

Living in Truth: Unmasking the Lies of our Postmodern Culture

PIETER DE VRIES

Pieter de Vries is a part-time lecturer of biblical theology and hermeneutics at the Seminary of the Dutch Reformed Church in the Netherlands, associated with the Free University of Amsterdam. In addition, he serves as the pastor of a local Dutch Reformed Church of Boven-Hardinxveld, Netherlands. He earned his two Ph.D. degrees from the Theological University of Apeldoorn and the University of Amsterdam respectively. Dr. de Vries has published numerous articles covering diverse aspects of Reformed faith and practice including articles on culture and apologetics. He has also written a number of shorter books including *John Bunyan on the Order of Salvation* (Peter Lang, 1994).

INTRODUCTION

Our society is one typified as postmodern: it is a society that has left modernism behind it, at least in part. Modernism had its roots in the Renaissance and attained its full flowering in the Enlightenment. The philosopher Immanuel Kant described the Enlightenment as man's liberation from the dependency in which he had been holding *himself* captive. It was the authority of the church — and, indeed, that of Scripture — that Kant had in mind. For the propagators of the Enlightenment, reason and understanding were decisive in everything. Only such truths as were apparent to reason were true. What was authoritative was not what Scripture said, but what reason could accept as true. One of the consequences of this attitude was that biblical events falling outside the ken of natural sciences were dismissed as unhistorical. In this manner of thinking, that which was impossible according to science could never have happened. One could summarize this view as, “That which is impossible with men is *impossible* with God.”

The Enlightenment — with modernism following in its wake — did, however, still hold to the existence of transcendent truth and transcendent morals. To account for the continuing post-Enlightenment acknowledgement of universal morality, we must bear in mind that even though the Christian faith was no longer the wellspring of Western civilization, the waters that had accumulated in the basin were not drained away overnight. For instance, it long remained an understanding deeply rooted in Western culture that marriage and the family were building-blocks of society.

The transition from modernism to postmodernism has come gradually. In the 1960s and 1970s this shift began to be visible as the question of whether there really was an all-pervading truth or morality was asked increasingly. Unlike modernism, postmodernism answers this question in the negative. Truth is what is true for me. Everyone ought to observe their own values. It is your own truth that should be coherent; it ought to form a consistent whole as far as possible — and that is “all you need.” There is no objective truth applicable to all people. Postmodernism contends that relativism is actually the moral standard. I may not impose my values on others, and the only restriction is that my values should not threaten society as a whole. And, in turn, only majority opinion in contemporary society can determine when a threat is being posed.

With the arrival of postmodernism, attention has begun once more to be paid to the fact that man is more than a purely rational creature. It has become permissible once more to speak of experience and perception. This development has not, however, curbed the persistence of the notion that no events can occur that do not fall within the frame of reference of natural science. In postmodernism, the supremacy of the natural science model has remained intact, only with the amendment that everyone may uphold his own personal philosophy of life, including pursuing the lifestyle that corresponds to that philosophy. A catchphrase of postmodernism is “the end of the grand narratives.” Written off under that slogan are all philosophies of life with universal truth claims, from Christianity right through to Marxism.

WHAT IS THE CONTENT OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH AND WHO IS A CHRISTIAN?

How, then, is one to live as a Christian in a postmodern society? To answer this question, we must first establish what a Christian is and what the

Christian faith entails. The content of the Christian faith is found in the Bible, in the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. These books constitute the source and the standard of our faith, for in these books, God has revealed himself to us. God's revelation is both personal and doctrinal in character. By the latter, I mean that God has disclosed in the Scriptures truths about himself, about this world, about mankind and about the means of access to himself. This is why the classic Reformed baptismal liturgy is quite right to speak in terms of the doctrine contained within the Old and New Testaments and in the articles of the Christian faith. These doctrinal formulations of the Christian faith describe something of the character of God himself and of the manner in which he governs the world and saves people.

The core of the biblical message is that the living God is the triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The triune God is the God of full salvation. The Father, to whom in particular the work of creation is ascribed, elected to himself in Christ a people—the church—unto eternal life. In order to call and to preserve the church, he steers history. It is in history that his counsel is fulfilled. The Son of God became man and shed his blood for the remission of sins. He died, and what is more, rose again and will return to judge the living and the dead. The Holy Spirit is the Lord, the giver of life. If we truly are Christians, we have not become so through our own efforts or those of other people (even though the Holy Spirit is pleased to use others in our conversions), but rather through the sovereign working of the Holy Spirit. As John 3:8 describes it: “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”

It will not have escaped many readers' notice that my summary of the key content of the Christian faith is contained in the Apostles' Creed. I note in passing that the Reformed confessions of faith are in fact nothing other than an outworking of that Creed. Put slightly differently, the content of the Bible can be summarized in four words — creation, fall, redemption, consummation. God, who created the world, saves sinners from among the human race that has turned away from him. At the return of Christ, the great division of humanity will be effected irrevocably. Those who in this life came to know the triune God as the God of their salvation will be with him in his glory for evermore. The rest of humanity will be excluded eternally. There

is of course much more to be said about the content of the Christian faith, but the above ought to be covered in the “rudiments of catechism,” as the title of a book by Augustine of Hippo puts it.

A nominal Christian is one who, while confessing the truth, does not live on the basis of that truth and who knows nothing of its power. A true Christian is one who, through the working and indwelling of the Holy Spirit, knows of the access to God that there is through his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. To believe truly is, as the answer to Question 20 of the Heidelberg Catechism puts it, not only a sure knowledge whereby I hold to be true that which God has revealed to us in his Word, but also a wholehearted trust, worked in me by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel, that for all who believe God grants forgiveness of sins, eternal righteousness and salvation, out of sheer grace, on the merits of Christ alone.

Through the ages, it has been the calling of Christians to confess the triune God as the God of full salvation. Every age has had its own issues, cares and challenges to contend with, which have lent their own tint to the manner in which the triune God has been confessed. Equally, however, it is true that there are matters in the confession of the Christian faith that transcend times and cultures. The calling of the Christian is to confess the name of Christ in the time and the culture in which he is placed. The essence of this is not that the message be adapted to the time or the culture, but that the time and culture be imprinted by the message; that life here on earth be imprinted by the glory of the new Jerusalem. That imprinting of this world by the kingdom of God will only ever be partial. Indeed, even a Christian gives but a poor showing of the image of his master. What is certain is that being a Christian always necessarily entails being a stranger on the earth to some degree. Whenever the church marries the *Zeitgeist*, or “spirit of the age,” she is a widow in the next generation.

POSTMODERN LIE #1: THERE IS NO OBJECTIVE OR UNIVERSALLY APPLICABLE TRUTH

Armed with this knowledge, we now consider the subtitle of this article: Unmasking the lies of our culture. The master lie of our culture is that there is no objective truth and that, concomitantly, there are no standards, no norms or values, that are unchanging or that are binding for all people. The Bible

might still be seen as an interesting book, but, we are told, we must always keep in mind that it is a book describing the experiences of people who lived in times totally different from our own. Admittedly, we might learn the odd thing from those people's views and experiences, but they need not be our views or experiences; more than that, they *cannot* be ours. Whenever the Bible speaks of a reality that falls outside the frame of reference of natural science, then that Biblical witness has the same value as a fairy tale.

Now the Bible does have the premise of objective truth. The truth, that is, that God is our Creator, and since the fall we have only been able to approach him through his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. There is also the truth that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. It is within that Biblical frame of reference that a Christian views not only his only life but also the lives of others. A Christian looks at other people the way that God looks at them. That is, we know that all people are by nature children of wrath (Eph 2:3). The wrath of God is revealed *against* (ἐπι [*epi*], Rom 1:18) all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Our God is a wrathful God. One could hardly think of a notion more diametrically opposed to the postmodern vibe. If God is permitted to exist, surely it can only be a "god" that is under an obligation to let me get on with my life, that respects me without quibbling, that accepts me as I am and as I act? The Christian is called to talk to others honestly about the wrath of God and about sins. The book of Acts is full of instruction for us in this regard. From the apostles' pronouncements in Acts, we may learn that the wrath of God is not once brushed under the carpet in an initial presentation of the Christian faith. The attitude in which the wrath to come is to be spoken of, is the attitude that each of us have deservedly incurred God's anger.

The Bible teaches us that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. Inevitably, if we truly do look upon others as God does, we will be moved and will yearn for people to be saved. Salvation is only possible by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This means that we ought to be witnesses of Christ, in our words but very much in our actions too. We are called to confess his name and to portray his image.

For postmodernism, it is basically a problem that people have religious convictions, that they believe in God. Problems arise most definitely when the biblical witness is voiced that there is no salvation outside Christ. How exceptionally arrogant and even intolerant this seems. Consequently, Christians

have been withholding salvation for themselves and sending others to their doom. They have thereby set themselves up as the judge of others.

How are we to respond to this? We are to subtract nothing from the Biblical testimony. It is true and will remain so even if we set about to add to or subtract from it. What we have to do, however, is seek to make clear that what we hold out to others, we apply to ourselves too: that living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is not a product that is bundled by default in the package of a Christian upbringing or obtained from concourse with the Christian church, but the gift of God, a gift to which none of its recipients have entitlement. Let us testify to others that we too would never dare to meet with God outside of Christ and that we would never dare advise others to try that either.

We are called to be clear in our presentation of the Christian faith, and at the same time meek in the manner of our own demonstration of it. Meek behavior does not imply that we detract at all from God's truth; what it does mean is being ready to suffer reproach ourselves and to make ourselves less than others in our personal relationships.

In the matter of looking upon others — and of course upon ourselves — as God does, I am bound to think of the Lord Jesus, who received publicans and sinners. His receiving of them did not mean that the Lord Jesus accepted people just as they were in terms of their lifestyles; they were to “go thy way and sin no more.” What it does mean is that he excluded no-one then and excludes no-one now (for the Lord Jesus Christ lives today) from the call to faith and repentance. The Christian must, like Christ himself, distinguish himself from the world yet at the same time be concerned about the world. Being a Christian aright involves recognizing ourselves in the parable of the prodigal son's return to his father, even if some of us have never lived as ruined a life as that prodigal son did. For anyone who does not recognize himself in the prodigal son is the elder brother! A concern for people, and an urge to share the content of the Christian faith with others, ought to characterize everyone that bears the name of Christian.

POSTMODERN LIE #2: THERE ARE NO UNCHANGING OR UNIVERSALLY-APPLICABLE STANDARDS REGARDING MARRIAGE AND SEXUALITY

Modernism maintained the pretense that reason and science were capable of formulating and legitimizing a universally-applicable ethics. This pretense

has been abandoned by postmodernism, which is typified by ethical and cultural relativism. I am well aware of the reawakening of interest in standards, certainly in the general Western public dialogue about “norms and values,” but that is a dialogue taken up with the safety of our streets, courtesy, concern for our neighbors, and such like. Without wishing to suggest that those are trivial matters, they are nowhere near the heart of ethics. In the area of sexuality in particular, postmoderns refuse to countenance any norms that are applicable to everyone or that remain unchanging. Should not everyone be left to live as they themselves wish, as long as they do not harm others? The last Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, is a textbook example of this view. He has gone on record (in *The Body's Grace*) asserting that the only standard for authentic sexuality is that our bodies should be a source of joy to others. On this basis, while he does repudiate paedophilia, he leaves the door open not only for homosexual relationships but also for extramarital heterosexual affairs.

Of course, the argument runs, people are still perfectly free to choose traditional marriage, but let them not dare insist that it is the only channel for the expression of sexuality! Those who disapprove of sexual activity among unmarried young people are dismissed as hopelessly behind the times. Why restrict yourself or deny yourself pleasures? Safe sex can be promoted, for sure, for the sake of your own health. For many, that is the only boundary there is in human sexuality.

Above all, it is disapproval of homosexual relationships that tends to attract fierce to very fierce condemnation. The mantra we hear is that everyone should do what seems right to them, as long as they harm no-one else. Who could it possibly damage if two people have a loving homosexual relationship? Isn't forbidding people of homosexual orientation from having sexual relations placing a burden on them that we are absolutely not at liberty to place? After all, it is not as if they themselves chose their orientation, is it?

Current-day opposition to the Christian faith is in no small measure finding its expression in an opposition to the Christian view of marriage and sexuality, which is now even being called a danger to society. Recently, a U.S. magazine published an article stating that a child that grows up in a traditional family is in dire need of being sent to kindergarten at age four to be redeemed by being taught by a lesbian. I have little difficulty in discerning that this attitude reveals that the world still does insist upon an ethics that

must be applied to all, and that these ethics are based entirely upon human autonomy. Yet that basic premise must be subjected to criticism from the Scriptures. Moreover, it is a basic premise that is not evident to all as having that status. It is unmistakably a philosophical and ideological premise. Tolerance appears here to have led to intolerance.

It is at this very point that unmasking is called for. A Christian is called to be a confessor of the Gospel against the spirit of the age, very particularly in the domain of marriage and sexuality, and this not in word alone but in deed. Let me address the most controversial point, that of homosexuality, first of all. How are we to treat those who pursue that lifestyle? We must always accept and respect others, whoever they are, as creatures of God. At the same time, we are not to remain silent that according to the biblical testimony, it is impossible for those who adhere to a homosexual way of life to enter the kingdom of heaven. Yet, with this as in other sins, whoever confesses and desists from his sin will receive grace and forgiveness. We read in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11: "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, no adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders no thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (NIV, 1984).

Being erotically inclined to one's own sex is a heavy cross for people to bear. The biblical way to deal with it is to maintain a lifelong struggle against yourself. Indeed, we are all biblically called to do that. The standard to be maintained in that struggle is not the broken status quo of fallen mankind, but the image of God in which we were created and the image of Christ in conformity to which we are being renewed by the Holy Spirit. The Christ, that is, who came not to destroy the law or the prophets (the Dutch Statenbijbel translates *καταλύσαι* in Matthew 5:17 as "unbind," which is a more literal translation) but to fulfil them.

In this as in other matters, we cannot work ourselves free of our culture. We daily breathe in the spirit of the age, and if God does not avert it, we will be infected by it and already are infected by it. What is needed is daily prayerful reading of the Bible in the knowledge that in it God has provided us with an infallible and immutable guide for the pilgrimage to the new Jerusalem. Let

us live chaste and pure, whether in the estate of marriage or as unmarried. Let us cling to the biblical fact that marriage and the blessing of children are inseparable, and that the role of a married woman is, if not exclusively, then certainly at the very least primarily a role within the family. Consider the words of the apostle Paul regarding the married woman: “Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety” (1 Tim 2:15). It will be evident that on this very point, large swathes of the Christian church have fallen massively under the influence of the spirit of the culture — a spirit incongruent with the Gospel.

Let Christians make clear in their words, and even more so in their deeds, the positive meaning of what is now known as the “traditional family.” In such testimony, God’s commandment is a garment that matches this truth. Through grace, the Christian does not find this garment a straitjacket. The true Christian understands God’s commandments in the light of their preamble: “I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee ... out of the house of bondage” (Ex 20:2). How vital it is that Christian living — in the matter of marriage and sexuality, but no less in other areas — be a lifestyle that entirely fits us; that people can see that what they regard as a burden is no burden at all to us. Postmodernism is very hot on consistency and authenticity. These are good notions in and of themselves; a Christian ought to be consistent and authentic.

Seeking to win others for Christ has everything to do with living a biblical lifestyle. When we do so, the difference between us and others will leap out at every turn: for example in how we live in regard to our sexual ethics, in what we read, and in what we consume in the realm of social media. I am bound to think of the words of Paul on this point: “... that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (Phil 2:15). At the same time, the Christian observes a number of standards that are held in high regard in our society as much outside the Christian church as within it. Again, I find Paul’s words from the same epistle compelling: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phil 4:8). I am convinced that it was especially with those virtues in mind that Paul wrote elsewhere that a

would-be church office bearer must have a good report of (or “from”) them that are without (1 Tim 3:7).

Just as we have a completely different view of the ultimate nature of this truth than is held in our non-Christian surroundings, so we ought to be genuine, considerate and courteous in interpersonal relationships so that we bring no shame to the name of Christ through our inattentiveness.

Let me cite one striking line from the Epistle to Diognetus, an anonymous early treatise in defense of the Christians and their lifestyle: “They marry and have children just like everyone else, but they do not throw their children away.” (This is a reference to abortion and leaving babies out to be foundlings.) The letter goes on: “They have their food in common” — mutual help being offered among believers — “but not their wives. They are in the flesh, but live not after the flesh. They dwell on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven.”

MATERIALISM VERSUS PILGRIMAGE

In pleading for the traditional family in this postmodern society, one of the major obstacles I encounter is the materialism and individualism that has so thoroughly permeated society. In postmodern thinking, the basic unit is assumed to be not the family but the individual. This individualism characterized Western society even before the emergence of postmodernism: let nothing stand in the way of your self-actualization! Add to this the sentiment that I am worth every material pleasure within my grasp, whether it be a more exclusive abode, a swankier car or a posher holiday, and before we know it both man and wife simply have to go out to work.

Biblically, the family is a nursery of godliness. This means that we must have time for our spouses and our children, if it has pleased God to grant us any. Having time for the family means making sacrifices. That availability far outweighs material pleasures, and accordingly we are to deny ourselves those pleasures. There is no denying that moderation — temperance, to use an old-fashioned word — is as indispensable a part of a Christian lifestyle as righteousness and godliness. In permissible pleasures, a Christian does not need to have it all or be involved in everything that is going on. To do so is detrimental to our walk with God. A Christian is self-controlled in his grief over all earthly losses, and tempered in his joy over any earthly pleasures, because God is the source of his joy.

A real walk with God requires the attitude of being a stranger and pilgrim on the earth; it calls for a focus on the new Jerusalem, on the wonderful reality that thanks to the work of Christ is coming, and that far excels this present earthly reality. The Epistle to Diognetus, which I have already cited, has this to say about Christians: "Each of them lives in his own country, but only as sojourners. They participate in everything as citizens, yet endure everything as aliens. Every foreign country is a motherland to them, and to them every native land is strange." A sterling example of this attitude in the Bible itself is that of Daniel, who felt responsible for Babylonian society, while nevertheless dwelling as a stranger in Babylon.

This society is a materialistic society. It is also a society in which many exalt physical health to the status of the Greatest Good. The Christian church has from her inception been characterized by care for the weak and the sick. There *is* a higher good than bodily health: it is peace with God, and ultimately it is God himself, for he is the saving goodness of all who know him. Besides, sickness and any imaginable form of brokenness are means used by God to cast people upon himself. The joyful bearing of suffering that we encounter, in the knowledge that God is leading our lives as our Father, is part of a Christian lifestyle.

Our society is not only a materialistic society; it is also a society that has moved with great alacrity to ban all possible risks. One is now supposed to hedge oneself in from every conceivable threat. For what other reason than this have insurance companies and legal departments gained such a mighty position of influence in our society? Now, in no place does the Bible forbid us from taking precautions, but the Bible does teach us that a child of God ought not to be worried about anything. If there is one area above all in which we are so beset with difficulties when trying to loosen the culture's grip on us, it is surely this.

What our Lord asks of us is a disposition of dependency and a holy carefreeness. This issue, again, throws into relief the essential need for prayer and inward communion with God. Health is incredibly highly valued in our society. What is more, death has come to be seen very emphatically as the natural conclusion to life, in the sense that while a few decades ago impending death was a subject hushed up even beside sickbeds, it is no longer taboo in general. This is progress of sorts, but a counter-consideration is that society has entirely lost sight of the concept that death is the wages of sin. Biblically,

death is *not* a natural condition! Even for the people of God, death remains an enemy, albeit a defeated one. The chief teaching of the Bible regarding what happens after a person's death is that he or she must meet God and be judged. We will only pass the trial of God's justice if we have already in the spirit been placed before God's just demands in this present life and have received pardon from our guilt and punishment on the grounds of the blood of Christ. To determine the minimum level of knowledge that someone can have of the Biblical message while yet being a genuine child of God is a tricky matter. What is certain is that every true Christian confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, in whose name forgiveness of sins and repentance toward God are obtained.

There are few occasions on which we preachers notice the influence of postmodernism more obviously than on pastoral visits to the terminally ill and the dying. More and more often, the nearest and dearest have just one criterion by which they will deem the pastoral visit to be either proper or indecent, namely putting the dying at their ease. It matters not how this comfort is given, nor whether it is a reassurance that has any biblical foundation. Relatives and friends are looking no further than the present reality, and even if attempts are made to look beyond, then any prospect of gloom ahead must be ignored or denied as far as possible. How great are the difficulties that the pastoral visitor can face; how often it is hard to speak honestly about the biblical significance of death and coming face to face with God! So much the more when those whom one is talking to are further away from the biblical Christian faith. Yet the Lord does demand that we do so. The way for us ministers to be faithful in this is that we ourselves should be conscious of standing and living in God's sight.

EMPHASIS ON EXPERIENCE

Postmodernism does not believe in universal rationalism as regards the answers that philosophies of life have to questions. What it does set very great store by is authenticity, and, by association, experience. Actually, giving consideration to experience is also something inherent to the authentic Christian faith, although that consideration does not play the same role in Christianity as it does in postmodernism. There are tendencies within the Christian church that have allowed the impression to arise that any

consideration of experience is wrong. The theologian Karl Barth is one whom I would name on this point. For Barth, justification by faith, for example, is a purely objective phenomenon. As all mankind is sinful before God, he argues, all mankind may know itself to be included in God's grace. It is no coincidence that Barth had very little esteem for Augustine's *Confessions*.

The experience of faith has an evident place in Scripture itself: one need only think of the book of Psalms. The key consideration in this matter is that we do not go to God as determined by our experience, but we learn to understand and interpret our life in accordance with what God has revealed to us. There can be no faith without experience; there *can* be experience without faith. The Christian experience of faith is multi-faceted. A fine description of the two poles around which our experience of faith revolves is found in the answer to Question 60 of the Heidelberg Catechism: namely, the accusation of conscience on the one hand that I have sinned against all of God's commandments and the confidence of faith on the other with its "But God;" a confidence that the perfect satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ is imputed and imparted to me. We could also express it thus: Christian experience is all about the lived knowledge of sin and grace, or as the Scots believers used to put it, forgiveness is better felt than telt.

The Christian identifies himself with the world in its guilt, yet at the same time knows of things the world has no inkling of, namely access to God through Jesus Christ, forgiveness of sins and the tasting and seeing of the first principles of eternal life already here on earth. That element of Christian experimental faith is inextricably linked with the inward, personal experience of forgiveness of sins. Our hearts are restless till they find their rest in God, as Augustine writes. There is a void in every human heart that can be filled by Jesus Christ alone. We have to do here with a joy that the world has never given and never can give to anyone; I am not saying that this is a joy that the Christian experiences equally strongly at all times. In fact, often there is a pronounced sentiment of falling short. The English poet William Cowper writes:

*Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and his word?*

*What peaceful hours I then enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still!
But now I find an aching void
The world can never fill.*

Yet Isaac Watts may still proclaim:

*The men of grace have found
Glory begun below;
Celestial fruits on earthly ground
From faith and hope may grow.*

The believer who has been grafted into Christ through a genuine faith already belongs to the new creation and is privileged to know the first stirrings of the joy that appertains to that creation. A Christian is homesick for God, homesick for his Father's house, longs for the marriage feast of the Lamb. Those who are homesick come home. We are born as children of Adam and we breathe the air of the secularized society in which we live. Through God's quickening grace, people are also enabled to breathe the air of the new Jerusalem, a city to which access is gained only through faith in the blood of Jesus Christ. I affirm with Pascal that true Christian faith consists in the knowledge of two persons, namely Adam and the wretchedness of us all, and Christ and the bliss of all who are his.