

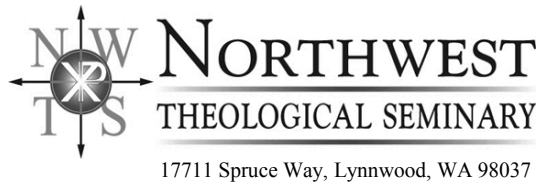
The Works of Rev. Charles G. Dennison, Online at www.nwts.edu

Currently we have available Charlie's series on Philemon, Habakkuk and Isaiah's Christmas Children. We hope to have his sermon series on Philippians up shortly. We are constantly updating, so check back with us often!

How You Can Help NWTS:

- *Pray without Ceasing!*
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NWTS has a variety of audio resources available for a suggested donation of \$40, including the 2007 and 2005 Kerux Conferences in mp3 format. Contact Brian at brian_nwts@yahoo.com for more details.



Volume 9, Issue 1
March 2008

NORTHWEST THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY NEWSLETTER



His story is...

Our Story

Sabbath Work: John 5:1-18

By Rev. R. Daniel Knox

Commenting on this passage, F. F. Bruce writes, "How does the Son impart life? By His 'Word', for the word which He speaks is spoken not by His own authority, but by the Father's... The incident of the healing of the lame man at the pool of Bethesda is a 'sign' of this truth; as he received bodily healing through the enabling word of Christ, so it is through His word that men and women receive life on the spiritual plane."

The Jews were enraged because Jesus "was doing these things on the Sabbath" (Jn. 5:16). Jesus' answer?—"My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working" (Jn. 5: 17).

Therefore they sought all the more to kill Him, "because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father..." (Jn. 5:18).

Jesus, as both Fulfiller of the Law and Lord of the Sabbath, came to reveal and to do His Father's will, declaring that He can only do what He sees the Father doing (Jn. 5:19). For Jesus, that meant Sabbath work— showing mercy and preaching the

life-giving Word of the kingdom. He remained faithful to that task to the end. In turn, He commissioned His church to go and do likewise in His Spirit. On His authority and with His presence, then, such Sabbath *work* is carried out in the church Lord's Day by Lord's Day.

Now we all have heard the tongue-in-cheek comment, "After all, ministers work only one day a week." But we know better! The ministry of the Word is full-time, often-excruciating labor. But men are taking up this task under the compulsion of love of Jesus. He is building His Church; therefore, they must preach His Word.

The Heidelberg Catechism (Q. 103) asks, **What does God require in the fourth commandment?** The answer begins, "In the first place, that the ministry of the Gospel and schools be maintained..."

Here is our Sabbath work. Jesus exhorts us to pray the Lord of the harvest to raise up workers to go into the fields already whitened. We are to pray that these men would be thoroughly equipped for every good work, that they might make known with bold-

Continued on page 7

FACULTY SCHOLARSHIP

FROM DR. WILLIAM D. DENNISON, PROFESSOR OF APOLOGETICS AND

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY:



My book on *The Young Bultmann, Context for His Understanding of God, 1884-1925* was just released by Peter Lang Publications. I have also submitted two articles by request to *New Horizons* (the denominational magazine of the OPC): 1) “Parenting the Baptized,” and 2) “Darwin on Theism” (in light of Darwin’s 200th birthday in 2009). I have offered a sermon on faith to *Kerux*. Presently, I am working on a review article for *Kerux* on J.P. Moreland and William Lane Craig’s, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*. Mark Chapman of Oxford University and editor of the *Journal for the History of Modern Thought* has requested a three-part component from me on the following project: 1) an article on neo-Kantianism, from the class notes of Rudolf Bultmann on Prof. Paul Natortp’s logic lectures; 2) publish Bultmann’s class notes from that course; and 3) publish J. Gresham Machen’s personal letters during his academic days at Marburg University when he was a classmate of Rudolf Bultmann.

FROM PROF. JAMES T. DENNISON, PROFESSOR OF BIBLICAL THEOLOGY AND

CHURCH HISTORY:



MARKET DAY OF THE SOUL BACK IN PRINT

Jim Dennison’s book on the Sabbath has been reprinted by Reformation Heritage Publications of Grand Rapids, Michigan. As a study in the history of doctrine, the book explains and provides an exegetical defense of the Puritan view of the 4th Commandment (“Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy”). This is the view expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms. It is also the view of the Dutch Reformed community of Emden (East Frisia) as found in the 1551 Emden Catechism. Hence the suggestion that the so-called ‘Continental’ view of the Sabbath is opposed to the 17th century Puritan view must be reconsidered. The Sabbath as a “delight” (Isa. 58:13), set apart wholly unto the Lord is more universally Reformed than contemporary practice suggests. Modern practice needs to be conformed to the will of the Lord of the Sabbath as expressed in his holy, moral and gracious Law. The Sabbath is an eschatologically oriented (“now”/“not yet”) redemptive-historical dynamic (Creation Era, Era of the Law, and Era of the Gospel), as Geerhardus Vos demonstrated many years ago (see *Kerux.com* for an explanation of Vos’s Sabbath biblical theology, i.e., “Vos on the Sabbath: A Close Reading”).

REFORMED CONFESSIONS PROJECT, VOLUME 1, AT THE PUBLISHER

For the past 5 years, Jim Dennison has been collecting Reformed confessions from the 16th and 17th centuries. These documents originate in many nations (Switzerland, Germany, Holland, England, Scotland, France, Hungary, Transylvania, Poland, Brazil, America) and are written in many languages (German, Latin, French, English, Dutch, Spanish, Italian, Polish, Magyar, Portuguese). More than 125 confessional documents have been gathered and will

new has come and the old has ended and is being done away (2 Cor. 5:17), even while we wait for the Son from heaven (1 Thess. 1:10).

Good preaching is God-centered, not man-centered. Enough of these litanies of illustrations, autobiographical and otherwise, often more important to the preacher than the text itself. Enough of these shameful anecdotal homilies invented out of half truths and out-and-out untruths, the stuff of evangelical folklore. Preaching is not first of all about what may have happened to me or to you, disgracefully embellished and exaggerated, but what has most assuredly happened to Jesus Christ.

Engaging in my own litany of illustrations (this is a bit of foolishness, after all), let me pass on a couple of personal experiences. I recently heard a message on Isaiah 6 in which the preacher informed us that the prophet’s adventure in the temple was merely a moment of new self-awareness, “a defining moment in his life,” the kind we all need in the interests of “getting serious” about worship! Thus the life of the hearer was made the text of the sermon. This message rivals in absurdity the one I heard a number of years ago from the minister who preached on Abram’s departure from Ur to the theme, “We all need a change from time to time.” I have wondered, in light of these travesties, if we should not reconsider our definition of blasphemy?

I plead with you: Good preaching is Christ-centered, not morality or behavior-centered; Scripture-centered, not headline-centered; event-centered, not idea-centered; church-centered, not culture-centered; history of redemption-centered, not history of the world-centered.

But good preaching is even more. For it is vitally bound to the risen Christ. In him it touches the heavenly, transcendent truth of which Paul speaks in 2 Corinthians 2:17. The apostle is quite conscious that he “speaks in Christ in the sight of God.”

—Excerpted from *Kerux* 11(December 1996):3-9

Sabbath Work, cont.

ness the life-giving gospel. Indeed, it is our joy to fellowship with them in that good work. In this we recognize that our tithes and offerings provide support so that they might devote themselves to the ministry of the word, being relieved of worldly care.

But as the catechism teaches, in view is not only the support of the ordained ministry but also the maintenance of the schools. Historically then, the Reformed have understood the Sabbath requirement, in terms of maintaining the Christian schools, and particularly the requisite training of men for ministry. Here, too, through our prayers and gifts, we all have a part in this blessed Sabbath work in Christ. The Lord of the Sabbath is working until now, and in Sabbath hope we ourselves are working.

—Rev. R. Daniel Knox

New Board Member!

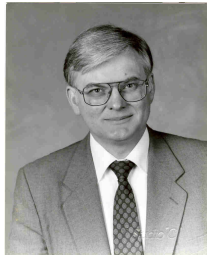
Northwest Theological Seminary is pleased to welcome Rev. R. Daniel Knox as our newest board member.

Rev. Knox is pastor of Grace Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Sewickley, PA. Dan holds an M.Div. from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, and was ordained into the United Presbyterian Church. In the 1980’s, Dan, along with a number of conservative United Presbyterians, left the UPC USA and came into the OPC.

Dan is committed to the Redemptive-Historical approach to preaching, presuppositional apologetics and confessional orthodoxy, and has been a staunch supporter of NWTs since its inception.

Some Thoughts on Good Preaching

By Rev. Charles G. Dennison



Preaching, I'm sorry to say, is in a bad state of repair. While many share this judgment, all do not realize how desperate the situation is. Particularly indicting is the fact that good preaching cannot be recognized by many in the church. Tragically, preaching, let alone good preaching, doesn't interest a large number of church-goers.

Good preaching stands in the line of the book of Deuteronomy, Moses' magnificent sermon preached to a people redeemed by God, lead through one world, and poised to enter another even as the law of that other world is communicated to them through a dying mediator. Good preaching stands in the line of the prophet Isaiah who ministers between the coming of the

kingdom in David's reign and the coming of the kingdom in Jesse's more wonderful branch. Against the background of the destruction of the Northern Kingdom, Isaiah exalts grace through the anguish, death, and vindication of God's faithful servant for a blessing on his elect from all nations in the new heavens and new earth.

Ultimately, good preaching rests in the preaching of Jesus Christ, who proclaimed the good news about the kingdom's gracious arrival in his person and work before that kingdom's awful consummation (cf. the parables). Jesus' preaching called his hearers to the reality of the kingdom, effectively sealing those repenting and believing in him within that kingdom's superlative blessings presently hidden in a life of cross-bearing (cf. Mt. 5:3-16). Faithful preaching follows the risen Christ who, from Moses and all the prophets, declared to those going to Emmaus the necessity of his suffering before glory (Lk. 24:25-27).

I plead with you: Good preaching is Christ-centered, not morality or behavior-centered; Scripture-centered, not headline-centered; event-centered, not idea-centered; church-centered, not culture-centered; history of redemption-centered, not history of the world-centered.

Paul's preaching flows from this fountain. The coming of the kingdom in Jesus' message translates into the apostle's message about the advent of the end of the ages (1 Cor. 10:11), the fullness of the time (Gal. 4:4), the revelation of the mystery (Eph. 1:9), and the end of the law (Rom. 10:4). Kingdom blessings are mediated by faith through gracious union with Christ in the sufficiency and finality of his death, resurrection, and ascension (Rom. 4:25; 1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 3:1-4). The Holy Spirit is given as down-payment of the heavenly reward and as the one by whom and in whom the church shares in the heavenly life of the world to come (Eph. 1:3-14), even as she, in the self-sacrifice of bondservitude to her Lord (Phil. 2:5ff.), awaits in this world the appearance of her great God and Savior, Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13).

Good preaching, therefore, consistently declares the mighty acts of God, supremely the redeeming work of his eternal Son. It labors to convince us about our place in relation to those mighty acts: We are participants in them, not spectators of them. Good preaching directs us to the word of God, the Scriptures, there to find our life in the drama of redemption. It draws us into the text to be confronted with the revelation of the awesomeness of God, the certainties of his justice, and the comforts of his mercy for the gathering of his elect into a holy assembly, the church of Jesus Christ.

Good preaching calls men and women, young and old, to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ so that they might be delivered from this present evil age and be made citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20; Col. 1:13). It understands that we live "between the times," i.e., between Christ's bodily resurrection and our own, between the time when the

be printed, in English, in a multi-volume set. Volume 1, entitled *The Reformed Confessions of the 16th and 17th Centuries in English Translation: 1523-1552* will include 34 confessions beginning with Ulrich Zwingli's *67 Articles* and concluding with John Calvin's *Consensus Genevensis* or "On the Eternal Predestination of God". In between will be the first English translation of the Bern Synod (1532), the Waldensian Confession of Merindol (1543), the Confession of Wessel (1544/45), Juan Diaz's, Summary of the Christian Religion (1546) and the Rhaetian Confession (1552). Also included in this initial volume will be the Confession of the East Friesland Preachers (1528), the 1st Confession of Basel (1534), the 1st Helvetic Confession (1536), all of Calvin's Catechisms (1537, 1538, 1541/45), the Confession of the London Congregation of John a Lasco (1551), the Confession of the Refugee Congregation of Vallerand Poullain at Glastonbury England (1551), the Emden Catechism (1551) and many others. The Reformed Confessions project is being published by Reformation Heritage Publications of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

EARLIEST PROTESTANT CONFESSIONS IN HUNGARY

The forth-coming May issue of *Kerux: The Journal of Northwest Theological Seminary* will feature the first English translation of the earliest Protestant Confessions from Hungary. Jim Dennison will provide an introduction to the Reformation in Hungary together with a translation of the Latin texts of the "Theses of Nagymarad" (1544) and the "Erdod Confession" (1545). Beginning in Lutheranism, the Reformation in Hungary shifted to the 'Helvetic' theology of John Calvin and Heinrich Bullinger by the 1550s, giving rise to the Hungarian Reformed Church.

FEATURED ALUMNI UPDATE: BENJI SWINBURNSON



During this past year, quite a bit has happened! After graduating from NWTS and enduring licensure examinations for the Presbytery of the Northwest (OPC) last year, I began a year-long internship at Lynnwood OPC under Rev. Peter Vosteen. Since then, I have been busy serving in the church here in a variety of ways, including preaching at least once a week. So far we have made our way through 1 Peter, Haggai, and the Psalms of Ascent. The last series has been a particular delight as we have seen the ancient psalmists proclaim their steadfast hope in the coming of their eschatological Savior as they sojourn in a weary world. My training in Mr. Dennison's *Psalms and Wisdom Literature* class has proved invaluable as we have studied this beautiful, inspired poetry. Furthermore, I have also taught two adult Sunday School classes on the Reformed faith for beginners, and the Canons of Dordt. As I have worked through these difficult studies, I have grown more and more thankful for the training I received at NWTS. Not only do I feel they have prepared me academically for the work of the ministry, they continue to show a sincere personal interest in my well-being and faithfulness as a pastor. I cannot say enough to express my gratitude to the faculty and staff for their continued love, prayers, counsel and support.

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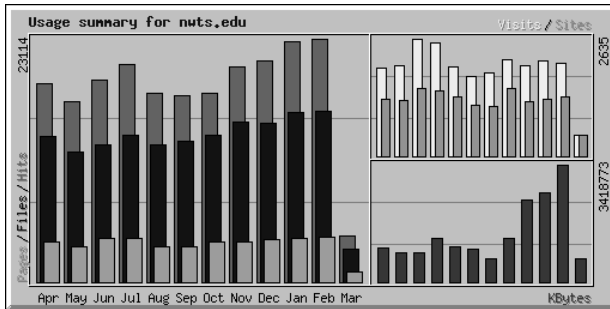
From the Director of Development:

Legacy Gift Received!

We give God thanks and praise that we have received a generous legacy gift this past month! This gives us the much needed funds to make it through the summer months when giving is particularly low. Pray that the Lord will continue to provide the financial needs of NWTS, even as he has provided so abundantly already!

Record Number of Hits to Our Website!

Our website, www.nwts.edu, has experienced record numbers of hits over the last several months, especially since making available the sermons of Rev. Charles Dennison. We give God thanks for this encouragement!



February Recruiting Tour:

Last month, Brian Belh completed his spring recruiting tour. Starting at Dordt College, he visited the campuses of Covenant College, Geneva College, Grove City College and Kuyper College. He was very encouraged by the number of both new contacts he made, as well as reconnecting with former contacts. For part of his display, he gave to potential students a copy of Geerhardus Vos's *Grace and Glory*, as well as an mp3 CD of sermons by our graduates and students, to help see and hear NWTS distinctiveness. Pray that God would bring a rich harvest out of our recruiting efforts!

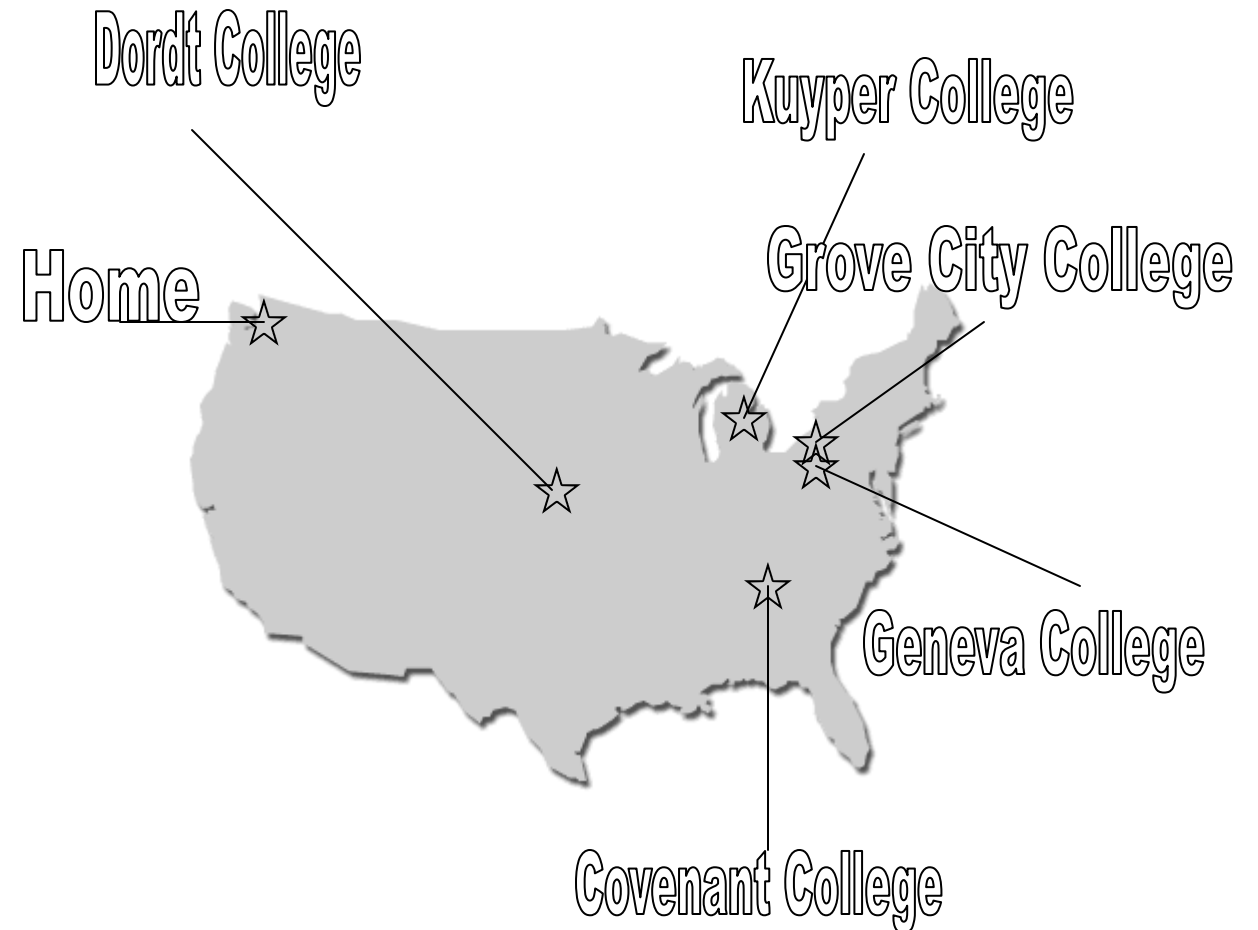
Monthly Giving Still Low

While we have received very good news with regard to the legacy gift, our monthly giving remains very low. Will you consider giving monthly if you are not doing so, or increase your monthly giving to NWTS in order that we may prepare men for Gospel ministry? Without your support, we cannot sustain our efforts. Please prayerfully consider how you can help!

Featured Alumni Update: Benji Swinburnson, cont.

We are also thankful to God to inform you that we have received a call from the congregation here in Lynnwood to continue to serve as their Associate Pastor. I would ask for your prayers, not only as I prepare for ordination exams, but also for many years of service to Christ and his church. Please pray that I might continue to look to Christ, the great Shepherd of his sheep, for guidance and wisdom to care for his flock. Through the grace of Christ, at NWTS we have received much from the riches of Christ's grace. And we know that to whom much is given, much is required. Please pray that we may, with Paul, "not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor. 4:5).

Recent Recruiting Tour



February 20-March 1, 2008