

Grace Alone

Confronting our Culture

Highlights

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Grace Alone

is the newsletter of Grace Theological College, a non-denominational evangelical and reformed theological college in Auckland, NZ.

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FROM THE PRINCIPAL

This issue of *Grace Alone* features articles about two of our graduating students, Dawie Malan and Nick Allen. Both men were interviewed and asked to reflect on their experience as students at GTC. Their responses provide a window into what the Lord is doing at the College. We hope that it encourages you as much as it does us.

In this issue we also want to appeal to school leavers to consider spending a "gap" year at GTC before taking up work options or tertiary studies. This past year has highlighted - as both Dawie and Nick mention in their interviews - the importance of developing a

Christian mind. Young people in particular need to learn to think clearly and biblically before launching out into an increasingly anti-Christian world. We believe that a year of study at GTC is an ideal way of doing that.

With that in mind we have outlined the courses we are offering at GTC next year. These aim at providing the biblical and theological foundations that people need to confront the culture of the university and the workplace. We would encourage young people to consider devoting at least part of their time this coming year to attending one or more courses.

◇ Andrew Young



Pastoral Ministry graduate Dawie Malan (centre) with the elders of the Manukau Central Bible Fellowship Church (Rob Allen, Geoff Garton, Peter Reynolds and David Gray) see p. 4

A Well Spent Year

Nicholas Allen is one of an increasing number of young people choosing to wait a year after finishing High School before taking up university studies. Nick finished his seventh form at the end of 2002 and plans to study engineering at the Manukau Institute of Technology (MIT) in 2004. The year in between – often called a “gap” year – he has been at GTC.

We asked Nick what had prompted him to spend the year at GTC. Three factors led to his decision. The first was the taste of theological studies he had gained the previous year (2002). While completing his final year of home schooling Nick also tackled a paper in Systematic Theology at GTC. He loved this so much he wanted “more of the same.”

But secondly, Nick also wanted to prepare himself for “hitting the world” when he reached university. He had been raised in what he describes as a sheltered home. He was deeply appreciative of this but at the same time was uncertain of what he would face at university. He wanted to prepare himself as best he could for the experiences ahead and believed further study at GTC would help him do that.

Thirdly, Nick also wanted to strengthen his own faith. He knew “roughly” what he believed, but he wanted to know it much better. Just as importantly, he wanted to know *why* he believed what he did. To use his words, he wanted to eliminate “nagging, faith-destroying questions” from his mind, and he knew of no better place to do that than at GTC.

A year later, Nick is ready to graduate from College with a Certificate in Biblical Studies. Has the year been worth it? Has it helped him in the ways that he hoped it would? Nick has no doubts about that. He singles out two subjects that have been of

special help in giving him confidence to face the future. The first was a course in Hermeneutics – the biblical approach to interpreting the Bible. “Understanding better how to interpret the Bible has been a great help,” he says. For one thing, Nick feels he can better discern and respond to wrong interpretations of the Bible current in the Christian community. For another, he feels he can better answer challenges to the Christian faith based on supposed discrepancies in the Bible. And finally, he feels more confident reading difficult sections of the Bible like the Old Testament prophets.

The second subject that has helped him greatly has been the Christian Mind course. Nick is quick to say that he is not a confrontational person. He has never felt confident approaching and challenging people about what they say or believe, nor has he found it easy to stand his ground in an argument. The Christian Mind course has helped him immensely here. It has given him a basis for evaluating the ideas of others – especially those that “seem fine on the outside but are really fatally flawed.” Learning to question the presuppositions behind a viewpoint – a person’s starting point and underlying agenda – has helped him dissect and analyze an argument. It has also helped him to see how to challenge it from a Christian point of view. This course, he says, “has given me a shield and a sword to face the world with.”

It is a thrill to hear Nick say these things. We wish him well in his university studies and look forward to seeing him make an impact upon the secular community he finds there.



Nick Allen

DR MARTYN LLOYD-JONES NZ TAPE LIBRARY

A free lending library of some of Dr Lloyd-Jones’ sermons has now been established.

Borrowers pay only return postage. For a free catalogue e-mail mljlibrary@xtra.co.nz or write to:
The Martyn Lloyd-Jones NZ Lending Library, Stoney Bridge Lane, RD1 Karaka, AUCKLAND 1703

Foundations for the Future: GTC Courses for 2004



College courses are typically tailored to suit the student body in any given year. In 2004 we are anticipating a majority of first year students. That means that we will be offering a number of what we call foundational courses next year.

One of these is a year-long course called *Biblical Theology 1*. Starting with Genesis 1:1 it traces God's unfolding plan of redemption through the books of the Bible. En route in this survey students learn where the different books of the Bible fit into God's plan and what they contribute to its disclosure. Biblical Theology 1 is a great course for getting a grip on the Bible as a whole.

A second foundational course taught in 2004 will be *The Westminster Confession of Faith*. The Westminster Confession is one of the Protestant Creeds that emerged from the Reformation era in the 16-17th centuries. Many Presbyterian and Reformed churches today still use it as a standard of doctrine or teaching for their churches and many Baptists hold to a similar version of their own. In 33 highly condensed and very short chapters it distills the understanding of the ages on what the Bible teaches. It remains a fine way to gain an introduction to Christian doctrine, something that many in the church today desperately need. This course will be taught on Tuesday evenings to make it as accessible as possible. Current and prospective church leaders are especially encouraged to consider attending.

Church History is a third course that will be offered next year. An unhealthy feature of our society is its lack of appreciation of history. This is

true within the church as well. Few appreciate how the church today came to be as it is. Understanding this is enormously helpful. It helps us discern what is essential, appreciate differences, and avoid pitfalls. As has so often been said, knowing our past helps understand the present and prepare for the future. Time spent discovering the twists and turns of Church history is time well spent.

A fourth course offered next year is *Ministry of the Word 1*. Although aimed especially at helping preachers learn to preach, this is a course anyone can benefit from. It teaches people how to discover the message of the Bible, how to apply that message to life today, and how to present it in a compelling way to other people. It combines classroom teaching, exercises, and practice presentation sessions. Students of this course typically find that it helps them to read the Bible in a new way and gives them tools to study any passage that they come across.

These are the "big four" that we will be teaching next year. There will be other courses as well – including courses Rev. Arthur Palmer will be teaching in Greek and Hebrew and Pastoral Theology. We also hope to be able to offer the Christian Mind course that has proved so helpful this year. Peter Reynolds' departure to the USA in December means that we will need to find a substitute teacher for this course. When we have we will be sure to let readers know. We will also keep you informed about special courses for women that are being proposed.

Biblical Languages

Rev. Arthur Palmer, former pastor of the Mangere East Presbyterian Church, has a great love for the original languages of the Bible – Greek and Hebrew – and for teaching these. This year he is willing to offer beginning courses in Greek and Hebrew and a second level paper in Greek.

If you want insight into the Bible in a way nothing else can provide, register for these courses now. Enquiries to "Greek and Hebrew Courses," Grace Theological College, P.O. Box 75-534, or email: enquiries@gtc.ac.nz

Another Worker in the Field

On Sunday 12th October third-year student Dawie Malan was recognized as a teaching/preaching elder of the Manukau Central Bible Fellowship Church. This was a very special day for both Dawie and his family, and for the local church.

For Dawie, it marked the attainment of a goal he set out to achieve when he came to New Zealand in January 2001. Along with his wife Sarah and children Riaan and Charne, he had left Zimbabwe convinced that God was calling him to exchange farm life for full-time Christian ministry. Though uncertain as to what shape that ministry would take, he was nevertheless clear that he needed to prepare himself for what lay ahead, and that the Lord was leading him to New Zealand to do that. Three intensely challenging, testing, yet rewarding years later, he is on the threshold of the work he believes God has been calling him to.

We asked Dawie to share his reflections on what he had found most helpful in his course at GTC, and what he considered to be the greatest challenges facing Reformed and evangelical churches in New Zealand.

He had no hesitation in identifying those aspects he had found most helpful in his three years of study at College. The first was a deeper appreciation of Scripture. When asked what he meant by that, he said that he had really appreciated coming to see the “bigger picture” of God’s redemptive plan as it unfolds in the Bible. “Seeing how all the parts fit together into a whole, and how they all form part of the great plan of redemption, has been heartwarming.”

Secondly, Dawie told us how much he had appreciated the preaching classes. Preaching, and especially expository preaching, has clearly become one of his passions. He has learned how to get substance and depth into his sermons, he says, and how to maintain a redemptive-historical-Christ-centred focus in them.

The course that has had the greatest influence upon him, however, is one of the very last he has studied, a course on the Christian Mind. “Reading van Til and Bahnsen,” he says, “has helped me understand where I have come from in my thinking and helped me to change and grow.” It has helped him understand how the secular mind works, but more importantly, how different the Christian mind needs to be. “It has put a lot of things into perspective for me,” he said.

Looking to what lies ahead, Dawie sees three great challenges. The first is to help Reformed be-

lievers engage with society. “I sense we have to make a lot of headway in understanding our culture,” he comments. “We need to spend time with our society to identify quite specifically how we can address its needs. We have all the resources, all the tools, and all the equipment we need to do that, but we have to find ways and means of proactively using the rich heritage God has given us in engaging and ministering to a society which is crying out for what we have got.” Dawie believes that Reformed Christians in New Zealand are becoming increasingly aware of – and increasingly open to taking up – this great challenge. But to do that, he says, we must “work together to encourage one another and learn from one another.”



***Dawie and Sarah Malan
and their children Riaan and Charne***

The second challenge is for evangelical and Reformed churches to mobilize their members into active ministry. "We need to become a dynamic body of Christ." He believes that this process has to begin with the leaders. "There needs to be a change of mindset," he says with intensity and passion. "We have to decentralize the church and unleash the people. We will be stunted in our ability to reach our society and minister to it if we don't effectively mobilize the church."

Thirdly, Dawie sees a need for Reformed preaching to become more transformational in character – preaching that aims at changing hearts rather than just informing minds. This, he believes, is the key to the future. "If our preaching changes hearts, it will mobilize the body and affect the

culture. If it remains informational and defensive, the people – the church members – will be withdrawn and disengaged. We must experience the power of the gospel in our own lives first," he maintains, "before we are able to share it with others."

Dawie believes the Reformed church community (both Baptist and Presbyterian) in New Zealand is at the crossroads. He believes that it has to engage the culture without losing its distinctiveness or it will wither and die. "We need to help one another do this," he says. "No one has it all together. Churches must be open to learning from one another and encouraging one another in this great task. We must take the opportunity God has given us and do it together."

College News

- ◆ Mark and Nancy Kreitzer have encountered delays and obstacles in their attempts to come and teach at GTC in 2004. Pray for them as they work through these and seek the Lord's direction for their lives.
- ◆ College Administrator Tony Bracefield and Principal Andrew Young were in the South Island for a brief visit early in November. Andrew conducted a mini-conference in Church Revitalization at Waiholo for a group of 30 church leaders in the Otago-Southland region. They were also able to spend time with GTC graduates Mark Smith and Azriel Gray. Both men are pastoring growing churches in the South.
- ◆ Board Chairman Rev. Ross Thompson travelled to Cyprus in late October to attend the International Council Meeting of the Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF). He then visited MERF's new Ministry Centre in Lokichoggio, northern Kenya. He would be glad to share an account of his experiences with individuals and groups who are interested.
- ◆ Peter and Margaret Reynolds are scheduled to travel to the USA on December 27th for three years of study at Covenant Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. Both Peter and Margaret are enrolled in degree courses majoring in counselling. Pray for them as they travel and settle into their new lifestyle.
- ◆ The College held a successful Open Night on Thursday, 20th November. Several present and prospective students and family members heard about the background of GTC, its commitment to equip, support and encourage leaders, and the courses it will be offering in 2004. Next year promises to be an exciting one.

GRADUATION AND THANKSGIVING SERVICE

The annual Graduation and Thanksgiving Service will be held this year on Saturday evening, December 13th at Covenant Presbyterian Church, 77 Rogers Road, Manurewa.

We will begin with a shared meal at 6:00 p.m.,
the Graduation and Thanksgiving Service will be from 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Come and join in the celebrations!



Finding the Christian Mind at GTC

Two of our students are quoted in this issue of Grace Alone as saying how much they appreciated the Christian Mind course at GTC. We asked the course lecturer Peter Reynolds to explain what the term Christian mind means, and why it is so important for young people to develop such a mind. Ed.

One of our ambitions at GTC is to help young men and women develop their Christian mind. What do we mean by this?

If you are united by faith to Jesus Christ, you already possess the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:15f). As the Holy Spirit gives you insight into the Scriptures, you can see things as Christ intends you to see them. Your Christ-centered mind is able to make true and insightful observations concerning everything in this world. All things are open to the Christian mind. What we want to do in our College courses is show you how to develop your mind to think in a way consistent with the mind of Christ in every area of life. And we also want to help you expose non-Christian thinking for what it is - knowledge without truth.



Student Guy McKenzie preparing to address the Christian Mind class on the Christian view of Culture

According to Romans 1 non-Christians do have knowledge of God and his world (v. 19) but they suppress the truth in what they know (v.18). The result is knowledge without truth. The Bible calls this foolishness (1 Cor 1:20). Wisdom – the opposite of foolishness - comes only when we unite what we know of this world with the truth that the world is constantly teaching us about God (Psalm 19:1ff).

Furthermore, when unbelievers suppress the truth they not only become foolish but they attract judgment. This creates the opportunity for us to bring the challenge of the Gospel to bear on their knowing processes. This is our point of contact

with non-Christian thinking, the point we need to pursue with vigour, trusting that the Holy Spirit will open hearts and minds to His truth.

In helping men and women develop a Christian mind we want them to be able to discern, dissect, and uncover the non-Christian bias that lies behind all beliefs and ideas that are contrary to God's revelation. All too often we make two mistakes as we seek to establish a point of contact for evangelism. We either accommodate to non-Christian thinking, or simply react and distance ourselves from it. In doing so we then lose the possibility of finding any point of contact by which to present the Christian perspective.

We want our students at GTC to avoid both accommodation and reaction as they venture into their vocations, or into further tertiary study. We want to help them find a way forward in dealing with non-Christian thinking by exposing its pagan starting point, its bankrupt methodologies, and its God-denying conclusions. The great Reformed apologist Cornelius van Til is our guide as we examine the Scriptures in order to equip ourselves to bring every thought

captive to the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor 10:5).

An example from contemporary New Zealand life might help us understand what Christian thinking involves. In New Zealand today we are grappling with issues of land ownership as they relate to the Treaty of Waitangi. Who does the land belong to, and who took what from whom? What can Christians say about this issue?

If we bring a perspective that is determined by our skin colour, family/ethnic backgrounds, or political persuasion, then we will have failed to be truly Christian in our thinking. Our starting

point must be God’s revelation, a revelation that speaks equally to both sides of the debate and that critiques European culture as much as it does Maori culture. A Christian perspective will be different from all others; it will present a third option, one in which God’s voice is heard.

What we have in this issue is a clash between the rival claims of fallen men on the one hand, and God’s ownership of all things on the other. In effect, we are dealing with a clash between two religions or world-views. On one hand men claim ownership to the land, while on the other God says the whole earth belongs to Him.

From a Christian point of view the land does not belong to Maori, in spite of their ancient claims. Nor does it belong to Pakeha, in spite of their claim to fee simple ownership, or to a so-called right of conquest. The land belongs to God and He does not surrender ownership of any of it to any of His creatures. Rather He retains and exercises His claim over all things and one day will bring this world to an end. (Even in the OT Israel occupied the land but God continued to own it, and to exercise His right to evict his rebellious occupiers). Today both races occupy the land in New Zealand as tenants in common until the day when they will both be evicted, when God brings this world as we know it to its consummation. Both races owe their allegiance to the Landlord whose image they bear and who graciously allows them the occupancy.

However, that’s not the way either Europeans or Maori approach the issue of land ownership. Both sides begin with a starting point in their thinking that denies the truth of the Creator who has made the land they live in. Their method of reasoning seeks dominion for the creature rather than glory for the Creator. Hence their conclusion is to stake a claim for ownership over that which

they can never own. This is foolishness!

The Christian understands this and is able to see clearly how to lead the way forward for this nation. It is a way that abandons claims to absolute ownership and promotes the idea of responsible stewardship in a spirit of brotherly love. Christians of whatever skin colour must be willing to give up, surrender, to count all things as loss, in order to bring the grace of the Gospel of Christ to bear on this issue. When in our hearts we are willing to give up our claim to the land then we can enter this debate without any vested interest in the outcome. We can bring the Gospel of repentance and reconciliation to bear on both parties. We can do so with the confidence knowing that our labour will not be in vain. We will be vindicated and God will be glorified on the day of His return.

At GTC we will help you discover and develop your Christian mind to think clearly and biblically in all areas of living.



Term Dates for 2004

- Term 1:** Tues 27th January – Fri 2nd April
- Term 2:** Mon 19th April – Fri 25th June
- Term 3:** Mon 12th July – Fri 17th September
- Term 4:** Mon 4th October – Fri 3rd December

Timetable for 2004

Day	Time	Subject	Instructor
Monday	7:00-9:00 p.m.	Greek II	A.W. Palmer
Tuesday	9:00-10:00 a.m.	Chapel	
	10:00 a.m.-12:00	Ministry of Word I	A.W. Young
	7:00-9:00 p.m.	Westminster Confession of Faith	A.W. Young
Wednesday	9:00 a.m.-12:00	Biblical Theology I	A.W. Young
Thursday	9:00-11:00 a.m.	Pastoral Life & Skills (Terms 1,2)	A.W. Palmer/ R.C. Thompson
	9:00-11:00 a.m.	Biblical Counselling (Terms 3,4)	A.W. Palmer/ R.C. Thompson
	12:00.-2:00 p.m.*	Hebrew and/or Greek I *	A.W. Palmer
Friday	9:00 a.m.-12:00	Church History	A. Robinson

* times and subjects dependent on student demand

Please join us in....

Thanking God for

- ◆ A very productive year at GTC, with a lot of learning accomplished and good work from our students
- ◆ A successful Church Revitalization Seminar run by GTC in Waihola in November
- ◆ A record number of full-time students enrolled for 2004
- ◆ Many opportunities this year to speak about GTC both in NZ and overseas



Praying for

- ◆ Our students as they complete assignment work and exams
- ◆ Dawie Malan as he takes up work as a preaching elder
- ◆ Nick Allen as he begins his university studies next year
- ◆ Peter and Margaret Reynolds as they depart to further their studies at Covenant Seminary in the USA

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