

REFLECTIONS

Grace OPC

THE INTRUDER GOD

By Pastor Brian De Jong

Mythology is a very safe thing to those who will suspend disbelief and play “make-believe.” Whether it was the ancient mythological deities of Greece or Rome, or modern myths like Santa Claus, these stories offer comfort and security without the possibility of danger.

We all know that there is no fat bearded man living on the North Pole employing elves to build toys for nice girls and boys. We “get it” that there are no reindeer with red noses who pull a magic sleigh through the sky to visit every home worldwide in a single night. All but the youngest understand the myth of Santa Claus – it is part of our culture and it makes for cute TV specials, but there is no truth to it.

Because they are imaginary, such myths are easy to entertain and safe to the touch. Be ever-so-bad as you can be for a whole year, but you still won’t get a lump of coal in your stocking. We chuckle at the song, “He knows if you are sleeping, he knows if you’re awake, he knows if you’ve been bad or good, so be good for goodness’ sake...”

Jesus Christ is a whole other story. In His incarnation, He came as the Intruder God to enter into the world of men. He came to seek and to save what was lost, bringing good news of great joy – the Incarnate Invader had arrived.

No matter what the New Atheists like Richard Dawkins may claim, Jesus Christ is no myth. Jesus was really real – He is true truth. There is far too much credible

evidence by way too many eyewitnesses to doubt his true existence in Palestine two thousand years ago.

As the Incarnate Intruder, He came to challenge the powers-that-be. That started with the Jewish leadership – the Pharisees, Sadducees, chief priests and elders of the people. Once He began His public ministry, they quickly realized how dangerous He was to their popularity and power. They saw Him as a threat, and they tried to eliminate Him. Jesus triumphed over the Sanhedrin and the High Priest, rising from the dead in an open display of His insuppressible power.

Jesus also came to challenge the Roman Caesar cult. It is well documented that Caesar Augustus claimed to be divine. He is spoken of as “the savior of the world.” His birth was proclaimed to be “good news for all peoples.” The birth narrative in Luke’s gospel takes up these blasphemous titles ascribed to Caesar and shows how Jesus Christ fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament and came as the True Savior of the world. Caesar, too, would be defeated by the Prince of Peace.

Even more significant was His intention to tackle the great enemy of God. 1 John 3:8 tells us that “*The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.*” That great feat was accomplished, according to Hebrews 2:14 *Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death...*

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December 2013

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Mnemonics...

- *Session Meeting, 10th*
- *Pastor Brian’s Pizza & Bowling Party, 27th*

My Trip to ETS

by Pastor Brian De Jong

As part of my pastoral development, I try to attend conferences that will be spiritually refreshing, theologically challenging, and mentally stimulating. My recent trip to the Evangelical Theological Society annual conference met these criteria and exceeded my expectations.

The overall theme of the conference was “Evangelicalism, Inerrancy and the ETS.” Since its inception, this organization has required members to sign a statement of faith affirming the inerrancy of Scripture. By this term “inerrancy,” we mean the idea that the Bible contains no errors in it, but is altogether true and trustworthy in what it affirms and addresses. In short hand, inerrant means “without error.”

Because scholars within the evangelical world are challenging the inerrancy of Scripture, the leadership of the Society felt it was time to address the issue and re-affirm their commitments. The three plenary speakers all addressed the issue from different angles. Each of the presenters in the various “parallel sessions” was also asked to relate their papers to the main theme of inerrancy.

I was very happy to have my dear wife, DeLou, with me. We were able to take in many of the same presentations and discuss them. Occasionally we split up and attended different presentations, so we covered more ground in that way. It was a very pleasant time for us as a couple – an added bonus.

We began on Tuesday morning with a presentation by five different scholars who are collaborating on a book. They represented five distinct views of inerrancy. Dr. Al Mohler of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary represented “classical inerrancy” and called for a continued commitment to this vital doctrine. Without inerrancy, Evangelicalism is doomed to destruction, Mohler argued. The next presenter was Peter Enns, who took the position that inerrancy is unduly restrictive and keeps us from following the Bible faithfully. He sees inerrancy as a constraint that should be discarded if we wish to be more truly Biblical. He stood at the opposite end of the spectrum from Mohler. The third scholar was

from Australia, and was the funniest of all. His name is Michael Bird, and he suggested that inerrancy is a uniquely American issue that really doesn’t matter much to people outside the USA. He had some interesting critiques of the other positions, but didn’t have a strong alternative to suggest. Fourth came a video presentation by one of the five collaborators – Kevin Vanhoozer of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He called for a level-headed Augustinian doctrine of inerrancy. He was probably the most persuasive of all five. The last presentation was done by John Franke, a neo-orthodox postmodernist thinker who was the most radical and dangerous of the five. From this panel, it became clear that Evangelicalism is increasingly divided on the issue of Biblical inerrancy.

The next presentation I attended was given by a PhD candidate at Southern Baptist Seminary on the differences between Dr. David VanDrunen and his critics. The thesis of the presenter was that the divide is due largely to a different understanding of covenant theology. This has led to a running disagreement over what is called “the two kingdoms view” that Dr. VanDrunen advocates. Since this has direct bearing on our Presbytery and denomination, I wanted to hear how we’re being perceived by those outside our circles.

After that presentation came a thrilling paper on “Covenantal Apologetics” by the professor of apologetics at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia – Dr. Scott Oliphint. He is unflinchingly Van Tillian in his position, but prefers the label of “Covenant Apologetics” to the more usual “Presuppositional Apologetics.” He explained why he is calling for that name change, and what makes his position truly covenantal. He did some probing exegetical teaching from Romans 1:18ff and he quoted the Westminster Confession of Faith freely. Listening to that lecture was like red meat to a hungry dog – I devoured it with great satisfaction.

After lunch on Tuesday DeLou and I attended a presentation by our friend from seminary days, Dr.

Trip Continued...

Bassam Chedid. He spoke in a parallel group on Islam. He examined the different attributes of Allah in Islam, and how they differ from Biblical ideas about the nature of God. One attribute that he shared was Allah's deceptive nature – he is the greatest deceiver. Therefore Allah is capricious and cannot be predicted or trusted. Followers of this deceiver-god are therefore free to act deceitfully and capriciously themselves. They are just being like Allah. In sharp contrast, our God never deceives and cannot lie. He never engages in deception with any of His creatures. This shows how Allah and the Christian God are not the same being.

The next speaker was not the best presenter, but had interesting material. He was an Argentinian man with a PhD in Engineering. He was clearly uncomfortable speaking to a group of theologians, but he had a fascinating paper nonetheless. He dealt with the Waldensians and their use of Scripture in the 12th and 13th centuries. He had done translation of original source material from Latin, and gave us material that is literally unavailable anywhere else in the world.

Around 3:30 we headed off to a panel discussion on the relationship of systematic theology and Biblical theology. The panel featured D.A. Carson, Gerald Bray, and two other men. Carson is probably the foremost thinker and Biblical exegete of the Evangelical Theological Society, and it showed through his comments.

Following this was the first plenary session. The speaker was Dr. John Frame of RTS Orlando. He gave a very matter-of-fact presentation on why inerrancy is the only possible position that right-thinking evangelicals can and should hold. He showed how this is not just an academic issue, but relates to the state of our hearts and souls. There can be no neutrality on the issue of Scripture's inerrancy. Frame gently but firmly pushed the point. By the end of the first day, we were both exhilarated and worn

out.

To begin the day on Wednesday, DeLou and I went in different directions. I attended a presentation on Dutch Reformed understandings of art. The presenter was from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, CA. Fuller is often a bit left of center on the theological spectrum, so I wasn't sure what to expect. The presentation was very sound and intellectually stimulating. He showed how Reformed thinkers have developed a better and stronger understanding of artistic work, and learned to appreciate the valuable contributions to worldview that come through art. The paper was more descriptive than prescriptive, and gave a good overview of key figures in Dutch Reformed theology and philosophy.

“From this panel, it became clear that Evangelicalism is increasingly divided on the issue of Biblical inerrancy.”

The second presentation on Wednesday had the highest entertainment value, as Professor Alan Strange talked about the Presbyterian theologian Charles Hodge and his contributions to the doctrine of Scripture. I can always tell when Alan is excited about his material, as he repeatedly interrupts his own sentences to start new sentences. (Perhaps his brain is moving faster than his mouth can accommodate?) Alan was very engaged in his topic and wanted to pack his time with the most content possible.

One statement he made was especially helpful. He said that Hodge believed that inerrancy was a consequence of infallibility. What he meant is this: since God is infallible, He cannot make any mistakes. He is incapable of making mistakes. Thus His word is infallible – incapable of mistakes. Since it is incapable of being mistaken, there are therefore no mistakes (inerrancy). Anyone who tries to deny inerrancy but affirm infallibility “is not too smart,” according to Rev. Strange. The funny thing is that several of the presenters of the “five views” on Tuesday morning had challenged inerrancy but affirmed infallibility – not so smart!!!

Perhaps the most personally engaging presentation was a panel on Wednesday afternoon

Trip Concluded...

featuring Al Mohler, Ligon Duncan, D.A. Carson, and two other scholars. Their topic was the leadership and influence of Carl F.H. Henry. Henry was one of the leading thinkers in Evangelicalism from the 1950's onward. He was the first editor of Christianity Today and authored numerous important books. Each one on the panel had known Carl Henry personally, and shared their reminiscences of this great man. As they interacted with each other in discussion, you could sense the love and respect they each held for the man who had mentored them. God used Carl Henry to significantly shape evangelical Christianity and some of the foremost leaders of the current generation.

On Wednesday evening we attended the annual ETS banquet. The President of the Society addressed us on the topic of inerrancy and its worldwide importance. DeLou and I sat at a table full of Southern Baptists. They all knew each other, and talked knowledgeably about the issues within their own circle. We were the "odd Presbyterians out" during most of the discussion. It was a good reminder that not everyone in this world is OPC.

Thursday was the final day of meetings. The third and final plenary session was given by Ben Witherington of Asbury Seminary. He comes from the Methodist tradition, and was quite different in content and delivery. He gave a very engaging presentation that focused on the history of the inerrancy debate. After his talk, the other plenary speakers joined him for an hour and twenty minute panel discussion. Although I don't usually care for panel discussions, this one was very impressive and informative.

Perhaps my favorite moment came when Witherinton knowingly proclaimed that if you look at the four gospels, you find differing accounts of the cleansing of the temple. Each of these is somewhat different, some have suggested there were really two cleansings of the temple. One cleansing took place at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry and the other one took place during the week before his crucifixion. Witherington scoffed at the idea of two different temple cleansings.

As Witherinton talked, I saw Carson faunching in

his chair. As soon as Witherington finished, Carson spoke up with a rebuttal. In about 3 minutes Carson completely demolished Witherington's argument and showed from Scripture why it is most likely that there were indeed dual cleansings of the temple – one early and one late. Witherington was left speechless as he watched his confident assertions being chopped to bits before a room of 2300 theologians and scholars. (I personally hold Carson's position, but had never heard it expounded so cogently)

Coming away from the meetings, I was encouraged in my spirit and stimulating in my thinking. It was good to hear such sound scholarship on so many different topics. It was also good to be with brothers and sisters in Christ – most of whom I don't know and didn't personally meet. Yet to know we will be shoulder-to-shoulder around the throne of the Lamb in heaven, it was good to at least be aware of them.



Thank You

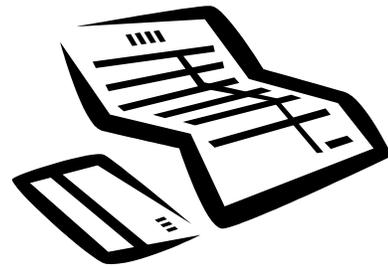
Dear Grace OPC,

We thank the Lord for you & the bonds we have in Christ. Thank you for your recent gift for the church planting efforts in Andover, Minnesota.

We had our first worship service on Sunday. It was grand. We also had about 35 people in attendance. Some were from Mission OPC but we still had a good group.

Thank you for your gracious help & prayers.

In Christian Love,
Pastor Jim & Immanuel Church (OPC)



Continued from the front

...He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,"

Not only did Christ intrude the realm of time and space generally, but He comes into our lives uninvited. While we were dead in our trespasses and sins, Jesus barges in to make us alive and draw us to Himself. And He blessedly refuses to leave us – He keeps intruding so that we will grow in our faith. As C.S. Lewis famously wrote, He is not a safe lion!

Normally intruding is a negative thing, but not so with Jesus. Where would we be if He had not sought us out and come into our lives, subduing us to Himself and teaching us to love Him? Thank God for the Incarnate Invader! May He hold more sway over our lives in the years to come!



December Birthdays



Pine Haven Bake Sale

The Pine Haven Auxiliary is hosting their Annual Craft and Bake Sale on Saturday December 7. It runs from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Catalunya Restaurant in downtown Sheboygan Falls. All proceeds go to support the Pine Haven Communities. Any donations of baked goods and crafts would be appreciated.





Grace OPC

December 2013

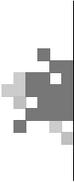
Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Fellowship Lunch	2	3	4 Prayer Meeting, 7 p.m.	5	6 Pastors & Wives Dinner	7 Deacons & Widows Lunch
8 Missions Sunday	9 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m. <i>Pine Haven Study,</i> <i>1:30 p.m.</i>	10 Session Meeting, 6:30 p.m.	11 Prayer Meeting, 7 p.m.	12	13	14
15	16 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.	17	18 Prayer Meeting, 7 p.m.	19	20	21
22	23 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.	24	25	26	27 Pastor Brian's Pizza & Bowling Party	28
29 Lord's Supper, (p.m.)	30 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.	31				

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submitted by Carla De Master

Pine Haven Auxiliary Update

The Pine Haven Auxiliary raised \$25,000.00 for the Pine Haven Communities over the last year. \$9,000.00 of it came from the Corner Store. The money will be used by Pine Haven to buy four Defibrillators, a Sit to Stand, a Sling Lift, a Broda Chair, six Wheel Chair Cushions, Exercise Bands, Positioning Equipment, Isolation Chairs, a Scale, and a Rebounder. Money was also given to the Beauty Shop and the Activities Department. We want to say Thank You to everyone who has helped us raise this

money. We appreciate your time and your donations of crafts and bake goods. Thank you also to everyone who came to our events and supported our mission to improve the lives of the Pine Have Residents.

Thank you to everyone who supported the Perkins fundraiser by eating there. We received a check for \$903.94. New Perkins vouchers for Pine Haven Auxiliary fundraiser located in the foyer are good through January 25.

Talent Night

by Nancy Harmelink

Everyone should have been there to see just how much talent we have in our church!

It all began in grand style with a piano solo by Lona. Mr. Emcee said she has been playing since the age of 3. It was hard to follow her act, but Becca did and she performed a beautiful trumpet solo with her aunt accompanying her on the organ. The two cute sisters Una and Elsi sang their hearts out in a duet in which most was memorized. Arenda followed by giving an outstanding reading (can't remember the title but do with it could be printed out in the Reflections.) She has a very good speaking voice and enunciated so well. Jared brought his guitar and we were delighted with the songs he chose. When Megan stepped up to the organ everyone was awed by the piece she played which showed how accomplished she is. If you closed your eyes you could almost imagine Mr. Bach playing. I couldn't believe how well Scott played his recorder; it looked like he was enjoying

himself. He later told me he also plays the harmonica. Chris came up next, reading two stories to us about a worm and a story from Brer Rabbit. You had to be there to experience how he can totally change the tone of his voice to fit the characters. And when the two ladies, (Ellen and Phyllis) dressed in their frumpy house dresses appeared, we all got a lot of laughs from their skit about two bickering sisters.

Even though I thoroughly enjoyed the talent, I really liked the hymn sing. We sang until everyone had a chance to pick their favorite hymn.

I surely do hope we will have another Talent Night because I know there are many more gifted people out there whom we want to see and hear.



Book Review

by Anna and Sara TenPas

Alone Yet Not Alone is the true story of the Leininger family, a family of German immigrants living in Pennsylvania during the time of the French and Indian War. The title of the book comes from an old German hymn that the family often sang together. The family had a strong faith in God, but their faith is tested when sisters Barbara and Regina are taken captive by Indians. The book tells how the family kept God close in their hearts during their many hardships.

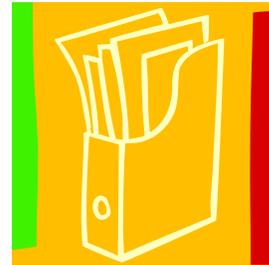
Our whole family enjoyed this book about the

strong faith of the Leininger family. It is best suited for older kids and adults to read. Younger kids may want to read it together with a parent. It is available on the Easicat library system.



Take One!

You may have noticed the magazine rack by the mailboxes at church. Feel free to put a magazine in you'd like to share with others or take one out to read!



Books to Read

by Carla De Master

Books for Christmas & other times in the year...

Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus,
edited by Nancy Guthrie

This book of 22 chapters by 21 men and one woman helped us to focus on Jesus' first and second coming. Many are the sermons by theologians: Whitefield, Luther, Spurgeon, Augustine, Francis Schaeffer, Tim Keller to name a few. The topics covered are varied, such as wrapped in humility, glory revealed, seeing Jesus with the shepherds, the lessons of the wise men, those who come to Christ. Good reading!!!

The Story of the Christ Child by Leon Morris

At one time I read this book (published in 1960) every year. There is so much biblical information here about the various people of Christmas. Details not found elsewhere are in this book. Mary is discussed in *The Promise of the Christ*; the Song of Mary and the Birth of Jesus. The shepherds and the wise men are presented biblically and historically. Who they were, what they were like, and more.

The 31 Days of Christmas by Roger Ellsworth

A devotional book that can be used throughout December, this book seeks to write about the essence of Christmas: Jesus Christ. Some topics are: Angels. Christmas prophecy, Christmas for the 'ful family (fearful, doubtful, sorrowful, sinful), the songs of Christmas: Elizabeth, Mary, Zacharias, angels, Simeon, and more.

The Song of the Virgin by Spiros Zodiates

Based on passages in Matthew and Luke, mostly, this book focuses on Mary's song in the first chapters. What did she really sing about? The honor due to Mary is here--not the honor of some traditions--but the biblical honor that the gospels contain. Where Mary appears in the gospels, Zodiates explains the details.

These are small books, easily read, interesting and helpful for Christian growth.



Gail's French Bread

Put 4 cups of warm water in a large bowl. Add 3 pkg.'s of yeast or 7 tsp.'s of loose yeast. (The extra yeast makes for a quicker rising time). Dissolve the yeast in the warm water. Add 1/4 cup of honey or 3 Tbsp. of sugar to the water/yeast mixture and stir. Let this sit for about 15-20 minutes to form a "sponge."

Now add some flour to make a thick mud. Possibly 3 or 4 cups. After you have mixed the flour into the yeast/water/sugar mixture, fold the mud 100 strokes bringing in as much air as possible.

Put a cloth over the mud and let this double— about an hour or maybe less depending on the warmth of the room (sometimes I put it in a warm oven that has been preheated to 150 and the oven then turned off).

Now incorporate 4 tsp.'s of salt into the mud. Then add flour to make a stiff dough that you will knead for 10 minutes. It should be smooth & elastic. If the dough sticks to your fingers then you will need to add small amounts of flour to keep kneading. Oil the bowl and put the dough into the bowl. Turn it over once. Cover this and let it rise in a warm place until double— maybe an hour. Punch the dough down after it has doubled. Let it rise again until double.

Now take the dough out of the bowl and divide it in fourths. Roll each of these fourths into a large rectangle. Roll up the rectangle like a carpet. It should look like French bread that you would see in the grocery store, only it hasn't risen. Put these on cookie sheets and let rise for an hour or so in a warm place. (note: if you have to do an errand and you might be gone for over an hour, then just place the loaves on the cookie sheet on your counter. They will rise, however, it will take longer because the temp. is cooler). Preheat the oven to 450. Cut slits about 1/2 inch deep in the top of the bread. Spray with water and put in the oven for 10 minutes. Turn the oven down to 350 and leave in the oven for about 20 minutes after spraying the bread with water again. The top of the bread should be a nice brown/tan color.

When the bread is done and just out of the oven I rub a blob of butter on the bread and then sprinkle coarse kosher salt on the bread. This is just something I do. You can put sesame seeds or nothing on top if you wish.

- ★ I sure hope you understand this. The recipe is in my head and you know how that works. Call me!! 208-2551
- ★ I use only unbleached flour and sometimes add whole wheat flour (but not too much otherwise it gets heavy).
- ★ I find this bread very easy to make. I have many interruptions in the day, so it is easy to begin the bread in the morning and work on it whenever. I like having it rise on the counter in the afternoon and then popping it in the oven at 5 p.m. so it is ready for supper or when school is over.

Gail Moody



“The eyes
of all look
to You,
And You give
them their food
in due time.
You open
Your hand
And satisfy
the desire of
every living
thing.”



Showing forth the
excellencies of Jesus
Christ

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CHECK OUT THE AUDIO:

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Spurgeon Corner

*“And lay thy foundations
with sapphires.”
(Isaiah 54:11)*

Not only that which is seen of the church of God, but that which is unseen, is fair and precious. Foundations are out of sight, and so long as they are firm it is not expected that they should be valuable; but in Jehovah's work everything is of a piece, nothing slurred, nothing mean. The deep foundations of the work of grace are as sapphires for preciousness, no human mind is able to measure their glory. We build upon the *covenant of grace*, which is firmer than adamant, and as enduring as jewels upon which age spends itself in vain. Sapphire foundations are eternal, and the covenant abides throughout the lifetime of the Almighty. Another foundation is *the person of the Lord Jesus*, which is clear and spotless, everlasting and beautiful as the sapphire; blending in one the deep blue of earth's ever rolling ocean and the azure of its all embracing sky. Once might our Lord have been likened to the ruby as he stood covered with his own blood, but now we see him radiant with the soft blue of love, love abounding, deep, eternal. Our eternal hopes are built upon *the justice and the faithfulness of God*, which are clear and cloudless as the sapphire. We are not saved by a compromise, by mercy defeating justice, or law suspending its operations; no, we defy the eagle's eye to detect a flaw in the groundwork of our confidence—our foundation is of sapphire, and will endure the fire.

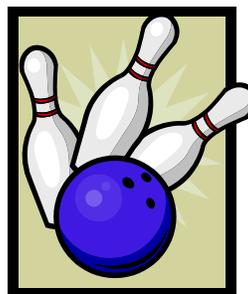


The Lord himself has laid the foundation of his people's hopes. It is matter for grave enquiry whether *our* hopes are built upon such a basis. Good works and ceremonies are not a foundation of sapphires, but of wood, hay, and stubble; neither are they laid by God, but by our own conceit. Foundations will all be tried ere long: woe unto him whose lofty tower shall come down with a crash, because based on a quicksand. He who is built on sapphires may await storm or fire with equanimity, for he shall abide the test.

Evening, December 15, Morning & Evening, by C. H. Spurgeon

Pastor's Pizza & Bowling Party

This year's Bowling & Pizza party will be held on Friday, December 27th starting with bowling at Odyssey Fun Center in Falls. We will bowl from 3 p.m. – 5 p.m. Then we'll



have pizza and games at the church from 5:30 onward.

Cost is \$5 for bowling and \$3 for pizza. Please see Pastor Brian for more details.