

THE
CROSS



OUR
CALLING

THE IDENTITY AND VISION
OF REDEEMER UNIVERSITY

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FOREWORD



Faculty Council, Senate
and Board of Governors
November 2002





SEEKING TO BE a faithful and vibrant Christian academic community, we have crafted this document to give a fuller expression of the religious identity and founding vision of Redeemer University as a Reformed Christian institution seeking to serve the broader Christian community. Using biblical language and a contemporary idiom, *The Cross and Our Calling* is intended to build on the other founding and official documents of the university. These include the:

- **Objects and Purposes**
- **Statement of Basis and Principles**
- **Educational Guidelines**
- **Guidelines on Reformed Christian Perspective**
- **Redeemer University Mission Statement**

01

**THE CROSS
OF JESUS
CHRIST**



IN IDENTIFYING OURSELVES as a Christian university, we at Redeemer are declaring that it is in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, and more particularly in his suffering, death and resurrection, that we find our own calling to academic lives of teaching, scholarship and artistry (1 Cor. 2:1-2). In taking as our starting point the work of Christ which makes possible our reconciliation with God, we join our brothers and sisters from other traditions within the Christian church in confessing the centrality of the atoning work of Jesus. And in keeping with our Reformed tradition, we stress the comprehensive significance of what has been accomplished in Christ; the cross was the means God chose to restore to himself the whole of his good creation, and thus the whole of human life, including academic life (Col. 1:19-20).

The source of the creation's present brokenness, and of all that inhibits humankind's joyful and abundant life in God's good provision for us, is human rebellion and sin. Christ took this sin upon himself for our sake. When God struck Jesus in his judgment against sin, he began to dismantle forever the evil that so disfigures and oppresses our world. In the resurrection of Jesus, at the cross, a new day has dawned. We see in it the beginning of a new world in which the very powers of darkness, and sin, sorrow, sickness and death itself, have been overcome by God. The resurrection is our assurance that all these will one day be removed utterly from the creation. At the cross of Christ, God rejected the corruption which had been brought upon his creation by human mutiny: he said "No" to sin.

And yet, in the very same event by which he condemned the evil which had infiltrated the creation through humankind's fall into sin, God affirmed the essential goodness of the creation itself. What brought Jesus to the cross was God's unwavering love for a world that had become enslaved by sin. In the crucifixion and resurrection of his own Son, God conquered sin, liberating the creation from its bondage. No other act could have demonstrated more clearly God's abiding love toward the world; he judged it to be good, to be worth salvaging and redeeming even at a terrible price. Jesus' sacrificial death accomplished the world's salvation, and guarantees that one day the entire creation will be set free from the effects of sin, healed and restored to God. At the cross of Christ, God affirmed the goodness of what his hand had made; he said "Yes" to the creation.

For in him all the fullness
of God was pleased to dwell,
and through him

**TO RECONCILE
TO HIMSELF ALL
THINGS,**

whether on earth or in heaven,
making peace by the blood
of his cross.

COLOSSIANS 1:19-20

02

GOD'S

"YES" TO

CREATION





IN OUR APPROACH to teaching, research and artistic endeavour in this university, we wish to echo God's affirmation of his good creation (Gen. 1). We believe that God continues to maintain the cosmos he created, and that within it (and in spite of the perversions wrought by the fall) we may yet discern something of the beauty of forms and of relations as he made them, a beauty and order that reflect his own wisdom, constancy and power (Ps. 19, 104; Rom. 1:18-20). We see his handiwork not only in the regularities of the natural world, but also in the normal patterns of human behaviour and relationship which underlie human societies and cultures (Is. 28:23-29). We discern God's creative artistry both in the amazing diversity of kinds in the natural world and also in the diversity of social structures and cultural activities which he has made possible. Furthermore, we see the entire array of God's or-

And God blessed them.
And God said to them,

**“BE FRUITFUL
AND MULTIPLY
AND FILL THE
EARTH AND
SUBDUE IT,**

and have dominion over the fish
of the sea and over the birds of the
heavens and over every living thing
that moves on the earth.”

GENESIS 1:28

dinances for the world and for human life, not as a constricting burden, but as a liberating blessing (Ps. 119).

Within this broad creational context, human beings are created uniquely in God's image to enjoy loving communion with him. God asks us to nurture and develop the creation, and to delight in his good gifts within it. God's first and fundamental command to humankind was that we should subdue the earth and have dominion over its creatures (Gen. 1:26-28). We understand this injunction to refer not merely to agriculture but to culture itself in the broadest sense of the word. We are enjoined to open up the potentialities within every field of human endeavour, including the academic enterprise. This fundamental cultural mandate was neither abrogated by the fall nor superseded by the mission mandate; on the contrary, it has been reaffirmed at the cross by Christ's work of restoring humankind to its intended place within the order of creation. Thus we understand the academic task in general, and the mission of Redeemer University in particular, to be grounded in the goodness of creation and in God's own calling to preserve and develop it in obedience to him.

03

GOD'S "NO"

TO SIN



WHILE WE CAN and do find God's purpose within academic pursuits (since by them we can investigate and delight in the creation God made good), we must also acknowledge that the creation has not maintained its original perfection. Humankind chose and still chooses to believe and to live out the lie of Satan instead of the word of life given by the Creator (Gen. 3:1-8). The destroying and enslaving influence of sin infects every aspect of human life, including academic life. Nothing in our world or work as teachers and scholars is untouched by sin (Gen. 3:7-24).

Humankind was made to worship and serve its Maker. If we divert this impulse to something else, something created, we make of that created thing an idol. And idolatry is not to be understood solely as the individual's misdirected worship. Since we are creatures made to live in

community and to share our lives, our idols, too, are shared (Rom. 1:21-23, 25). Human societies can and do make commitments of faith to many objects and ideas other than God. Religious significance is ascribed to created things; cultures and institutions are shaped by idolatry. Since teaching, learning, research and artistic performance within the university are likewise vulnerable to the twisting, disfiguring influence of misdirected faith, the university, too, must be liberated from its bondage to the enslaving power of human rebellion.

**...BECAUSE THEY
EXCHANGED THE
TRUTH ABOUT
GOD FOR A LIE**

and worshiped and served the
creature rather than the Creator,
who is blessed forever! Amen.

ROMANS 1:25

04

BIBLICAL

FOUNDATIONS





1. THE STORY OF GOD'S REDEEMING LOVE FOR THE WORLD

To understand the nature and purpose of higher education, we need to recall the conception of history that should shape it. There is a true cosmic story of which our university's story is a part. The Bible is the true story of the world, the grand historical narrative of an earth and a people formed in creation, deformed by human rebellion and reformed by God's redemptive work in Jesus Christ. It is the story of God's redeeming love for his wayward creation, the story that will culminate in the restoration of the entire creation under the gracious rule of God.

In this cosmic historical drama we can discern six major acts. In act one the creation is formed by God, his original purpose for it is explained and he pronounces it good. In act two this good creation is defiled by human rebellion and begins to suffer the effects of humankind's willful separation from the Creator. The remaining four acts of the biblical story—from the third chapter of Genesis to the book of Revelation—tell of God's mighty acts in history as he works to restore the creation, delivering his world from the bondage of sin.

Act three, narrated in the Old Testament, recites the work of God to form a people who will bear in their corporate life the promise of future restoration. This people is meant to be a light to the world and a channel of God's redemptive love for all creation and all nations (Gen. 12:2-3; Ex. 19:3-6). God gives to his people the law, the sacrificial system, priests, prophets, kings and more, to nourish the kind of life that points to his intention for all peoples. For many ages of Israel's history, as she is overcome by the darkness of her pagan neighbours, God's redemptive purpose appears to fail (2 Kings 17:7-23). And yet God promises that from this wayward people will come a Saviour who will one day establish, in the power of the Spirit, a kingdom without boundaries of time or space. By this Saviour the creation will be renewed and restored; the corruption brought upon the world by sin, and sin itself, shall be destroyed (Is. 2:2-5; 9:6-7).

In act four that promise is kept when Jesus of Nazareth steps onto the stage of history, announcing that he has come to realize the expectation of Israel and to fulfill Israel's calling

by bringing God's salvation to a broken world (Lk. 4:16-21). Jesus claims that the kingdom of God has arrived, that God's power by the Spirit to liberate and heal the creation is now present in himself (Mk. 1:14-15). Yet this kingdom does not come in the way that Israel had expected. While the renewing and re-creating power of God is present in the life and work of Jesus, the world is still in bondage to sin and death; Satan continues to hold sway (2 Cor. 4:4). Though in redemptive history a new era has begun in which the saving and restoring power of the promised age to come is beginning to flow into history, the final judgment on evil is delayed (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43; Heb. 6:4-5). In this new epoch, though the kingdom is already present in Jesus by the power of God's Spirit of renewal (Matt. 12:28), the full restoration of creation is not yet complete (Matt. 6:9-13).

JESUS WAS THE FIRST WITNESS TO THE KINGDOM IN HIS LIFE, WORDS, AND DEEDS.

What is the meaning of this new period in redemptive history? This is an urgent question, because this is the era in which we live; it is our place in God's story. The answer to this question ought to shape the life of the Christian community in all its endeavours, including its educational task.

Ours is an era of witness to the coming kingdom (Matt. 24:14; Lk. 14:15-24). Jesus was the first witness to the

And he who was seated
on the throne said,

**“BEHOLD,
I AM MAKING
ALL THINGS
NEW.”**

REVELATION 21:5A

Kingdom in his life, words, and deeds. He embodied the power of God's purpose to heal and renew a broken world. At the completion of his ministry he gathered the nucleus of his newly formed community together to give them their marching orders: "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (Jn. 20:21). A community of Christ's followers was "called together" (*ekklesia*, from which *église* derives) to continue the witness to the Kingdom that Jesus had begun—a witness to be carried out by the power of the Holy Spirit working within and among the believers, the people "of the Lord" (*kyriakos*, from which comes church) (Acts 1:1-11; Acts 2:14-42). Their story—our story—is act five of the biblical drama. This era of witness must continue until the sixth and final act of world history, when Jesus Christ returns to judge the living and the dead, to make a final separation between his good creation and the parasitic evil which has obscured and thwarted it, and then to complete his work of restoration and renewal (Rev. 21:1-5).

2. THE CROSS: THE VICTORY OF GOD'S REDEEMING LOVE

The mission of God's people is founded upon the central events of world history (Acts 2:14-41): Christ's triumph in his death over the power of evil (Col. 2:15), his inauguration (in the resurrection, as firstborn from the dead) of the world to come (Col. 1:18), his accession to the throne at the right hand of God as rightful king over creation (Phil. 2:9-11)

and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon his chosen community (Acts 2:1-13) so that they might begin to taste the renewing powers of the coming age (Heb. 6:4-5).

The recurring problem of the people of God during the time of the Old Testament was that they succumbed repeatedly to the seductions of idolatry. Neither the law nor God's various judgments nor the sacrificial system nor any other of the gifts of God to Israel were able to uproot the sin of rebellion from their hearts (Gen. 6:5; 8:21). Yet what these gifts were unable to effect, due to the entrenched power of sin, God did accomplish in the cross of Christ (Rom. 8:1-4). The cross demonstrates the victory of God's redeeming love over the destructive power of sin (Jn. 12:30-33; Col. 2:15). In the death and resurrection of Jesus, God delivered the final blow to human sin and rebellion, and accomplished the salvation of his world. Such a startling claim for the significance of the cross seems undermined by the historical and cultural contexts in which the death of Jesus took place. In the Roman empire, crucifixion was the cruelest among many cruel means of execution—our word excruciating (from *crux*, *crucis*: a cross) suggests the ultimate degree of physical suffering. But the pain of crucifixion was not merely physical; its victim was meant to be humiliated, put on public display to demonstrate the contemptible weakness of any man foolish enough to fall into the hand of Roman law. How then could anyone interpret this horrific event as demonstrating the power and victory of God himself over sin and death?

The claim of victory through the cross was first made by the disciples who had seen Jesus alive after he had risen from the dead. Christ's bodily resurrection heralded a new day. By raising his Son from the grave and seating him at his own right hand, God declared Jesus to be Lord over the whole creation, and then he poured out his Spirit on his people in celebration. That first Christian community experienced the renewing power of the Spirit at Pentecost as participants in this new resurrection life, and proclaimed the cross to be God's victory over sin (1 Cor. 1:18–2:5).

3. THE CHURCH: A PEOPLE CALLED TO WITNESS TO THE VICTORY OF THE CROSS

How may our unbelieving world ever see that God's victory over evil was accomplished by a man's dying on a cross? First, by seeing the church, a community that embodies and demonstrates this victory in its own life: worshipping, studying God's word, commemorating and appropriating the death and resurrection of Jesus in the sacraments of baptism and communion, seeking to work out Jesus' claim of lordship in every facet of life and work (1 Pet. 2:4–12). At the beginning of his ministry on earth, and again after the resurrection, Jesus commissioned a small band of followers to become the nucleus of this new people, a community that would grow and develop through time and space to be witnesses of the good news that God is taking up his

rightful place as king and renewing his creation (Acts 1:1-11). Second, the world will see the true significance of the cross and joyfully submit to the rule of Christ only as the Spirit works, particularly in response to prayer, awakening faith in human hearts (Lk. 11:1-13; Col. 4:2-6). It is for this reason that prayer is essential to all the tasks of the Christian community. At Redeemer University, since we recognize that university education is taken up into the battle for God's coming Kingdom, we acknowledge that this educational task must be nourished by prayer and worship. A healthy corporate spirituality is essential to Christian higher education.

WE ARE CALLED TO WITNESS TO THE VICTORY OF JESUS CHRIST IN OUR WHOLE LIVES.

We are called to witness to the victory of Jesus Christ in our whole lives, to make known the good news of God's renewed reign over creation (1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:17). Since the kingly authority of our risen Lord extends to the whole world, the mission of his people is equally comprehensive: to embody the rule of Christ over marriage and family, business and politics, art and athletics, leisure and scholarship (Matt. 28:18-30; Rom. 12). Thus the work of Redeemer University must be understood as part of the call of God to proclaim the good news of his Kingdom, a Kingdom which is in our own day both present and yet to come (Col. 2:6-8). But it remains a mission under the sign of the cross.

In the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ we see four things: Jesus proclaims the message of God's redeeming love in the very face of human rebellion and sin; that message is rejected and the messenger scorned and brutally put to death; God's loving act in giving his own Son demonstrates his immediate victory over the power of sin; the return of Jesus from the dead is the token of God's ultimate victory over sin itself and all its effects upon the creation—a victory that remains largely hidden until the final day. The cross casts its shadow over the church's mission as it moves toward the completion of God's triumph when Jesus returns. As we seek to embody the victory of God, we too will face opposition, and the rejection that results in our suffering (Jn. 15:18–25). We too will announce and embody a final victory that will often remain hidden until the final day. In our mission we live in the certain hope that the victory of God will finally be revealed, that every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and the entire creation will be renewed (Phil. 2:9–11; Rev. 21:1–5).

05

Our Cultural Context:

**WITNESS
TO THE
LORDSHIP
OF JESUS
CHRIST**



THE FINAL ACT of the cosmic drama has not yet begun. In the meantime, for today and until Christ returns, we continue in the mission he entrusted to us, witnessing to and implementing the victory of the cross in our own society and beyond it to other peoples and cultures as we have opportunity. If we are to bring a faithful academic witness to our world, we must understand not only the grand cosmic story in which we find our place but also the local cultural story that is shaping the contemporary academic enterprise. God enjoined us to “be fruitful and increase in number, to fill the earth and subdue it” (Gen. 1:28). In other words, we are called to be part of our culture as it unfolds. Christ in his renewing work on the cross reasserted his claim to be Lord of all. Thus, we who have been made in God’s image and redeemed by Christ are obligated to participate in the formation of that culture in which we live. We are called to be

“at home” in our world even as we recognize that much of our world’s culture has been shaped by a conception of world history incompatible with the biblical story. Thus, if we are faithful to the gospel, we may often find ourselves “at odds” with much of our culture (Matt. 6:24; Rom. 12:1, 2). As a Christian academic community we stand in this tension, neither withdrawing from cultural participation nor accommodating ourselves to the status quo. We are to be in the world but not of it (Jn. 17:13-17). And a truly faithful response to this tension will require discernment regarding the religious core that shapes our culture.

The story of modern Western culture, like that of every human culture—indeed, like the biblical story itself—is rooted in faith. When modernism dominated thought and culture in the secular West, the prevailing faith commitment was to rationalistic humanism. In its 20th-century manifestation, humanism’s main tenets were that the exercise of human reason alone could explain reality, and that reason’s application (in research and especially in technology) to the world’s ills could remove those ills from human experience once and for all. Thus the infusion of technology into agriculture was to be the beginning of the end of poverty and hunger. A rationally ordered and sociologically informed educational system would eliminate ignorance, prejudice and inequity from society. Anthropological, political and economic research would show the way for the world’s nations to live together in lasting peace and prosperity. Confidence in this modern story, however, seems to be weaker in the early 21st century as we move into an era that has been termed postmodern.

Do not be conformed
to this world, but

**BE TRANSFORMED
BY THE RENEWAL
OF YOUR MIND,**

that by testing you may
discern what is the will of
God, what is good and
acceptable and perfect.

ROMANS 12:2

It is not easy to characterize the postmodern or late-modern situation at the beginning of the third millennium. For some, modernity's early promises now seem hollow. Faith in the modern story has been crushed by two world wars, a global depression, the growing gap between rich and poor, ecological crises, the nuclear threat, increasing psychological problems and social breakdown. What is emerging in reaction is a tolerant pluralism and a lifestyle of consumption. The modernist hope for a glorious future achieved by human science and technology is being supplanted by insecurity about the future. Trust in the human rational capacity to attain certain knowledge through the scientific method is giving way to uncertainty as the recognition of numerous subjective factors shaping knowledge impress us with the relativity of all truth claims.

And yet, for others, humanistic confidence remains strong. Indeed the dominance of the market, technological progress, and the spread of modern Western beliefs and institutions around the world in the process of globalization, encourages a resurgence of confidence in the modern story.

A sober and faithful Christian response to these competing worldviews must acknowledge what it is in each of them that is congruent with a biblical understanding of the nature of God, of humankind and of the world we've been placed in; likewise, we must identify those elements of each worldview which stand opposed to biblical Christianity. Thus we can, with humility, appreciate that modernism's emphasis on human rationality rightly draws attention to one of the

greatest of God's gifts to humankind: the reasoning capacity of a mind unique among his earthly creatures. But we must acknowledge also that postmodernism's emphasis on the profound role of subjectivity in human experience and understanding was a corrective to modernism's tendency to privilege—virtually to deify—certain kinds of human knowledge, especially scientific and technological knowledge. While we can agree with the modernist that truth is indeed the proper end of enquiry, we agree with the postmodernist that all of human knowledge is at best conditional and partial. While postmodernism is generally tolerant of spirituality itself and even of personal faith and faith communities, it is notoriously intolerant of any faith which claims (as biblical Christianity claims) universal application, and which denies that all religious experience may be equally valid and salutary.



GOD'S PEOPLE ARE CALLED TO GIVE WITNESS TO CHRIST'S PURPOSE FOR THE WORLD.


This is the cultural situation in which we as God's people are called to give witness to Christ's purpose for the world. A faithful Christian witness in academia will contest those faith commitments which have helped give definition to Western culture but which stand in contrast to the Gospel, and any challenge to such deeply rooted religious beliefs will provoke conflict and suffering. But while our calling to maintain a faithful Christian witness in the aca-

I do not ask that you take them
out of the world, but that you
keep them from the evil one.

**THEY ARE NOT
OF THE WORLD,
JUST AS I AM NOT
OF THE WORLD.**

Sanctify them in the truth;
your word is truth.

JOHN 17:15-17



**WE SEEK TO AFFIRM THE
GOOD WHICH WAS INTENDED
IN CULTURE'S MAKING EVEN
AS WE SEEK TO IDENTIFY
AND TO REJECT THE TWISTING
EFFECT WHICH IDOLATRY HAS
HAD UPON IT.**

demic arena may demand that we oppose much of what is accepted as normal and good in the culture surrounding us, we must not simply withdraw. We are called to participate in culture, to be involved in the ongoing tradition of university education and scholarship in the West, without accommodating ourselves to the differing religious beliefs that have helped to shape that tradition. Cultural products—whether particular theories or curricula or institutions—embody both the goodness of creational structure and the distortion of religious misdirection. There may be genuine discernment into God's creation in any branch of learning, even though every such branch will also bear the marks of sin upon it. The task of the Christian community, including the Christian university, is to discern that which is creational and therefore good in every aspect of culture. We seek to affirm the good which was intended in culture's making even as we seek to identify and to reject the twisting effect which idolatry has had upon it.

006

Our Educational Task:

**WITNESS TO
THE VICTORY
OF CHRIST IN
UNIVERSITY
EDUCATION**



WE WHO ARE members of Redeemer University are called in our teaching, research and artistic expression to witness to the victory of the cross and the lordship of the resurrected Christ. We understand the overall purpose of a Christian university education to be to equip young men and women to serve as witnesses to Christ's victory in the various vocations they will take up in society. They are to be witnesses not solely by using the opportunities for evangelism that their positions may afford, but by testifying to the transforming power of Christ in every aspect of their professional or vocational conduct as teachers, homemakers, business people, lawyers, journalists or artists, or in whatever other tasks there are to which God may call them. Redeemer University seeks to prepare servant leaders who dare to challenge the idols of our culture, and who in the very exercise of their callings bear witness to Christ and his

gentle yet liberating rule. In formulating the purpose of university education in this way, we are deliberately repudiating the mistaken conception that study is merely the handmaid of economic competitiveness. It is good that Christian university students become prepared in the course of their studies to become successful and productive members of society. But when social status and financial gain become the principal goals of education, that good has become twisted and rendered evil. Our students' first task, like our own, is to witness to God's rule over creation.

OUR STUDENTS' FIRST TASK, LIKE OUR OWN, IS TO WITNESS TO GOD'S RULE OVER CREATION.

We place high value on the kind of scholarship that is deliberately and explicitly shaped by the gospel. A faithful witness in the university is committed to study all aspects of what God has made, both in the non-human creation and in human culture, and to pass along these insights to students, equipping them to carry out in all their lives a faithful witness to the coming Kingdom of God. In this task, Redeemer University participates in two venerable traditions. The first is that scholarly tradition within Western culture stretching back to the Academy of classical Greece; the second is the tradition of Christian participation in higher education which had its beginnings among the early church fathers, flourished in the Middle Ages and was refined during the

Reformation and in subsequent ages. As Canadian Christian academics in the 21st century, we do not seek to create an academic ghetto in which we might devise a new “Christian” scholarship from the ground up. Instead, we seek to participate in the ongoing work of scholarship from within a Christian tradition which seeks to carry out its academic task in the light of Scripture. More specifically, we stand in the tradition of scholarship rooted in Augustine and Calvin which has been given more recent expression in Dutch neo-Calvinism and its conceptions of the relationship between faith and learning, a tradition associated with such scholars and theologians as Kuyper, Bavinck and Dooyeweerd, among others. Our participation in these two scholarly traditions compels us to discern the religious foundations and faith commitments that shape all theoretical work, acknowledging with thanks the creational insights they confer while seeking to identify and to reject the idolatrous twisting that can disfigure them.

In articulating the task of Christian scholarship in this way, we stand against two very different idols of the mind that have had great influence. The first is rational objectivism. In this view, the academic enterprise can be religiously neutral. While some modernist scholars might once have looked upon all pre-theoretical commitment in academic work as something which compromised scientific integrity, the Christian scholar recognizes (with the postmodernist) that no academic enquiry can begin without presuppositions, that all theoretical work is shaped by foundational beliefs. The second of these idols is radical relativism. In this view,

since perspectives on reality have been shaped largely by personal experience and by the arbitrary influences of one's own history, society and culture, all points of view are equally subjective, and objective knowledge of reality is an impossibility. For ourselves, while we do affirm the insight that human knowledge is always shaped to some degree by human subjectivity, we differ from the radically relativist point of view in two important respects. In the first place, the subjectivity that informs scholarship is, at its deepest level, religious in nature. That is, the paradigms and worldviews that mould theoretical work have not merely evolved to maturity under historical, social and cultural influences. Paradigms and worldviews are the products of that fundamental and directing power—the religious impulse—which lives at the very heart of humankind. Religion is not merely one more element of human subjectivity standing alongside all the others; it is what shapes and moves them all. Secondly, we reject the relativism that can arise from paying inordinate attention to the subjective elements in human knowledge and knowing. We believe that there is a given order of creation which can be known, and that we are called in our scholarly work to give a faithful account of what we can perceive of that order. Though our knowing never occurs in a vacuum, and though our knowledge is always partial and imperfect, genuine insight into the order of what has been made can be achieved.

Among Christian academics too there are models of scholarship from which we distinguish our own approach. The first is a kind of dualism that sees Christian belief as applicable only to the realm of theology, and keeps biblical teaching

completely separate from theoretical work in other disciplines. In another approach, often termed biblicism, isolated texts of Scripture are brought to bear on specific issues of research and theorizing in the disciplines, but without a proper recognition of the considerable differences in purpose and kind of language which distinguish Scripture from scholarship. A distinctive element of the Reformed tradition of scholarship in which we locate ourselves is its deliberate attention to the inner connection between Scripture and

**IT IS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE FOR
THE CHRISTIAN SCHOLAR TO
HAVE A GOOD GRASP OF THE
BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW.**

scholarly inquiry, that is, the normative bearing of Scripture on the making of theory. We see it as our responsibility to apply the biblical story and a biblical worldview to the basic religious, ideological, and philosophical assumptions that form the foundations of all academic work. It is these underlying assumptions which come to expression in the creation of a canon of literature, an artistic composition, a conceptual framework, a methodology or a paradigm, and it is on the level of these assumptions that the Scriptures may most fruitfully be brought to bear on the scholarly enterprise. Consequently, it is of great importance for the Christian scholar to have a good grasp of the biblical

worldview and some of its philosophical implications, in order to critique the assumptions of current secular schools of thought, to recognize the valid insights within theories which may not themselves be derived from a biblical worldview, and to reposition such insights within a Christian framework of thought which explicitly recognizes God's revelations in Scripture and creation. Moreover, Scripture is useful in scholarship not only to shape a biblical worldview, but also to provide norms and themes that offer more direct guidance and instruction for our theoretical work.

THERE MUST BE AN INNER CONNECTION BETWEEN THE GOSPEL AND SCHOLARSHIP.

Thus, a Christian psychologist might critique behaviourism for its reductionism and determinism, suggesting instead a Christian view of the human person which honours the rich complexity of human functioning and gives due respect to biblical teachings regarding personal responsibility. A Christian sociologist might challenge the cultural relativism which shapes most theoretical paradigms in sociology, and argue that normative social structures are not merely arbitrary in their construction but in fact reflect God's constant and abiding creation order for social life. A Christian historian might take issue with the Marxist view of economic forces as the overriding explanatory factor in history, and work out in response a view of the historical process which gives

appropriate attention to the multiple causes at work within it, including its religious dynamics. The Christian student of politics would recognize the distorting influences of various ideologies working within the political realm, while acknowledging the genuine insights they carry with them. A Christian professor of English might encourage the enjoyment of Romantic literature for its celebration of the imagination and of the richness of the world that God has created, while critiquing its individualism and its idolatrous elevation of imagination almost to the place of divine revelation. A Christian scientist would acknowledge the tension between a naturalistic explanation of origins and the biblical concept of creation, and in investigating the natural world would recognize in all its phenomena the handiwork of the God who made all things and sustains them by his word.

Though we wrestle with foundational issues in scholarship, we do not prescribe only one “right” approach within the Reformed Christian tradition. The approach within that tradition which has been very influential among us works from the scriptural story to an elaboration of a Christian worldview, thence to a philosophical articulation (ontology, epistemology, anthropology, social philosophy) and on to the formulations of the various disciplines. The crucial insight we wish to guard is that there must be an inner connection between the gospel and scholarship. That is, since faith will always shape scholarship, we strive to bring Scripture’s teaching to bear in a formative way on theoretical work, critiquing foundational assumptions that are idolatrous while acknowledging legitimate insight into the creation,

As for the rich in this present age,
charge them not to be haughty,
nor to set their hopes on the
uncertainty of riches,

**BUT ON GOD,
WHO RICHLY
PROVIDES US WITH
EVERYTHING
TO ENJOY.**

1 TIMOTHY 6:17

and relocating such insight within a Christian framework of thought. In all these ways— by positioning ourselves against the ideologies of the age, by affirming the genuine insights of non-Christian scholarship and by working in faith toward the goal of integrally Christian scholarship—we seek to witness to the victory of Christ on the cross, by which we can be set free from idolatry and enabled to live more and more in the new world of the Kingdom of God.

As part of a community called to continue the mission of Christ, we commit ourselves to witness to the message of the cross of Christ in higher education. The strength of our particular tradition is an attitude to secular culture which emphasizes simultaneously the deeply distorting effects of sin, the enduring goodness of creation and the restoring power of Christ. In the name of the crucified and risen Christ we wish to say an unequivocal “No” to sin in all its forms and effects, including its effects across the broad range of human culture. We wish to unmask idolatry where we see it, notably in the academic sphere, and to oppose everything that compromises academic integrity. But also in the name of Christ we wish to say an unequivocal “Yes” to creation in all its wonderful variety and the goodness that shines in human culture, including academic culture. God gives us all things richly to enjoy (1 Tim 6:17), including the gifts of scholarship and of university education. Of that we are witnesses.

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