly that we have to decipher the signs. Because sometimes we disfigure or mar the creation. Nevertheless even in the marring some of the good features of creation, the love of God, sounds forth. There are all these texts in the scripture, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof," and so I take the love of God to be the flame, the glue, the fire of creation and that means that dealing with creation is always challenge, a risk and we're always on sacred ground and that gives meaning to life and meaning to everything we do, whatever occupation, whatever calling. So there's a sanctity about it. In the *Beautiful Risk* I call it "everyday mysticism." Whenever we have any meeting or interaction with anybody in the creation we are meeting God and so we can either rebuff God or we can honour God by honouring our neighbour.

One of your most characteristic contributions to the ongoing development of the academic work of the ICS and in the reformational tradition as a whole is your bringing of psychotherapeutic expertise to your work as a philosopher. How did you get involved in that and how does it function in your work as a philosopher?

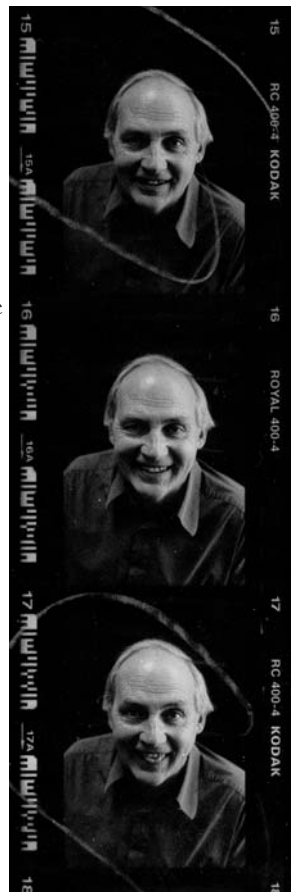
It's a lovely confluence it seems to me. When I went to Calvin I was looking for some place to put my passion and discovered that my passion could be and was aroused in theoretic pursuits. Then I discovered that for myself and for many others a theoretic articulation was often a rationalization for emotional anxieties, or desires or something that was involved on a deeper emotional level. Then when I came back to Canada in

1968 and they asked me to speak about ethics in the community, I discovered that what the people were really interested in was not abstract things but *human* relations. Then I started talking about the nature of marriage, family, and friendship, which culminated in publishing *I Pledge you my Troth* in 1975. When I went out with that, people told me that they found it much easier to talk about what marriage is, what family is, what friendship is.

However, it was much more difficult to *live out* friendship and marriage. I remember one time, Jean and I were talking and *I Pledge you my Troth* was on the desk and she said to me, "you know what it's all about but I don't know if you know how to live up to it." And I opened my mouth and said, "Yeah you're right," I said, "Well why?" and I started to think about all the situations in my life and in the lives of others when emotional anxieties can lead you astray or hold you back or make you over confident and so then I started to really get into that and I discovered that it spoke to people and it spoke to me and I discovered that I had a gift for helping people work with that so that they could become the best kind of person they could be. It felt as if I could help give them heart or be a means of encouragement. So then I thought 'hokey mackerel' here is a ministry of encouragement which, on a psychotherapeutic level, could be hand in hand with my academic ministry.

What drew you to postmodern thought, particularly French poststructuralist thought, as your, if you will, final interlocutor?


Well there are three elements—probably more—which are crucial. All of postmodernism but specifically French postmodernists emphasise the limit of reason. That's really important. So the theme of the importance of faith finds its way then because if there is a limit to what reason knows, what then? Postmodernism says before and after and in and under your reasoning the voice of faith speaks and there is nothing neutral about it, which is the second part. There is nothing neutral in this world. The third thing, which is maybe the most important, which comes out in the works of the feminist postmodernists that I really like—Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray—along with Derrida and Levinas, is that there are other ways to come to knowledge in the world than reason. Now Levinas and Derrida don't take



advantage of this as much as they ought to. They say, "well, since reason can't get there we can't really know if we get anywhere." We're always in this 'maybe' mode, this 'perhaps' mode. Luce Irigaray said "Well, what if there is the power and dynamics of love in the world?", which means that emotions and feelings as one avenue of love, thinking as other avenue, allows for possibilities of other modes of commerce or traffic in the world being just as important—equally, not more or less—than reasoning. That speaks very much to me and I think gives the reformational tradition and their emphasis on the multi-modal beauty of creation a way to contribute to the ongoing philosophical discussion. So the language of emotions is as important as the language of thinking; the language of the body is just as important. And they are all God's language.

At the Institute, senior members are hired to teach and administer and write and publish. I think it's fair to say that in some way, you can divide academics into those who publish in order to teach, and those who teach in order to publish. Which are you?

I'm probably much more 'teach in order to publish.' And as I think about it, and feel it through, I don't know if that would stay the same if I was in the younger generation. My personality is such that I'm much more concerned with going on and doing something new and getting people excited about something and have someone else follow through and mop up and paint and change the colour and get the details just right.

I do think that students and faculty that come here have had an exceptional sense of calling. It's not an extraordinary sacrifice in the sense that they were forced to do it. They wanted to do something that would allow them to feel true to themselves as students, people and children of faith. I think, if I was alone in a university where I didn't have this sense of necessarily being part of a team, helping to give people an ethos I could have just said, "I'm going to do my thing" but I feel if you are teaching here you have an obligation to the students more than an obligation to yourself in some ways. I'm going to bend over backwards to stand beside students because I have some sense of what its meant for them to take the risk to come here. And I still see that. 



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