

PERSPECTIVE

INSTITUTE FOR CHRISTIAN STUDIES

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SPRING CONVOCATION 2007

by Lorraine Voorberg

“Are you religious?” is a deceptively simple question, yet one that thoughtful Christians might hesitate to answer as the waters of discussion are clouded because of its ambiguity. **Ron Kuipers**, Senior Member in Philosophy of Religion, asked this question in his inaugural address entitled “Faith as the Art of the Possible: Invigorating Religious Tradition in an Amnesiac Society.” At ICS’s convocation in May, this question opened an exploration of the difficulties inherent in our contemporary walk of faith.

Contemplating the question “Are you religious?” is not just an academic exercise for Ron. In his MA thesis, he took on this question with respect to the secular humanism of neo-pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty. In his published PhD dissertation, *Critical Faith: Towards a Renewed Understanding of Religious Life and its Public Accountability*, he risked exposing further the religious struggles he experiences in our secularized liberal society. The inaugural address was a natural extension of his ongoing philosophical inquiries.

Working backward through the title of his address,

Ron first described our society—“a western, post-industrial, consumer-capitalist society steeped in ecological crisis”—as amnesiac, because we have forgotten our traditions and instead look only to the future and technology for salvation. While we should be careful not to romanticize the past, Kuipers argued that we may still appeal to precious fragments of that past in order to deliberate concerning our fu-

“I admire Ron’s ability to keep in sharp, illuminating focus the clarity and contradictions of everyone fumbling their way forward in the twenty-first century.”

Benjamin Groenewold-VanDyk

ture: “Through our attempt to interpret a textual tradition inherited from a distant past, we create a space in which to... imagine a better future.” It is in this space that we realize the gift and call bestowed by God, who pulls back to make space for us. “As creatures called to image such a

loving Maker, our lives are to...engage in a similar act of loving space-making as the one God performed.” Ron challenged everyone to “understand our faith in terms of the sacrifice and courage that living such a God-imagining life requires.”

At ICS we strive to find that balance between inherited tradition and open future. This year’s graduates are a diverse group: a college professor receiving his PhD, some graduates going on to PhD or other graduate studies, and others established in careers. Though many of the students received an MA in philosophy, the interdisciplinary nature of ICS was apparent by the great variety of thesis topics the graduates engaged. From theology, philosophy, and political science to social justice and engineering, ICS students are taking risks and applying reformational views in exciting ways.

If you would like to hear Ron’s complete inaugural address, go to:

<http://www.icscanada.edu/audio/>



May 2007 ICS Graduates

Doctor of Philosophy:

J. Matthew Bonzo

Master of Arts (Philosophy):

Kenneth Joel Dam

Kristina Jung

Benjamin Groenewold Van Dyk

Tricia Groenewold Van Dyk

Jonathan D. Zeyl

Master of Worldview Studies:

Brian Matthew Kelvin Dijkema

Ben McCabe

Daniel Oduro Sem

NEW BOOKS

IN THE PHRYGIAN MODE:

Neo-Calvinism, Antiquity and the Lamentations of Reformed Philosophy.

Robert Sweetman, ed.

Review by John B. Roney,
Sacred Heart University

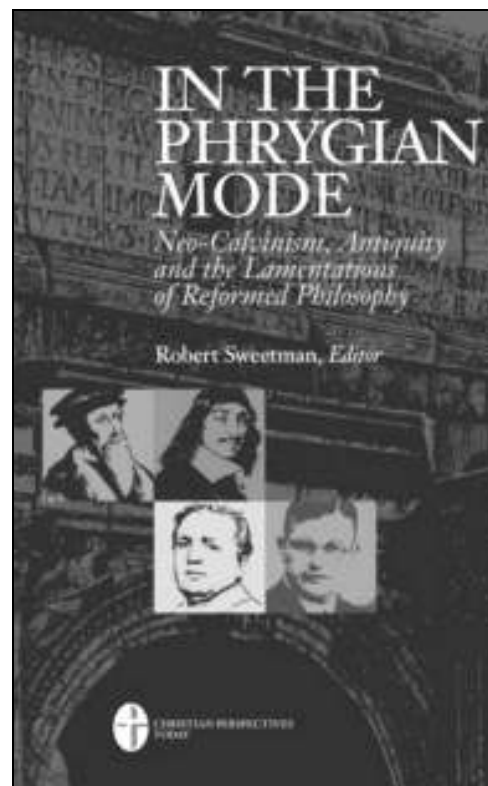
The title of this volume says many things about the task of neo-Calvinism. Perhaps readers of ICS literature have become somewhat used to erudite references such as “the Phrygian mode”—not to be confused with the French Revolutionary cap—that suggests a certain triumphant song, perhaps even warlike in its intellectual struggles. But this is juxtaposed with lamentations, evoking grief or regret, and in this case the creative tension cannot be easily resolved. The authors, representing third or fourth generation neo-Calvinist and Reformational scholars, were brought together in a conference held at Knox College, Toronto, and sponsored by the Institute for Christian Studies, the Dooyeweerd Centre for Christian Scholarship, and the University of Toronto. It followed a series of earlier conferences inspired by the classicist Wendy Helleman.

The early church struggled to define itself vis-à-vis pagan philosophy. Ever since St. Paul went to Mars Hill it has not been easy to dismiss human attempts to search for truth outside the Judeo-Christian revelatory tradition, although the age-old question remains, posed in Jaroslav Pelikan’s book *What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?* Despite Tertullian’s skepticism, it has been more common for Christian

theologians and philosophers to embrace some aspects of pagan thought, for central to the doctrine of creation is *imago dei*, and common grace is important in the redemptive process in Calvinism. But this raises the central issue for this book: can Christian scholars use synthesis to glean some insights from antiquity, or must they take the position of antithesis alone? Many theologians have attempted to embrace a part of pagan thought by seeing in it a “*praeparatio Evangelica*”; for *pagani* were far more ignorant than subversive of the truth. Renaissance scholars tried to reconcile ancient wisdom with Christian theology. Calvin, and many Christian humanists, had an immense appreciation for the classics, and Seneca and

Ever since St. Paul went to Mars Hill it has not been easy to dismiss human attempts to search for truth outside the Judeo-Christian revelatory tradition...

Cicero became important interlocutors for the Greco-Roman tradition. Richard Mouw reminds us in *He Shines in All That’s Fair* that “Calvin carefully avoided treating our ‘natural’ religious-cognitive capacities as if they are something that people simply ‘have’ in some static sense. While believing thinkers can offer ‘competent and apt statements about God here and there’, he writes, they always do so with ‘a certain giddy imagination’.”(67) Hence Christians are placed in a creative tension between a triumphal



Robert Sweetman, ed. *In the Phrygian Mode: Neo-Calvinism, Antiquity and the Lamentations of Reformed Philosophy.* Lanham, MD; Toronto: Institute for Christian Studies and University Press of America, 2007. Pb 311pp. \$69.95.

song found in the biblical promises and the lamentations of working out salvation in fear and trembling, perhaps demonstrating a certain giddiness at times. This collection of scholars are all working within the neo-Calvinist tradition, but that does not mean that their response to the synthesis-antithesis issue is the same.

Full review available at:
www.icscanada.edu

John B. Roney is Professor of European History at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, Connecticut. He obtained his PhD at the University of Toronto, 1989. His current scholarship includes the publication of *Culture and Customs of Holland*, due Oct 2008 by Greenwood Press, and *The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg: Crossroads to the European Political Economy*, in progress for Sacred Heart University Press.

HOPE IN TROUBLED TIMES

Bob Goudzwaard, Mark Vander Vennen & David Van Heemst

This book provides a biblically founded perception of the world's current events at a time when so many in our violent and broken world experience despair and succumb to apathy. The authors not only offer real-world solutions to these critical worldwide issues, but question the authority of technology, recognizing it as a poten-

tial idol that hinders progress. The choice is obvious. We either make care for others and the earth a priority, or we watch as humanity, and the world it inhabits, suffers.

Bob Goudzwaard, Mark Vander Vennen & David Van Heemst. *Hope in Troubled Times: A New Vision for Confronting Global Crises*. Baker Academic, 2007.

NEW BOOKS



WISDOM AND CURRICULUM:

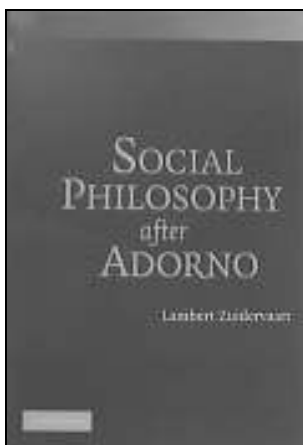
Christian Schooling After Postmodernity

Doug Blomberg

Utilizing fictional dialogue alongside conventional exposition, this book explores the educational implications of a biblically-informed perspective on wisdom as an alternative to the modernist theory-into-practice paradigm. Blomberg draws extensively on his experience as teacher and curriculum consultant at Mount Evelyn Christian School, Australia, to make the case that Christian schooling not only should but can be done differently than decreed by the typical focus on “academic excellence”. After considering convergences with postmodern perspectives, a view of wisdom as the realization of plural creational values grounds the argument

Doug Blomberg. *Wisdom and Curriculum: Christian Schooling After Postmodernity*, Sioux Center, IA: Dordt College Press, 2007. ISBN-13: 978-0-932914-

for recognition of a broader range of abilities than are traditionally honoured. The final chapter revisits the “play, problem-posing, purposeful response” metaphor for curriculum (introduced in Stronks and Blomberg [eds.], *A Vision with a Task*), as a way of leading students in “the getting of wisdom.” John Van Dyk writes, “My hope is that this book will be widely read, studied, and discussed.”



This book examines what is living and what is dead in the social philosophy of Theodor W. Adorno, the most important philosopher and social critic in Germany after World War II.

Review of *Social Philosophy after Adorno* to be published in next issue of Perspective and on www.icscanada.edu late fall.

Social Philosophy after Adorno. Lambert Zuidervaart. Cambridge University Press, 2007. 232 p. ISBN-13: 9780521690386

ICS BOOKSTORE

ICS offers a variety of books from scholarly and academic to popular and devotional. For a full list, visit:

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Or, please email us at:
bookshop@icscanada.edu

for a list or contact us at:
416-979-2331
(toll-free 888-326-5347)

NEW FACULTY PROFILE: Dr. Shannon Hoff

by Lorraine Voorberg

ICS is pleased to welcome Dr. Shannon Hoff to its faculty as Assistant Professor of Social and Political Philosophy. A graduate of Calvin College, she spent one semester at ICS before going to Stony Brook University (NY) for MA and PhD studies. Shannon is back in Canada after two years of teaching philosophy at Muskingum College, a liberal arts college in Ohio.

Although she is now closer to her family home in St. Catharines, that's not her only homecoming. "In a sense, I am returning to a community to which I feel deeply indebted, since I developed as a critical thinker and scholar within it. I received incredible support and intellectual guidance at both ICS and Calvin, an experience that hasn't been replicated in any other educational context. I am excited to be a part of this context, to pass on the gift that I received in the form of teaching and mentoring.

"When I was here in '98, the community was engaged, stimulating, supportive—doing philosophy in public, with others, was very exciting and came relatively easy. Philosophical conversations were more than just a display of intellectual bravado. I

think it's because philosophical inquiry at ICS is integrated with deep inquiry about how best to live as an individual and in community, and this benefits both types of inquiry."

To pursue that inquiry into



living as an individual and in community, Shannon is interested in exploring the contemporary

In a sense, I am returning to a community to which I feel deeply indebted, since I developed as a critical thinker and scholar within it.

debates around the positive and negative aspects of rights discourse, the political impact and meaning of forgiveness and solidarity, and the possible role of debates concerning "the good" in the public sphere. At the same

time, she is working on a book manuscript on G.W.F. Hegel's theory of law in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, as well as a collection of articles on Hegel and race, gender, and post-colonial philosophy. Other current projects include essays dealing with Hegel's concept of forgiveness, and the relationship between Hegel and French feminist Luce Irigaray's understanding of rights.

Shannon looks forward to interacting with students as a mentor and as a teacher. This year she will offer two courses, "Liberalism and Its Critics" and "The Politics of Forgiveness", and will co-teach two others: "Religion, Life and Society: Reformational Philosophy" and "Ethics after Auschwitz: Adorno and Lévinas."

ICS Senator Janet Wesselius, an Associate Professor of Philosophy with the Augustana Faculty at the University of Alberta, is excited to have Shannon join the faculty at ICS. "Not only is Shannon a fine teacher; she is a gifted scholar, and her current research elucidating Hegel's political theory is original and innovative."

ICS ENTERS "THESES CANADA PORTAL"

by Isabella Guthrie-McNaughton

Christian scholarship by junior members of the Institute for Christian Studies has reached a new level of global accessibility. Theses and dissertations are now available through a licensed database, *Theses Canada Portal*, that expands single-digit readership to an infinite number of potential readers. In addition, this program has substantially increased global awareness of ICS and its graduate programs.

Since 2006, ICS has been an active participant, along with more than sixty Canadian universities, in a national program of the Library and Archives Canada (LAC) to offer print and electronic theses through the *Theses Canada Portal* (www.collectionscanada.ca/thesescanada/s4-230-e.html). The program is a joint initiative of LAC and ProQuest Information and Learning (UMI).

First, ProQuest digitizes each thesis, provides ICS and LAC with a microfiche version on silver halide film for preservation, and adds the title to its database, the *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Index*. Re-

searchers who have access to the *Index* can locate ICS theses by searching under the Institute's name, the name of the junior member, or the subject. They can read the abstract, preview the first 24 pages, download the full text of the thesis (pdf file), or order a copy through ProQuest/UMI.

Using the microfiche version of the thesis provided by ProQuest, LAC then catalogues each microform into the *Theses Canada Portal*.

...this program has substantially increased global awareness of ICS and its graduate programs

This catalogue record is immediately available to all researchers using the *Portal* or *AMICUS* (LAC's library catalogue).

Finally, over a four-year window, ProQuest releases the electronic version of each thesis to LAC

for the *Theses Canada Portal*, where it will be freely accessible. At the time of this writing, seven theses are available in the *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Index*, with another eight theses in the process of being digitized. Our

first thesis will appear in full text on the *Theses Canada Portal* in 2010.

In addition to current theses, LAC also harvests 'born-digital' and older theses for the *Theses Canada Portal* from university-based ETD (Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Program) sites. Following the lead of the University of Toronto, York University, and the University of Waterloo, the ICS library is investigating ways to implement its own ETD, where our older theses, digitized in-house, could be made available online through the ICS Library web page. While our older theses are not eligible to be indexed into the *ProQuest Dissertation and Theses Index*, they will be accepted into the *Theses Canada Portal* once in digital format, thus showcasing and making available all of the theses written by ICS graduates.

ICS theses and dissertations are also accessible by inter-library loan through the ICS library. Search the ICS catalogue (www.icscanada.edu/library/catsearch.shtml) by entering the term: thesis* in the subject category. All past and current theses and dissertations should appear. Make a note of the one you would like, and order it through another library (either public or academic). If that is not possible, you may contact ICS Librarian Isabella Guthrie-McNaughton directly at:

iguthriemcnaughton@icscanada.edu



UPCOMING EVENTS

WORLDVIEW CONFERENCES

Burning Questions? Biblical Answers?

Can an Ancient Text Guide Us?

Richard Middleton gives practical insight as to how the Biblical narrative helps us make ethical decisions. We'll explore your questions through a panel discussion and workshops or drama.

September 15:

St. Paul University, Ottawa.
Contact Martin Mudde 613-728-0154.

October 20:

Trinity Christian College, Chicago.
Register at www.icscanada.edu/events/ or contact Jenny Krabbe: jkrabbe@icscanada.edu.

Hope in Troubled Times

Christian economist and author Bob Goudzwaard and co-authors Mark Vander Venen and David Van Heemst present the ideologies of identity, materialism, and security and how in their midst we can have hope.

October 13:

Toronto District Christian High School, Toronto.
Register at: www.icscanada.edu/events/ or contact Vidya Williams 1-888-326-5347 ext. 223



ICS celebrates forty years of God's faithfulness!

Join us at a 40th Anniversary Dinner and Silent Auction. Enjoy an opportunity to get behind ICS, support its mission and have a great time. Donate an auction item and purchase tickets at:

www.icscanada.edu/events/

Nov 10:

King's Christian Collegiate,
528 Burnhamthorpe Road West,
Oakville, ON

Contact Robbin Burry:
1-888-326-5347 ext. 234



Scott Macklin and former ICS mentor, Cal Seerveld

On June 20, ICS hosted two well-attended presentations on "Africa: in heART and mind" by alumni **Scott Macklin** and **Andrew Jefferson**.

Scott and **Angelica Macklin** presented their documentary film, "Masizakhe: let us build together" about the role of cultural activism and education in shaping post-apartheid South African society.

Andrew Jefferson shared his research findings and reflections on post-prison promotion of peace and justice in Sierra Leone.

ICS offered two courses in July: "Paul: Story and Empire", taught by adjunct professor, **Sylvia Keesmaat**, and "The History of Christian Political Thought", taught by **James Skillen** of the Center for Public Justice, Washington. Plans are underway to offer an expanded summer school in 2008.

Watch www.icscanada.edu for more information.



Summer students discuss the history of Christian political thought

FACULTY FOCUS

Doug Blomberg is in Australia, where he will be spending the bulk of his sabbatical year preparing the draft of a book on theories of learning. He hopes to demonstrate how a reformational anthropology provides a framework within which to reconcile theories often regarded as conflicting, once their reductionist tendencies are addressed and situated within a holistic view of the person. The target readership will be college students and practising teachers.

Nik Ansell's upcoming book, *The Annihilation of Hell*, will feature a foreword by renowned theologian Jürgen Moltmann, emeritus professor of systematic theology at the university of Tübingen, Germany. The book will be a revision of Nik's PhD thesis on Moltmann's view of universal salvation and the redemption of time, to be published by the Paternoster Theological Monographs series.

Lambert Zuidervaart has a new book out titled *Social Philosophy after Adorno* (Cambridge University Press, 2007). The book was published in both hard cover and paperback in July. One chapter in the book has also appeared recently under the title "Feminist Politics and the Culture Industry: Adorno's Critique Revisited," in *Feminist Interpretations of Theodor Adorno*, edited by Renée Heberle (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006).

STUDENT & ALUMNI FOCUS

THESIS AND DISSERTATION DEFENSES:

Shin-ae Won defended her PhD dissertation "Korean Christian Religious Education and the Hermeneutics of Action: Nurturing Intergenerational Relationships" on July 6th at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam.

Dr. Won has been living in Toronto, where she has worked closely with her co-supervisor Doug Blomberg over several years. She has also had intensive interaction with her promoter, Prof. Siebren Miedema, in both Toronto and Amsterdam. In his *laudatio*, Prof. Miedema described the dissertation as a "highly interesting and relevant project" in which Shin-ae sought to demonstrate the relevance of especially John Caputo's insights for educators "who do not want to conceptualize the identities of different generations as given or fixed, but as constructed and reconstructed.... These insights challenge Christian religious educators to open themselves to the radical insecurity as well as radical openness of life." He noted the influence of courses taken with Dr. Hart and Dr. Olthuis (the latter acting as one of the "opponents" at the defense), as well as of the three years of doctoral course work at Sookmyung Women's University, prior to moving to Canada in 1998. "Your dissertation shows that you really dare to go to the *radix* of hermeneutical thinking and combine this with a strongly committed view on Christian religious education." Shin-ae currently has a part-time position teaching at Myongji University, a Christian institution in Seoul.

Stephen Zylstra defended his MA thesis "Teleology in the Thought of William of Ockham" on July 6.

Thesis examination committee members (l-r):

Bob Sweetman (mentor), Stephen Zylstra, Clarence Joldersma (external examiner), Nik Ansell (internal examiner).



AWARDS

James VanderBerg (ICS grad) was recently nominated as a finalist in the 35 Under 35 National Recognition Project for his work as Campus Minister at the University of Guelph. The project, "an initiative of Arrow Leadership, ChristianWeek, the Canadian Council of Christian Charities and the Bridgeway Foundation, recognizes, encourages and celebrates over 220 nominated Christian leaders (ages 18-35) from Newfoundland to British Columbia who have oriented their lives to serve God and their communities through leadership in diverse and critical contexts." See www.35under35.ca

Stephen Zylstra won a Graduate Student Essay Prize at the 24th annual meeting of the Canadian Society for Aesthetics, May 29-31 2007, in Saskatoon, for the paper he presented entitled "On Society and the Cultivation of Taste in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*."

PRESIDENT'S ANGLE

John Suk

Small, but surprisingly roomy

What makes a work of fiction a real classic? Size? There are some really huge classics out there: Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, Hugo's *Les Misérables* (the unabridged version, that is!) and Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy.

But there are some really small classics too: Steinbeck's *The Pearl*, any of Alice Munro's short stories, and *The Hobbit*. So when it comes to great books, size probably isn't a consideration.

I'd say the same is true of schools. When I was a pastor in Ann Arbor, Michigan, the community was giving thought to starting a Christian grade school. Lots of concerns were raised about whether or not we would have enough students to begin. At the membership meeting where the "go/no go" decision was to be made, my wife Irene got up and said that she'd send our son David to the new school—for kindergarten—even if he was the only student. As it turned out, we opened Ann Arbor Christian School with only three students in kindergarten. Thanks to the quality of the teacher and the involvement of the support community, I can honestly say that our tiny kin-



The bottom line, though, is that ICS is a very, very good small school.

dergarten was one of the best (if not the best!) in Ann Arbor, a community known for excellent education. It was the foundation of a school that now has nearly 200 students.

Forty years ago this fall, ICS began offering classes in a house on Toronto's Lyndhurst Ave. Back then ICS had only one professor, and no degree programs! It was a very small school.

Forty years later, ICS has six professors, with a seventh on the way, as well as a staff of eight or nine. Not as small as when we began—but still, not as big as Ann Arbor Christian school, either!

The bottom line, though, is that ICS is a very, very good small school. Not the best grad school in the world, perhaps, but a classic. Why?

It has a top-flight faculty rooted in the Word of God, a visionary support community that prays and leads, a body of students from many backgrounds who enrich the classroom with a broad range of perspectives, and a deeply committed and able staff. And most importantly, the ongoing presence of God's illuminating Spirit, the Spirit who guides our search for knowledge and truth.

No, ICS is not a big school. But it is an excellent—and blessed!—school.

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