

## Lynnwood OPC Conference features President of MARS

On March 5-6, the Lynnwood OPC is hosting its 9th annual Reformed Conference, **Justification by Faith: Protestant Reformation or Recent Reformulations?** Dr.



Cornel Venema will be contrasting the classical Reformed view of justification and covenant with the recent revisions especially the New Perspective. Lectures will be held in the sanctuary of

the LOPC at 7:30pm on Friday, and 9:30am to 2:00pm on Saturday. Lunch is included, and the only cost is a free-will offering.

We have a growing library of audio recordings that can be yours for a modest donation. For tapes or CD's of sermons and NWTs events, contact the office at registrar@nwts.edu or call (425) 787-5144.

## Prayer Requests

We rejoice with Adam King in his recovery from successful oral surgery, and with our homiletics professor Rev. Peter Vosteen in his remarkable recovery from bypass surgery. Both are doing very well.

Please continue to lift the budgetary needs of NWTs before God. The last months of 2003 were solid months, but the new year has been very slow so far.

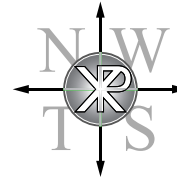
The Board of Directors meets on March 27. Pray for the Holy Spirit to bring wisdom and charity to them in their decisions.

Thank the Lord for His provision of the new library, and ask that He will use it for the building up of His kingdom.



17711 Spruce Way • Lynnwood, WA 98037-7431  
Tel & Fax: (425) 787-5144 • Web: www.nwts.edu

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NORTHWEST THEOLOGICAL  
SEMINARY NEWSLETTER

His story is...

# Our Story

## Philippians 3:8 "...the surpassing value of knowing Christ."

Our Reformed Faith is precious to us. We believe that it is no mere addendum to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that it is the Gospel revealed to us in Holy Scripture. The writings of the Apostle Paul are the basis for much that we confess in the Reformed Faith. Paul's voluminous material has generated volumes and volumes of other material in confession of the faith and in explanation of the Biblical message. But Paul himself often summarizes the whole gospel and his preaching in very brief and concise ways. One of those statements is in Philippians 3:8. In this passage, he renounces the value of his Jewish ethnic, religious and moral pedigree all based in the flesh and the pursuit of his own self righteousness. And he puts in place of all that value which is now nothing to him, the surpassing value of knowing Christ. For Paul, to know Christ is the sum total of the Christian's faith and life.

In academic circles today the mission is to forget Christ. Liberal seminaries across our country are consciously attacking the historic faith and are committed to destroying the knowledge of Christ. Students who have learned of the Savior from faithful parents and nurturing churches, are told that they must forget that Jesus. The mode of operation here is as old as the garden. Like Satan in the garden, they interject doubt about God's Word, and then they outright contradict that word. And then they confidently insert their own thoughts and wills in place of God's Word. The goal is to forget God's Word and the Christ who is declared therein.

When Paul summarizes the gospel as knowing Christ, it is because Christ in his person and work is the foundation of all we believe. Knowing Christ means we are united to him by faith. This isn't mere head knowledge. This is the knowledge of Christ that

*Knowing Christ means we are united to him by faith. This isn't mere head knowledge. This is the knowledge of Christ that means the same as loving him. He is our covenant head and from him comes our salvation.*

**-Rev. Larry Semel**  
Pastor of Reformation OPC  
in Morgantown, WV and  
Board member of NWTs

### NEW CLASSES!

The Three Forms  
of Unity  
and  
Ecclesiastical Latin  
See Page 2

means the same as loving him. He is our covenant head and from him comes our salvation. At the cross of Christ, the burden of our sin is removed and buried in the grave. Knowing Christ, his death, burial, resurrection and ascension into heaven means we know and love him because he did all of that for us. In his transfer to heaven, we have by faith been transferred as well. In Christ's work, we have come into a whole new existence and belong to God's Kingdom. Knowing Christ is the fountainhead from which all our religion of saving grace comes.

But knowing Christ is also the basis of our Christian ethics. To know Christ not only means that he has brought us into a new existence, but it also means that the new existence enters into our lives in a personal and individual way, creating in us the life of new obedience. The more we know Christ, the more also he makes us over in his image. Christ is not only the example for our Christian life that we should walk as he walked, but he is also the resurrection power at work in us by the Spirit to enable us to live the Christian life. We know Christ's cross that saves us. We do not just visit that cross, but we live our new lives in the pattern of the cross. We take up our cross daily and follow him.

God grant that Northwest Theological Seminary, in the full breadth of her rigorous curriculum, may continue to have at the center of her mission: (1) the training of ministers for the church who see that the center of the Biblical message is Christ; and (2) that the task of the preacher is to himself see the surpassing value of knowing Christ. Such preachers will then give themselves in sacrificial service in the church so that God's precious people might also have that knowledge of their Savior, the unsurpassed knowledge of Christ.

-Rev. Larry Semel

## Two New Classes Coming to NWTs Students and Auditors!

NWTS is planning to offer two new electives in academic year 2004-2005. Both Ecclesiastical Latin, and The Three Forms of Unity are expected to be very popular with ministerial students and laypersons alike.

The **Three Forms of Unity** class is being taught by Mr. Scott Sanborn. It will examine the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dordt in light of their immediate historical background, including sixteenth and early seventeenth century continental Reformed theology. Included will be a study of their influence on the life of the church.

The **Ecclesiastical Latin** class will be taught by Mr. Dennison, and will assume NO previous knowledge of Latin. The course will meet two and a half hours per week September through April, and on completion of the course, the student will have the equivalent of two years of the language. Students will interface with actual Latin texts from the church fathers, medieval theologians, Reformation theologians, and more. Homework and study outside of class will require about 4-6 hours per week. Register your interest now so that we can plan class hours that work with your schedule! (425)-787-5144

James 1:2-21 forms the thematic introduction of the book. James uses the following chiasmic structure:

**A 1:2-8** -> command followed by promise of a perfect gift followed by a description of man who is not identified with heaven.

**B 1:9-11** -> reversal followed by growth to death... the lowly brethren are exalted while the rich participate in the humiliating growth to death.

**C 1:12** -> blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love him.

**B' 1:13-15** -> reversal followed by growth to death... those identified with heaven treat temptation differently, this is followed by the growth of sin to death.

**A' 1:16-21** -> command followed by promise of a perfect gift followed by a description of man who is identified with heaven.

Verse 12 forms the center of the chiasm and as such the thematic introduction to the book. This builds upon the changed eschatological relationships that James uses to open the book. James informs his audience that being his brother means identifying

oneself as a servant of Christ, and in turn placing oneself in union with the heavenly arena. Union with the heaven only comes through the crown of life, which is given to those who love Christ. In the rest of the book, James drives his readers to identify with the heavenly arena.

The book of James organically ties itself to the story of redemption. It unfolds more of the plan of our salvation by calling us to identify ourselves with the text. And in so doing to see ourselves as finally, heavenly, and eschatologically united to Christ. I learned that the Redemptive Historical paradigm not only worked on James, but was taught by James!

God has used Northwest Theological Seminary to broaden, enrich and deepen my understanding of God's word. I am eternally grateful to those who have sacrificed labors, prayers and money to make this happen. My prayer is that with your continued support this great work may continue.

-Andy Vanderhoff

## Recent Faculty Publications

### James T. Dennison:

"Solomon's Sublime Song." *The Outlook* 53/7 (Sep 2003): 27-29.

"Jonathan Edwards, 1703-1758: An Appraisal on the Tercentenary of his Birth." *Kerux: The Journal of Northwest Theological Seminary* 18/2 (Sep 2003): 63-74.

"The Odyssey of Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)." *The Outlook* 53/8 (Oct 2003): 6-10.

"Bom of the Virgin Mary." *Kerux: The Journal of Northwest Theological Seminary* 18 (Dec. 2003): 16-25.

"Augustine and Grace." *Kerux: The Journal of Northwest Theological Seminary* 18 (Dec. 2003): 38-52.

Book Review on *Reformed Confessions of the Sixteenth Century* by Arthur C. Cochrane. *Kerux: The Journal of Northwest Theological Seminary* 18 (Dec. 2003): 53-54.

Book Review on *The Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions* by Hans-Josef Klauck. *Kerux: The Journal of Northwest Theological Seminary* 18 (Dec. 2003): 53-54.

"Johannes Piscator and the Doctrine of Justification." *The Outlook* 53/10 (Dec 03): 8

### William Dennison:

"Biblical Theology and the Issue of Application," in *Reformed Spirituality: Communing with Our Glorious God*, eds. Joseph A. Pipa, Jr. & J. Andrew Wortman (Taylors, SC Southern Presbyterian Press, 2003) 119-51.

"Resurrection Living." *The Galilan* VI (March-April 2003): 3-6.

"Reason, History, and Revelation: Biblical Theology and the Enlightenment." *Kerux: The Journal of Northwest Theological Seminary* 18 (May 2003): 3-25.

"Christian Education: Is it a Mess? (Part I)." *The Outlook* LIII (June 2003): 4-7.

"Christian Education: Is it a Mess? (Part II)." *The Outlook* LIII (July/August 2003): 12-14.

"Christian Education: Is it a Mess? (Part III)." *The Outlook* LIII (September 2003): 11-13.

"Mary: The Image of the Christian Life." *The Outlook* 53/10 (Dec 03): 2

## A Student's Story

"To go to seminary I would have to pack up my family, quit my job, and move across the country" I thought to myself. I was weighing the call of God that I felt to attend seminary in light of the other responsibilities God had placed on my shoulders. But when God calls he also provides the means. A few months later my pastor, Marc Renkema, informed me that Northwest Theological Seminary was going to be opening its doors in Lynnwood, WA. "Wow" I thought, "God wants me to attend seminary so bad that He is bringing the seminary to me!"

I started attending classes part time in the spring of 2002 and began hearing terms such as 'Biblical Theology' and 'eschatological.' I soon realized that there were depths to the Reformed Faith, which I had never imagined. By the spring of 2003 I understood the basics of the Redemptive Historical paradigm. I could see the strength of it in obvious books like the gospel of John. "But does it work with all of scripture?" I asked myself. "Does it consistently tie together the organic nature of the bible, or is it merely a tool to be picked up when needed and forgotten when not wanted?" How was this new found theology supposed to color my understanding of scripture?

I used the end of the semester assignment in the New Testament Introduction class to answer this question. I was asked to

write an introduction to a book of the New Testament, so I chose, what I thought was the most un-Redemptive Historical book I could find; the book of James. "If there was Biblical Theology in this book I said to myself, it is in the whole bible." The commentaries called James simply a book of pithy sayings and the New Testament Proverbs, there is no way the Redemptive Historical paradigm could possibly apply, or so I thought.

James introduces his book in verse 1 by describing himself as the servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he goes on in verse 2 to call his audience brothers. But James is the blood brother of Jesus so why is he calling us his brothers? There has been an important change in the life of James that the Holy Spirit is drawing us to. James does not identify himself as the brother of Jesus because he has been united with Christ's life, death and resurrection. In this union he has passed from earthly relationships which mean death, to heavenly relationships which mean life. So important is this change to James that he calls us to be his brothers. And as his brothers we also pass from death to life and become servants of the living God.

This change is so important to James that he doesn't call us brothers once or twice; no he calls us brothers 15 times in 5 short chapters. The book of James calls us over and over into eschatological union with the Lamb.

***God has used Northwest Theological Seminary to broaden, enrich and deepen my understanding of God's word. I am eternally grateful to those who have sacrificed labors, prayers and money to make this happen. My prayer is that with your continued support this great work may continue.***

***-Andy Vanderhoff***

## From The Department of Apologetics

Is Cornelius Van Til right about Christian apologetics (starting with the truth of Scripture), or is Thomas Aquinas correct (starting with natural theology)? This question occupied much of my attention from college through seminary. In those years, I opted for Aquinas in spite of attending Westminster Theological Seminary and taking Van Til's last academic class (course on Karl Barth). As I lived in this apologetic discussion, I also became interested in Biblical hermeneutics. I became preoccupied with the centrality of Christ in all of Scripture (Lk. 24: 27, 44-47). Soon I was struggling with this question: how do I reconcile an apologetic that begins with natural theology with a Biblical hermeneutic that understands the centrality of Christ in every text of Scripture? This question came to a head in the summer of 1979 as I wrote the final chapter of my Th. M. thesis in Apologetics entitled, *Paul's Two Age Construction and Apologetics* (published by Wipf and Stock). When I was faced with the task of applying to apologetics Paul's understanding of "the present evil age" over against "the age to come", Aquinas's view of apologetics

crumbled before the mastery of Paul's historical view of revelation. Indeed, apologetics is the defense of "the age to come" against "the present evil age;" hence, I came to see that Van Til was right about apologetics. In light of the fall, the Christ of Scripture must be presupposed in order to communicate Biblically to sinful man.

Christian education has been the focus of my vocational life. I taught Bible in a Christian high school from 1977 until I moved to Covenant College in 1993. What a challenge—equip high school students who are obsessed with "pop culture" with a redemptive-historical view Biblical revelation and a defense of that revelation within the confines of their world: film, TV, technology, cars, freedom from parents, employment, friendships, leisure, recreation, dating, parties, sports, church, and if there is time, academics.

While teaching in the "real" culture of high school, I decided to pursue a Ph. D. in Interdisciplinary Studies focusing on theology, philosophy, and history of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Germany. Van Til's apologetic and the redemptive-historical hermeneutic would now engage the

***Dr. Bill Dennison***



***teaches the apologetics and introductory systematics courses for NWTS. He is a frequent contributor to Kerux and many other notable periodicals in addition to teaching interdisciplinary studies at Covenant College.***

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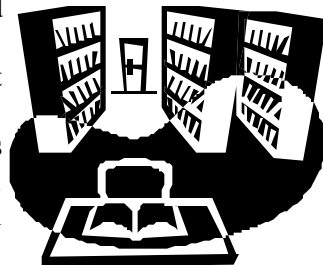
challenges of intellectual history. What a powerful combination of tools it was as I studied the German critical theologian, Rudolf Bultmann! The hermeneutic surely equipped me to deal with his version of Biblical criticism and Van Til provided the method to unfold the structure of his philosophy and expose his neo-Kantian and existential thought. This work on Bultmann defined my academic passion: use Van Til’s method to unlock the structure of the history of non-Christian thought while not compromising the Christ of Scripture with that thought. Whether I am teaching Cultural Heritage of the West at Covenant, unfolding worldviews for the summer sessions of World Magazine Journalism Institute (Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Locke, Darwin, Post-modernism), or teaching pastors apologetics for MTIOPC, the revelation of Scripture is uniquely sufficient to expose the hearts of men and to declare the need for all men to repent and come to the incarnation of wisdom—Jesus, our Lord! Our defense of the faith and our analysis of all thought must always *begin* and *end* with Christ! The apologetic task is inherently Christocentric and eschatological!

What a joy that a Biblical hermeneutic and Van Tillian apologetic defines the agenda of NWTS as she trains young men as pastors for a life of ministry in the Church. This is the essence of “old Princeton.” As the adjunct professor in apologetics, it is my goal to integrate this uniquely Biblical apologetic with my real world experience of counseling with and ministering to young people and their parents, dealing with the challenges of pastoring those attending college, and confronting the challenging intellectual issues of our day. As one who is also ministering to a congregation in the OPC while she searches for a pastor, I realize the importance of communicating to our future pastors that our hermeneutic, our doctrine, and yes, even our apologetic must always function in the context of the life of the church. The defense of the Christ in Scripture is the defense of Christ and His eternal Bride against the Kingdom of Satan and “the present evil age”!

**-William D. Dennison, Ph.D.  
Adjunct Professor of Apologetics**

### Library News

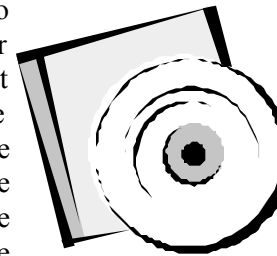
Construction of the new library facilities at the Lynnwood OPC are slated to begin in the last week of April. This library has been stored in boxes for several



years at Trinity OPC in Bothell, WA through the generosity of Rev. Marc Renkema and the Session there. Plans exist to erect shelving around the walls of what is now an extra classroom, and we hope to have the majority of the approximately 5000 volumes up and available for use by our students and the local seminary community beginning this summer.

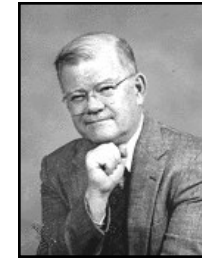
### Tapes, Donations, and CDs

NWTS has a new sermon CD available featuring sermons by the Academic Dean, Rev. Jim Dennison, and second year student Adam King. This recording is the second sermon CD in our sermon series, and it can be sent to you along with our other special event recordings which we make available for the edification of the Bride of Christ. We encourage you to take advantage of these resources with or without a donation. For more specific information, contact the office.



As you become persuaded of the value of our work for the building up of Christ’s Kingdom, continue to remember us in your giving. NWTS is a 501c3 federally tax-exempt educational institution. All contributions are tax deductible, and you will be issued a receipt with our sincere gratitude. If you’d like to give or pledge

by Visa or Mastercard, please call us at 425-787-5144.



### Phillip E. Johnson to speak at Summer Conference

The Summer Conference 2004 is just around the corner. NWTS has invited

Phillip E. Johnson, professor of law at the Jefferson E. Peyser School of Law at the University of California, Berkeley. Author of *Darwin on Trial*, Johnson is a widely recognized outspoken proponent of the intelligent design theory, and has caused controversy in the scientific community by pointing out that Darwinism is naturalistic philosophy, not science. In a 1997 interview with *WORLD* magazine writer Jay Grelen, Johnson is quoted as saying, “Ministers and Christians in science “have been heavily influenced by indoctrination . . . Evolutionary science is based on naturalism and draws philosophical conclusions to that base. That’s why any theistic evolution is inherently superficial. It leads people into naturalistic thinking, and they don’t realize it.””

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NWTS will be hosting Dr. Johnson in