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Face to Face

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From the Editor

We all long for that day when we shall meet the Lord face to face. But the metaphor of face to face is significant now. The meaning of interpersonal relationships is deeply embedded in this synecdoche. The face represents the doorway into a person's soul. It also reminds us that human life is embodied existence and that the physical and spiritual aspects of human beings are inextricably united. One of the dangers of the electronic environment is that it tends to undermine the importance of face to face relationships. Of course, it may also enhance face to face relationships. In my editorial essay "Face to Face: The Importance of Personal Presence in Ministry and Life" I explore the relevance of the biblical concept of the face in all of our relationships.

Also in this issue Dariusz Bryćko completes his article, "Steering a Course between Fundamentalism and Transformationalism: J. Gresham Machen's View of Christian Scholarship," reminding us of the remarkable scope and prudence of J. Gresham Machen. My hope is that his reflections on education will help us navigate this complex subject as the title of Bryćko's article suggests.

As we think, during this season, of the incarnation of our Lord, Bryan Holstrom's article on the name of our Savior should enhance our sense of wonder, " 'Thou Art the Christ': Reflections on the Name of the Lord."

Only a poet could see what Francis Thompson sees in a snowflake in his "To a Snowflake." Have a wonderful Christmas season. May you be able spend rewarding face to face time with church and family.

Blessings in the Lamb,

Gregory Edward Reynolds

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Ordained Servant exists to help encourage, inform, and equip church officers for faithful, effective, and God glorifying ministry in the visible church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Its primary audience is ministers, elders, and deacons of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, as well as interested officers from other Presbyterian and Reformed churches. Through high quality editorials, articles, and book reviews we endeavor to stimulate clear thinking and the consistent practice of historic, confessional Presbyterianism.

Servant Thoughts

Face to Face: The Importance of Personal Presence in Ministry and Life

Gregory E. Reynolds

Efficiency rules. Advocates of electronic centralization can point to vast benefits such as the availability of medical records to physicians. For members of our own church it is a great benefit to disseminate prayer requests and other important information to the whole church through electronic means. But the downside of electronic centralization is usually framed in terms of concerns about privacy. As legitimate as this concern is, I would like to address what to my mind is even more important—the diminishment of local face to face relationships in our churches.

J. Gresham Machen was concerned in the early twentieth century with the tendency toward a vast expansion of federal power through bureaucratic centralization and its concomitant, the tyranny of experts. In the conclusion of his essay “Mountains and Why We Love Them” Machen wrote:

What will be the end of European civilization, of which I had a survey from my mountain vantage ground—of that European civilization and its daughter America? What does the future hold in store? Will Luther prove to have lived in vain? Will all the dreams of liberty issue into some vast industrial machine? Will even nature be reduced to standard, as in our country the sweetness of the woods and hills is being destroyed, as I have seen them destroyed in Maine, by the uniformities and artificialities and officialdom of our national parks? . . . Will some dreadful second law of thermodynamics apply in the spiritual as well as in the material realm? Will all things in church and state be reduced to one dead level, coming at last to an equilibrium in which all liberty and all high aspirations will be gone? Will that be the end of all humanity's hopes? I can see no escape from that conclusion in the signs of the times; too inexorable seems to me to be the march of events. No, I can see only one alternative. The alternative is that there is a God—a God who in His own good time will bring forward great men again to do His will, great men to resist the tyranny of experts and lead humanity out again into the realms of light and freedom, great men, who above all, will be the messengers of His grace. There is, far above any mountain peak of vision, a God high and lifted up who, though He is infinitely exalted, yet cares for His children among men.¹

Just as Machen warned of the tendency in a our technological civilization for centralized tyranny to diminish the human spirit by undermining liberty, so ought we to be concerned

¹ J. Gresham Machen, *Selected Shorter Writings: J. Gresham Machen* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004), 436.

with the increased power of our technologies to centralize and thus diminish human liberty and local face to face relationships in a similar fashion, especially in the church.

The Apostle John had a similar concern about the rudimentary communication technology of his day when he wrote: “Though I have much to communicate to you, I would rather not use paper and ink. Instead I hope to come to you and talk face to face, so that our joy may be complete” (2 John 12). “I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face” (3 John 14).

Introduction

On May 24, 1844, the first electric communication was transmitted by telegraph thirty-seven miles between Baltimore & Washington, DC. Samuel Finley Breese Morse (1791–1872) sent the famous message “What Hath God Wrought!” His daughter had chosen the quote from Numbers 23:23 in the KJV, “God brings them out of Egypt and is for them like the horns of the wild ox. . . . ‘What has God wrought!’ Behold, a people!” Morse used the statement as an exclamation, not a question. He was proclaiming this revolutionary form of communication to be a wonder of God’s providence. What we now take for granted had the appearance of a miracle to mid-nineteenth-century perceptions.

In our day the magic continues apace. Our electronic connectedness has grown exponentially. Facebook users are a prime example, growing from over twelve million in late 2006, to over one billion today. Fifty percent of Americans use Facebook. Immersion in electronic technology seems inevitable. So it seems that we should all join or we’ll be relegated to irrelevance. But, while it is second nature to recite the benefits of this pervasive technological environment, we are hesitant, and many are even very resistant, to recognize its liabilities. I believe this is a dangerous position for church leaders, especially since the rising generation has never known any other world. I believe church officers have a grave responsibility in this area if we are to harness the tremendous potential of these technologies as good stewards of God’s world. This requires constructive criticism of the electronic environment.

Our Pedagogical Responsibility

A wonderful example of the power of constructive criticism is the story of what the chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, Dana Gioia, did by raising worrisome concerns about the state of literary reading in America. Building on an alarming trend signaled by reports in the 1990s, Gioia sounded the alarm in dramatic fashion in 2004 and 2007 with reports, “Reading at Risk” and “To Read or Not to Read.” He was often criticized as a doomsayer. But, because parents and educators, including the NEA, did not simply accept this as a necessary and irreversible trend, the 20 percent decline in the youngest age group surveyed (ages 18–24) in 2002 was reversed to a dramatic 21 percent increase in 2008, as presented by Gioia in a subsequent NEA Report “Reading on the Rise.”

So instead of throwing up our hands and saying, “This is the way it is. We have to accept it,” we have a tremendous pedagogical opportunity to help this and the next generation of Christians to navigate the electronic environment as wise stewards of God’s providential gifts. Of course we can’t escape the modern world; nor should we wish to.

But we must live well formed lives, conformed to God's self-revelation, in this world (Rom. 12:1–2). We must not miss this teaching moment.

When it comes to the electronic media, it is almost as if the church has taken the advice of Oscar Wilde seriously. When asked what he recommended in the face of temptation, he quipped, "Give in to it."

But before we do, we must ask, Does the electronic environment diminish or threaten our face to face relationships? I believe it does. I believe we can and must do something about it. As leaders in Christ's church we need to turn Morse's enthusiastic declaration, "What has God wrought!" into a question. As with all of man's inventions we need to understand them, how they work, their effect on our perceptions and relationships, and then their benefits and liabilities, and rid ourselves of the dangerous notion that they are just tools!

It is our pedagogical responsibility to teach the church to be discerning in its understanding of and participation in the rapidly changing media environment?

Electronic Media Rearrange Our Total Relational Environment

Electronic media tend to dis-incarnate and distance people from their embodied lives. While excellent at disseminating information, electronic media tend to isolate us from face to face interaction. Social media, in particular, cannot replace, and often even undermine, the fabric of personal relationships which strengthen fellowship with God and each other. Church officers need to encourage church members to ask themselves how their use of media fosters healthy relationships with God, his church, my family, my friends, my world.

Many secular researchers are sounding an alarm in this area. Professor Sherry Turkle, who was once very positive about the effects of technology on human beings and their relationships, has recently written *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*.² She is the Abby Rockefeller Mauzé Professor of the Social Studies of Science and Technology at MIT, the founder and director of the MIT Initiative on Technology and Self, and a licensed clinic psychologist. She reports a change in her early assessments.

I reported on this work [focus groups on boundaries between real and virtual worlds] in my 1995 *Life on the Screen*, which offered, on balance, a positive view of new opportunities for exploring identity online. But by then, my optimism of 1984 [*The Second Self*] had been challenged. I was meeting people, many people, who found online life more satisfying than what some derisively called "RL," that is, real life.³

Church leaders and parents are becoming aware of some of the dangers associated with online life. Mediated relationships open people up to deception about who they really are. This is a special temptation for teenagers, who are forming their identities, and learning habits of human interaction. Things are expressed online that would never be expressed, or at least in the same manner, in face to face situations. In some cases social

² Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (New York: Basic Books, 2011).

³ Turkle, *Alone Together*, xi.

skills are so stunted that young people actually fear face to face interaction. The church has a definite advantage in this area, because we believe in the vital importance of meeting together for worship, learning, and fellowship.

But as I have written elsewhere⁴ the Internet has a tendency to rearrange and undermine authority structures. The Presbyterian church is not exempt. Members and officers make theological and personal decisions, sometimes gossiping and even slandering others, outside, or beneath the radar of legitimate church authority. In some cases people even leave the church or never connect with the church, mistakenly believing that social media are sufficient.

Hence disembodied life online can promote the tendency to avoid the messy business of life in a fallen world—of sinners, saved by grace, but with many remaining imperfections, learning to live together in truth, forgiveness, and love. This is why we have been careful as a denomination to not unwittingly draw people away from local face to face existence by centralizing church interaction, especially through the use of social media. The Committee on Christian Education’s Subcommittee on Internet Ministries, on which I serve, often receives questions that should be addressed to local sessions or directly to individuals. We direct them back to those local face to face relationships with a gentle biblical admonition when appropriate. The Bible has a lot to say about the face and about face to face life in God’s world.

The tendency toward centralized power is a clear and present danger to the church. One of the great liabilities of mediated life is its tendency to erode the local life of face to face relationships.

A Brief Survey of the Importance of Personal Presence in the Bible

“Face” is used 382 times in the *English Standard Version*. In the Bible the face is most often referred to as a synecdoche representing the most intimate level of personal presence. The face is a revelation of the person, a window to the human soul. “Who is like the wise? And who knows the interpretation of a thing? A man’s wisdom makes his face shine, and the hardness of his face is changed” (Eccles. 8:1).

1. Sin causes God’s face to turn away and our faces to hide from him in shame. Sin alienates. Electronic media may exacerbate this tendency. We may become electronic fugitives.

But for Cain and his offering he [God] had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. The LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? . . . Cain said to the LORD . . . Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.” (Gen. 4:5–6, 13–14)

⁴ Gregory E. Reynolds, “The Wired Church,” *Ordained Servant* 16 (2007): 26–34; “On Being Connected,” *Ordained Servant* 15 (2006): 13–15; “Princess Adelaide and Presbyterianism: The Death of Context and the Life of the Church,” *Ordained Servant* 15 (2006): 16–18.

And he [Moses] said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. (Exod. 3:6)

I will set my face against you, and you shall be struck down before your enemies. (Lev. 26:17)

And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face. (Ezek. 20:35)

In the pride of his face the wicked does not seek him; all his thoughts are, “There is no God.” (Ps. 10:4)

Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. (Ps. 51:9)

For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. (1 Pet. 3:12)

2. Serious confrontation in the Bible is done face to face.

I answered them that it was not the custom of the Romans to give up anyone before the accused met the accusers face to face and had opportunity to make his defense concerning the charge laid against him. (Acts 25:16)

But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. (Gal. 2:11)

3. Face to face communication avoids the limits of mediated communication. Paul understood that distance increases the possibility for misunderstanding,

I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away!— . . . I do not want to appear to be frightening you with my letters. For they say, “His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account.” Let such a person understand that what we say by letter when absent, we do when present. (2 Cor. 10:1, 9–11)

John appreciated the importance of personal presence that could never be replaced by the first century medium of written correspondence.

Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink. Instead I hope to come to you and talk face to face, so that our joy may be complete. . . . I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face. (2 John 12; 3 John 14)

4. The absence of face to face presence may cause grief similar to death. This is evident in the departure of Paul from the Ephesian elders, “being sorrowful most of all because of

the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship” (Acts 20:38).

5. Jesus is present with his people through the means of grace and the officers of his church. The living and true God has orchestrated the ultimate in personal presence with the incarnation of his Son. The Word took on a complete and perfect human nature in order to create a new humanity. Church officers represent his presence as his undershepherds until he returns (1 Pet. 5:1–5). The personal presence of God’s people in worship, focusing as it does on Word and sacrament is essential to the meaning of our redeemed creaturehood.

Throughout the history of redemption God has favored his people by his grace. Now he smiles upon us through Christ. This was prefigured in the ministry of Moses and Aaron as mediators of the old covenant and consummated in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[T]he LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. (Num. 6:25)

Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. . . . “But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live. . . . Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen.” (Exod. 33:11, 20, 23)

And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face. (Deut. 34:10)

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. (2 Cor. 3:18)

For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. 4:6)

The good shepherd feeds his sheep on his Word through his chosen undershepherds. As the great and good shepherd of Scripture he is always present with his sheep. This was prophesied by Isaiah, “He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young” (Isa. 40:11). “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:27). His words are the words of the entire Scripture (1 Pet. 1:10–11). Thus, the whole counsel of God is the necessary food of God’s people.

The one who has visited his people in history continues to visit them through his Word and Spirit in the person of the preacher. Nothing can replace that personal presence and that living voice. Pastor, elders, and deacons are called to follow Paul’s apostolic example, “I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house” (Acts 20:20). Officers must know the sheep personally by name, even as their shepherd knows them (John 10:3).

Face to face encounter is central to the incarnation. The face reveals the person. So the best means of communication for John was to see his spiritual children “face to face” (2 John 12; 3 John 14). This reminds us that the word “communicate” comes from the Latin *communicare*, to commune, or to live in intimate fellowship with others. For John pen and ink could only supplement personal presence.

Paul also recognized that distance can only be overcome by personal presence, “Without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God’s will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. For I long to see you” (Rom. 1:9–10). He knew his ministry to the church was incomplete without such presence, “For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face” (Col. 2:1). The most beautiful expression of this is found in Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians:

But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us. . . . But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face. . . . as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith? (1 Thess. 2:7–8, 17; 3:10)

6. Public worship is all about faces: God’s face and his people’s faces. We see this in the old covenant, “Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him . . .” (Gen. 17:3). “David sought the face of the LORD” (2 Sam. 21:1). It has always been the desire of his people to have the closest personal contact with the Lord, “There are many who say, ‘Who will show us some good? Lift up the light of your face upon us, O LORD!’ ” (Ps. 4:6). “You have said, ‘Seek my face.’ My heart says to you, ‘Your face, LORD, do I seek’ ” (Ps. 27:8).

While the location of worship is now no longer limited to a geographical location (John 4), this does not mean that location is unimportant. In the new covenant the temple is the church, wherever it meets. “What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, ‘I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people’ ” (2 Cor. 6:16). The writer of Hebrews sounds like the wise real estate agent, location, location, location, when he exhorts, “not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” (Heb. 10:25). The location of worship matters, because the personal presence of God’s people matters.

While the modern world has never been better “connected” electronically, it seems to be starving nearly to death for lack of personal and local connectedness. Local church provides this reality in a way that no other institution can. At the center of this communal reality is God’s speech in the preaching and presence of his appointed vicars (the English word for substitute or representative, as in vicarious). “For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake” (2 Cor. 4:5). Few could afford personal Bibles in the first-century church. But even our private reading of Scripture is always also a communal reading, because Scripture is the

covenant document uniting God's people in all ages. Preaching accents and cultivates this communion. The worst tendencies of mass culture are overcome by the promotion of live pastoral preaching as the center of the church's life.

7. The goal of redemptive history involves Christ's and our personal presence. The consummate reality for the Christian will be seeing the face of Jesus Christ in resurrection glory. The transfiguration foreshadowed the coming glory reflected in the face of Jesus, "And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light" (Matt. 17:2). Paul looks forward to the final glory, "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known" (1 Cor. 13:12). John reflects the same hope, "They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads" (Rev. 22:4). There is no better antidote to the electronic dispersion of our day than the counter-environment of the church created by the Word of the good and great shepherd.

Implications for our Ministry in the Church

1. Officers, consider your personal presence with those to whom you minister in the church essential to effective ministry. Paul's presence in Timothy's life was essential to his mentoring, "Continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it" (2 Tim. 3:14).
2. Teach God's people media wisdom (media ecology). To be good stewards of the media we must understand not only the content communicated but the nature of each medium itself—its benefits and liabilities. Electronic media are best for information, and as a supplement, not a replacement, to face to face, personal communication. When we know people well face to face then texting, email, and phone calls can be effective supplements—in that order from least to most personal. But nothing replaces personal face to face presence.
3. Teach technological etiquette. Manners in general are in a state of decay. By enumerating some of the dangers of poor manners in electronic communication officers can head off some of the worst tendencies in the electronic environment. So many words are sent into cyberspace that would never be said face to face.
4. Encourage people to read good literature deeply, especially the Bible. This requires undistracted concentration, which is becoming a rare commodity today. We need to find "cool spots" to eliminate the ubiquitous, distracting buzz.
5. It is especially important that church officers warn people of the dangers of coming to doctrinal and ethical convictions, gossiping, and making decisions about the church on social and other media. The Subcommittee on Internet Ministries regularly sends people with local questions to seek out their church officers.

6. Church officers should encourage people to spend time with their families, developing the art of conversation. This requires some self-criticism regarding the time we spend alone on our devices.

7. We need to emphasize Sabbath keeping and family and personal devotions. This is the day the Lord has set aside for us to enjoy the Lord's presence in the presence of his people. This is what forms the Christian life. Worship should be a time apart, unique in the atmosphere of reverence and awe. This is the day for absorbing and being formed by God's Word. "Hear, O earth; behold, I am bringing disaster upon this people, the fruit of their devices, because they have not paid attention to my words; and as for my law, they have rejected it" (Jer. 6:19).

Were the apostle John alive today, I imagine him writing 2 John 12 in this way, "Though I have much to communicate to you, I would rather not use email or my smart phone. Instead I hope to come to you and talk face to face, so that our joy may be complete."

ServantHistory

Steering a Course between Fundamentalism and Transformationalism: J. Gresham Machen's View of Christian Scholarship Part 2

Dariusz M. Bryćko

What Makes Education Christian?

Presbyterians in America were not always strong advocates of distinctly Christian education, and in many cases were comfortable supporting public and private schools that did not possess explicit Christian identity. This was not the case with the Dutch Reformed churches, which much earlier came to advocate distinctly Christian education. In large measure, the growth of Christian scholarship among the Dutch is credited to Abraham Kuyper, the renowned Reformed theologian and politician who, in 1901, became prime minister of the Netherlands. Politically, Kuyper introduced a new model of society in which various religious and social groups enjoyed separate yet equal spheres of sovereignty.³⁴ This political system enabled the Dutch Reformed to develop a network of Christian schools, including the well-known Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. Unfortunately, in the aftermath of the Second World War, Kuyper's political model fell out of grace, as Dutch society perceived it as highly divisive. Despite this setback, the Dutch Reformed continued to promote Christian education, supplying powerful theological justification for it. Further, many followers of Kuyper immigrated and became some of the most outspoken supporters of Christian scholarship on the American continent—something that, as Marsden notes, competed with the classic Presbyterian model. Neo-Kuyperians also had a deep impact on the philosophy of cultural involvement held by many mainline evangelicals (such as the late Chuck Colson and others). It is important to note here that the Dutch Reformed philosophy of Christian education was partially due to the amicable political situation in the Netherlands, where churches, with the government's help, were seeking to fulfill their cultural mandate in the sphere of culture and education—something that became very important for the Dutch, especially during the Second World War, during which Dutch churches took a stand against Nazi Germany and German Lutherans who failed to oppose (and even supported) Hitler.

Perhaps because of their initial success, Kuyper and his followers assumed a triumphalist tone in proclaiming their ideas. This is apparent in Kuyper's famous speech in which he said, "There is not a square inch in the world domain in our human existence

³⁴ Richard Mouw, *The Challenges of Cultural Discipleship: Essays in the Line of Abraham Kuyper* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 33–57.

over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry ‘Mine!’” and more explicit when he writes:

Calvinism means the completed evolution of Protestantism, resulting in a both higher and richer state of human development. Further . . . the world-view of Modernism, with its starting-point in the French Revolution, can claim no higher than that of presenting an atheistic imitation of the brilliant ideal proclaimed by Calvinism, therefore being unqualified for the honor of leading us higher on.³⁵

Kuyper’s triumphalism, which sounds so odd—if not vexing—today, was not out of the ordinary for the intellectual elites of the early twentieth century, and in many ways embodied the optimistic expectations of those who taught that the approaching era would be a “Christian century,” or, as in the case of Kuyper, a Calvinist century. Kuyper’s triumphalistic Calvinism and high expectations of Reformed Protestantism went beyond the church and evangelism. It became a worldview that penetrated political, social, and cultural convictions, seeking to transform the whole of human society and culture. This worldview found its stronghold in Western Michigan.

Without a doubt, Machen and Kuyper shared much in common. As Calvinists, both were committed to the historic Christian faith and adhered to creeds of Reformed and Presbyterian Churches. They were also influential in their day—part of the upper class with political, religious, and cultural connections. Finally, in 1898 Kuyper delivered the famous Stone Lectures at Princeton, which continued to be discussed when Machen attended and later started teaching at Princeton. In Machen’s speech titled “Christianity and Culture,” delivered in 1912 at the opening of the fall semester, we can hear echoes of Kuyper’s triumphalistic transformational imperative.³⁶

However, Machen later moves away from Kuyperian ideas, forming his own views on faith, culture, and Christian scholarship. It has been observed that Machen’s nonmilitary service with the YMCA in France during the First World War had a powerful impact on him. Experiencing the horrors of war far from the comforts and luxuries of American life planted doubts in Machen’s mind about whether the twentieth century really would bring peace, prosperity, and the growth of the Christian faith. His optimism continued to wear out later, after he returned to America, where he carefully observed the rise and spread of Nazism, Fascism, and Marxism.³⁷ Further, the reorganization of Princeton Seminary and the Presbyterian Church’s acceptance of the Auburn Affirmation³⁸ caused Machen to realize that the challenges facing the church might have been greater inside the church than outside of it. All of this eventually brought him to

³⁵ Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 41.

³⁶ Machen, “Christianity and Culture,” delivered at the opening of the fall semester at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1912. It is available in Machen’s *Selected Shorter Writings*, 399–410.

³⁷ Nichols, *J. Gresham Machen*, 137, 154.

³⁸ In May of 1924, the Presbyterian Church in the USA signed a document that pledged the church’s fidelity to the ministers who no longer affirmed the Fundamentals of Faith (the inerrancy of Scripture, the virgin birth, substitutionary atonement, Christ’s bodily resurrection, and the authenticity of miracles). The document was supported by moderates who, although they did not agree with modernists, saw it as necessary to preserve the unity and liberty of the church.

believe that the church, when set on “redeeming the culture,” loses its integrity and becomes very much like the surrounding culture.

In effect, Machen developed a vision that no longer directly burdened the church with the task of cultural transformation. Instead it set before the church the spiritual goal of proclaiming the gospel through Word and sacrament. Although Machen no longer saw a direct role for the church to affect culture, this did not mean that he withdrew from or avoided political and cultural involvement in society. Quite the contrary: Machen’s activism continued when he addressed a number of political and social issues, including prohibition, jaywalking, prayer in school, environmental preservation, and the establishment of the Department of Education, against which he testified before the U.S. Congress. However, his activism here was motivated more by his libertarian and civic (rather than purely religious) sensibilities. As Hart puts it:

Machen was not implying that Christianity is unrelated to any range of activity beyond the ministry or fellowship of the church. Instead he was raising questions about the much more difficult issue of how Christianity is related to these other areas of human activity [and how] . . . Christians, even Reformed ones, may actually give different answers to the questions about the best form of government, cultural and religious diversity in a single nation, the value of mountain climbing or the significance of advanced learning.³⁹

The conviction that Christianity was *not* able to provide a sufficient basis for public life in a pluralistic American society came from Machen’s deep conviction that “historic Christianity was fundamentally narrow, exclusive and partisan.”⁴⁰ Thus Christians who used the church as a vehicle for political involvement were in danger of being intolerant or of treating the Christian faith instrumentally, to promote morality or American culture.

The spiritual aspects of Machen’s Christianity become evident in his commencement speech, titled “Consolations in the Midst of Battle,” delivered at Westminster Theological Seminary in 1931, when he said:

Remember this, at least—the things in which the world is interested are the things that are seen; but the things that are seen are temporal, and the things that are not seen are eternal. You, as ministers of Christ, are called to deal with the unseen things. You are stewards of the mysteries of God. You alone can lead men, by the proclamation of God’s word, out of the crash, and jazz and noise and rattle and smoke of this weary age into the green pastures and beside the still water; you alone, as ministers of reconciliation, can give what the world with all its boasting and pride can never give—the infinite sweetness of the communion of the redeemed soul with the living God.⁴¹

Furthermore, Machen argued that the spiritual direction of the church needs to be accompanied by a strong militant approach, which, as he argued, stands in continuity with the New Testament’s witness. He writes, “Every really great Christian utterance, it

³⁹ Hart, introduction to Machen’s *Selected Shorter Writings*, 14.

⁴⁰ Hart, *Defending the Faith*, 138.

⁴¹ Machen, “Consolations in the Midst of Battle,” in *Selected Shorter Writings*, 205.

may almost be said, is born in controversy. It is when men have felt compelled to take a stand against error that they have risen to really great heights on the celebration of truth.”⁴²

The theme of the spiritual militancy of the church finds its best application in Machen’s view of Christian scholarship. In “Facing the Facts before God,” a speech he delivered before the League of Evangelical Students, Machen compared the situation in which the church found itself to the biblical battle of King Hezekiah, described in the book of 2 Kings. He warns believers against the danger of complete annihilation if they do not seek their refuge in the Lord, writing: “Do you think that this is a happy or blessed age? Oh, no my friends. Amid all the noise and shouting and power and machinery, there are hungry hearts. The law of God has been forgotten, and stark slavery is stalking through the earth—the decay of free institutions in the state and a deeper slavery still in the depths of the soul.”⁴³ It is when we read words such as these that we see Machen no longer possessing the optimism and triumphalism of his earlier days of Kuyprian Calvinism. Instead, he holds to a pessimism that can be overcome only when the Christian seeks refuge in God by claiming his revealed Word, and openly challenges the world with it. Rhetorically, Machen expresses this challenge in militant terms.

Machen is not interested in negotiating with modernism (or the culture) because he ultimately sees it as anti-Christian and anti-academic in nature, seeking to destroy not only the historic Christian faith but scholarship altogether. Thus he calls for battle, and for conservative Protestant theologians who are committed to biblical truths and serious intellectual engagement to aid the evangelistic work of the church, writing that

evangelists, if they are real evangelists, real proclaimers of the unpopular message that the Bible contains, are coming more and more to see that they cannot do without those despised theological professors at all. It is useless to proclaim a gospel that people cannot hold to be true; no amount of emotional appeal can do anything against truth. The question of fact cannot permanently be evaded. Did Christ or did he not rise from the dead; is the Bible trustworthy or is it false?⁴⁴

However, theologians are not the only ones who can be involved in truly Christian scholarship. For Machen, all academics, to some extent, are to participate in it; that is, if they continue to take Christian revelation into consideration in their academic work. He explains:

A Christian boy or girl can learn mathematics, for example, from a teacher who is not a Christian; and truth is truth however learned. But while truth is truth however learned, the bearings of truth, the meaning of truth, the purpose of truth, even in the sphere of mathematics, seem entirely different, to the Christian from that which they seem to the non-Christian; and that is why a truly Christian education is possible only when Christian convictions underlie

⁴² Machen, “Christian Scholarship and the Defense of Faith,” in *Selected Shorter Writings*, 149.

⁴³ Machen, “Facing the Facts Before God,” in *Selected Shorter Writings*, 199–201.

⁴⁴ Machen, “Christian Scholarship and the Defense of Faith,” in *Selected Shorter Writings*, 146.

not a part, but all of the curriculum of the school. True learning and true piety go hand in hand, and Christianity embraces the whole of life—those are great central convictions that underlie the Christian School.⁴⁵

So then, for Machen, non-Christians can effectively practice the non-theological sciences (or disciplines), as “all truth is God’s truth”; however, he believed that modernity’s anti-religious bias had rendered this impossible. Therefore, Christian academics need to take a stand not only to defend Christianity but also the integrity of faith and science. *This* is where Machen’s philosophy of Christian education takes root, rather than a biblical imperative to make Christian education binding or compulsory, as was the case with the Dutch Reformed. For Machen, defending the integrity of a discipline itself is in the Christian’s interest, as both theology and philosophy (or, the truths found in every discipline) are true and cannot contradict one another.

On the margin, it could be argued that this approach has a long trajectory in the Protestant approach to education, and can be traced back to the Calvinist theologian, philosopher, and pedagogue Bartholomäus Keckermann (ca. 1572–1609) who, during his tenure at the Academic Gymnasium in the Polish city of Gdańsk (Danzig), implemented a curriculum reflecting this conviction. Since Keckermann’s work influenced Reformed academics in Europe and the New World, we can suspect that it also had an impact on the way some at Princeton viewed the relation between theology and science.⁴⁶

On a practical level, Machen argued that Christian education must be all-encompassing and in clear contrast to secular science, which does not take divine revelation into consideration. This comprehensive approach to Christian education must originate with *doctrine* and not with a general Christian ethos in the schools. In other words, Christian education is not so because it is done by Christians, but rather because of its content. An institution whose primary goal is to promote Christian culture, civic society, gender equality, or social justice is not what Machen had in mind. Instead, he saw Christian scholarship as based on a set of nonnegotiable principles expressed in Scripture and the historic confessions, and anyone departing from these in the name of academic freedom was no longer practicing scholarship that could call itself “Christian.”

Machen set forth as a positive example the classic Roman Catholic system of education, which roots the whole academic curriculum in the context of established doctrine and with consideration for natural law. Scripture and the creeds guide students in the discovery of the natural world, and that forms the dialogue with the non-Catholic and secular culture. Further, studying ancient languages and authors, logic, and metaphysics

⁴⁵ Machen, “The Necessity of the Christian School,” in *Selected Shorter Writings*, 172.

⁴⁶ Keckermann writes: “True philosophy in no way disputes sacred theology,” and elsewhere, “In sum, the natural knowledge of God is not contrary to the supernatural, knowledge gained from nature is not repugnant to knowledge gained by grace, the book of nature does not overturn the book of scripture: therefore neither does philosophy conflict with theology.” For these quotes and a discussion, see Richard Muller, *After Calvin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 122–36, 127–28. See also: Edmund Kotarski, Lech Mokrzecki, and Zofia Głobiowska, eds., *Gdańskie Gimnazjum Akademickie. Szkice z dziejów*, vols. 1–4 (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2008); William, T. Costello, *The Scholastic Curriculum at Seventeenth Century Cambridge* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958); Joseph Freedman, “The Career and Writings of Bartholomew Keckermann (d.1609)” (Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, vol. 141, no. 3, 1997), 305–28.

is an essential prerequisite for any fruitful academic labor.⁴⁷ This model of Christian education sees the world as *already* integrated where sciences are consecrated to the person and work of Christ and his church; and where the students who are broad in their interests, cultured, and well rounded are always ready to defend the hope they have in Christ.⁴⁸

In the face of the modern hostility toward historic Christianity among secularized academics and liberal theologians, Machen argues for the necessity of *narrowly defined* Christian scholarship. For Machen, Christian scholarship becomes essential not only for the proper functioning of the church but also of science itself. Just as the church desperately needs well-educated scholars who will defend the historic Christian faith and her truth claims, so also science needs to be practiced in an unsecularized form. Machen held that faith and science must relate to each other, otherwise neither would be able to find truth—or, worse, science without religion would fall into decadence, while religion without science would become superstitious.

The reactionary nature of Machen’s philosophy of Christian education caused him to adopt a militant tone, helpful in communicating great urgency as well as the antithetical relationship between the church and the world. Further, Machen’s definition of Christian scholarship is narrow, pointing to doctrinal orthodoxy and ecclesiastical commitment rather than to the general religious ethos of the school or its honorable heritage. Community-oriented goals—such as the preservation of liberty, civic society, or culture—are not the direct tasks of Christian scholarship (nor of the church), just as they are not the goal of even nonreligious academic work, but rather are byproducts (or desirable side effects) of education. Chasing after the *results* of education—no matter how noble—instead of its *principles* is a dangerous exercise in utilitarianism, defeating the purpose of scholarship and rendering it inherently unreliable. At the same time, liberty, civil society, tolerance, and open dialogue are naturally and organically preserved when good scholarship is practiced, and most effectively when Christian scholarship is practiced. Therefore, while it is not the direct task of Christian education to promote these values, they are indeed promoted when Christian scholarship is practiced faithfully.

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⁴⁷ Machen, “The Minister and His Greek Testament,” in *Selected Shorter Writings*, 210.

⁴⁸ Machen, “Consolations in the Midst of Battle,” in *Selected Shorter Writings*, 204.

Servant Truth

“Thou Art the Christ”: Reflections on the Name of the Lord

by Bryan D. Holstrom

Not long ago I received a flyer from a bookseller that specializes in distributing titles from Reformed publishers. As I flipped through its pages I couldn't help but be struck by an interesting dichotomy in the arrangement of the works offered for sale. In the first few pages I ran across books with titles or subtitles that included the following: *Singing the Songs of Jesus*; *The Reality of Encountering Jesus*; *Jesus Rose from the Dead*; *The House that Jesus Built*; and *40 Days with Jesus*. But when I got towards the back of the flyer these titles appeared: *The Priesthood of Christ*; *The Glory of Christ*; *The Intercession of Christ*; and *Christ Crucified*.

Of course, the seller hadn't purposely arranged the books in any kind of order based upon the characteristics of the titles. Rather, if you haven't already figured out what the distinction is between these two groups of books, the former is made up of more recent releases while the latter titles are found in the section containing “classic” works from earlier centuries.

While I've no doubt that each of the books in the recent release category is a valuable resource for Christian readers, the flyer did highlight a disturbing trend that has been making its way through the church for some time now. Increasingly, it seems as if Christians are hesitant to refer to their Lord and Savior by anything other than his given birth name of Jesus. This trend is particularly evident in churches that cater to young evangelicals, but, as the above example demonstrates, even the authors and publishers of Reformed books appear to be succumbing to the fashion of the day.

Actually, the seeds of this development date back at least to the fundamentalist-modernist debates of the early twentieth century. The mainline churches had already been greatly influenced by the so-called “Quest for the Historical Jesus” and were rapidly moving to strip him of his divine and messianic titles. As early as 1926, Geerhardus Vos observed that Jesus's messianic identity had replaced the cross as the great rock of offense to the modern Christian mind.¹ Simply stated, the liberal tendency to refer to the Savior solely by his given birth name is motivated by a desire to replace the divine Christ of Scripture with a purely human substitute, albeit one who was a great moral and ethical teacher.

But while this trend may be nothing new within the confines of the broader visible church, what is of more recent development is the depth to which it seems to have taken hold in those churches of a more evangelical persuasion. I refer here not merely to the

¹ Geerhardus Vos, *The Self-Disclosure of Jesus: The Modern Debate about the Messianic Consciousness*, ed. Johannes G. Vos, 2nd edition (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1953), preface.

titling of books, but to the more fundamental way in which our whole manner of discourse has been influenced by it. More and more Christians who supposedly don't share the theological presuppositions of which Vos wrote have nevertheless adopted the practice of speaking of Jesus, and of praying in his name, without appending the reference to his official title.

Is this controversy (if I may even be allowed to call it such) merely a tempest in a teapot? I don't think so. It may not yet rank high on the alarm scale for many of us, but I'm convinced that the significance of this trend far outweighs our awareness of it, for it tends to compromise our gospel message in the most subtle of ways—by obscuring the identity of the one whom we are called to proclaim. I also believe that those of us in Reformed circles have been more influenced by this trend than we probably realize.

In the remainder of this essay we'll seek to answer two questions: 1) How does the modern practice compare to the pattern of Scripture? and 2) What, if anything, can we do to reverse the trend?

The Biblical Pattern

Peter's declaration that Jesus was "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16) represents a turning point in the Gospel narratives. Even if subsequent events would call into question the depth of Peter's reliance upon the truth he had just expressed, it nevertheless demonstrates that he had moved beyond the more limited conception of Jesus's identity that was held by the general populace. Most importantly, it was a truth to which Peter could attain only through the working of the Holy Spirit, and one for which he would eventually give his life. Only a few short weeks after his stumble at Jesus's trial he would stare down a hostile crowd in Jerusalem and proclaim that same Jesus as the one whom God had made "both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36).

The rest of the New Testament demonstrates the importance that Peter and the apostolic band thereafter attached to identifying Jesus with his divine and messianic titles. Aside from a few examples in the speeches found in Acts where the Savior's given name is used primarily for the purpose of historical identification or to emphasize the nature of his humiliation, the name "Jesus" is almost never uttered without the titles of "Lord" or "Christ" being appended, either before (as "Lord Jesus" and "Christ Jesus") or after (as "Jesus Christ").

Paul's practice is particularly instructive. In his thirteen epistles he uses the name "Jesus" a total of 216 times (not counting his reference to the Jesus also known as Justus in Colossians 4:11).² The messianic title is appended to all but thirty-one of those references, eighteen of which are rendered as "Lord Jesus." That leaves only thirteen references without either title directly attached to the Savior's given name. But in every one of those thirteen references the name is contained within a sentence or thought unit that otherwise also identifies him as Christ or Lord.³ A good example is 1 Corinthians 12:3, which contains two of those thirteen references, the second of which directly states that "Jesus is Lord."

² The word counts given here are from the text of the New King James Version.

³ Those references are Rom. 3:26, 4:24, 8:11; 1 Cor. 12:3 (twice); 2 Cor. 4:11, 4:14, 11:4; Eph. 4:21; Phil. 2:10; 1 Thess. 1:10, 4:14 (twice).

Without a doubt, however, Paul's preferred designation for the Savior is "Christ." He uses it some 402 times, either appended to "Jesus" or as a stand-alone reference. Indeed, it is surprising how many of the most commonly memorized Scripture passages contain the latter type of reference (see, e.g., Rom. 1:16, 5:8, 8:34; 1 Cor. 1:23–24, 10:4, 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:17, 12:9; Gal. 1:6, 2:20, 3:16; Eph. 4:32, 5:25; Phil. 1:21, 4:13; Col. 3:3–4, 11, 16; 1 Thess. 4:16).

A vivid example of Paul's commitment to proclaiming Jesus as Christ and Lord may be seen in the opening words of his first epistle to the Corinthians. In the span of only ten short verses, he refers to the Savior once as "Christ," once as "Jesus Christ," twice as "Christ Jesus," once as "the Lord Jesus Christ," twice as "Jesus Christ our Lord," and three times as "our Lord Jesus Christ."

Nor is the picture any different when we examine the non-Pauline epistles. In the letters of James, Peter, and Jude there is only a single exception to the rule of appending "Christ" to the name "Jesus," and that is Peter's reference to "Jesus our Lord" in 2 Peter 1:2. John's first epistle contains three references to Jesus that do not have "Christ" appended, but each involves one of his diagnostic statements identifying Jesus as "the Christ" (2:22) and "the Son of God" (4:15, 5:5). Thus, those references serve the purpose of historical identification. The Son of God is none other than the man Jesus whom John and the other apostles had "seen and heard" (1:3) with their own eyes and ears.

Interestingly, the only real exceptions to the rule are found in the books of Hebrews and Revelation. But even in those works the number of such references is dwarfed by the combined number of references to "Jesus Christ," or to "Christ" as a stand-alone designation.

Stemming the Tide

Is there anything that we can (and should) be doing to encourage those under our care to speak of the Lord in a manner that is more in keeping with the biblical pattern? I believe there are at least two things that we can and should do.

First, we can make sure that the doctrine of Christ's deity is getting adequate attention in our preaching and teaching ministries. To be sure, this isn't an area in which Reformed churches have tended to be deficient. We have neither retreated from the truth of this doctrine nor been timid in our proclamation of it. But in an age when this truth is under constant attack from the unbelieving world, and more of those coming into the church lack the prior catechetical instruction that characterized earlier eras, it's quite possible that we're in need of stepping up our efforts in this area.

Unfortunately, we can no longer assume that those in our care have a proper appreciation for the dual nature of Christ's person or for the doctrinal significance which flows from that reality. In light of this, we probably need to be more diligent to expound upon the great truths attending his divine identity, rather than taking it on faith that our members are already well versed in such matters. We would benefit from evaluating our preaching and teaching ministries in the light of the following questions: Are we doing enough to demonstrate the intimate connection between Christ's divine identity and the nature of his redemptive work? Are we giving sufficient attention to the manner in which his exercise of the threefold office of prophet, priest, and king confirms that identity? Are we making use of the great creedal statements of the past respecting his person, wherein he is spoken of as "true God from true God" (Nicene Creed) or "very and eternal God" (WCF

8:2)? Moreover, are we following the example of our own confessional standards, which speak of the mediator almost exclusively as “Christ” with barely a mention of his given birth name?⁴

In commenting upon the increasingly common use of “Jesus” as the Savior’s exclusive designation, Vos wrote that the trend was “a symptom of the generally shifting attitude in the religious appraisal of our Lord from the official to the merely human.” He then noted that, in contrast to this attitude, “Paul and the whole early Church, in making and favoring the combination ‘Jesus Christ,’ expressed a strong feeling of appreciation for the legitimate standing of Jesus in his office of the Christ.”⁵

Vos’s comment highlights the second thing that we can be doing to stem this tide. Following the lead of Paul and the other biblical writers, we can be more intentional to speak of our Lord in both prayer and general discourse with the exalted terms that they use, and eschew the more casual form so commonly employed today. If Vos is correct in his diagnosis, then it seems incontrovertible that we should refer to our Lord simply as “Jesus” only sparingly, if at all.

Another theologian from the same time period, A. W. Pink, speaks even more forthrightly on the matter. After examining the way in which the biblical writers speak of Christ, and noting in particular the example of Paul, Pink concludes, “To address the Lord of glory in prayer simply as ‘Jesus,’ or to speak of Him to others thus, breathes an unholy familiarity, a vulgar cheapness, an irreverence which is highly reprehensible.”⁶

Now if Pink meant to say that every use of the name “Jesus” without an accompanying title is *per se* sinful, then we would surely part company with him. But I don’t believe that’s what he meant to affirm. Rather, it is the trajectory and general thrust of his comments here which are helpful and on point. We may not say that it is outright sin to speak of the Savior in such terms, but we may say that it doesn’t represent the best that we have to offer. To paraphrase Paul’s distinction between what is legal and what is profitable, we may say that whatsoever is permissible in this area is not necessarily advisable.

Such an affirmation in no way obscures the fact that the name “Jesus” itself has profound theological significance (Matt. 1:21). But the same divine/human person who was given that name at birth came into the world already possessing the title of “Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10). Nor do we foolishly assert that appending one of those divine titles to the human name works as a magic incantation, turning an otherwise fruitless prayer into an effectual one. Nothing will substitute for a right heart in prayer, or worship, or any other endeavor. But the Christian who desires to conform his or her practice to the biblical pattern will be hard pressed to maintain that the casual form of addressing the Savior is to be preferred over the more exalted forms used by the writers of Scripture.

The truth that Peter confessed in Matthew 16, and which he afterwards proclaimed to the crowd in Jerusalem, was Spirit-wrought, life-changing truth. It is the same truth that we proclaim to a dying world; a world that will gladly make room for a human Jesus but not a divine Christ. Like Peter, we have only so many opportunities in a week to proclaim this Jesus as Lord and Christ. We do well not to waste them.

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⁴ See especially WLC questions 36–60.

⁵ Vos, 109.

⁶ Arthur W. Pink, *An Exposition of Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 103.

ServantPoetry

Francis Thompson (1859-1907)

To A Snowflake

What heart could have thought you?—
Past our devisal
(O filigree petal!)
Fashioned so purely,
Fragilely, surely,
From what Paradisal
Imagineless metal,
Too costly for cost?
Who hammered you, wrought you,
From argentine vapor? —
"God was my shaper.
Passing surmised,
He hammered,
He wrought me,
From curled silver vapor,
To lust of His mind—
Thou could'st not have thought me!
So purely, so palely,
Tinily, surely,
Mightily, frailly,
Insculped and embossed,
With His hammer of wind,
And His graver of frost."