

CLASIS

THE BULLETIN of THE
ASSOCIATION of CLASSICAL & CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

Sine doctrina vita est quasi mortis imago

MAY ■ 2005

VOLUME XII ■ NUMBER 3

Education, the New Covenant, and the Holy Spirit

by James D. Nickel

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more (Hebrews 8:10-12; cf. Jeremiah 31:31f).

Too many Christians limit the potentialities of the New Covenant in Christ. They tend to apply the benefits of this gracious covenant only to redemptive issues related to personal salvation. Although this is a correct application, it is only the beginning; it is the foundation upon which a worldview edifice is built.

For example, consider the first promise of the covenant: "I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts." It is the person of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, who carves God's laws upon the mind and heart of the believer making him a covenant keeper (cf. Ezekiel 36:27). What is meant by "My laws"? The primary meaning is, of course, the Decalogue (Exodus 20), ten command words that unfold the whole of Scripture. In the New Covenant, the Holy Spirit, by internalizing the command words of God, generates a new motivation in the believer, "Oh, how I love Thy Law!" (Psalm 119:97). The epistemological implications that lay dormant within this promise have profound implications for Christian educators. Keep reading in Jeremiah 31, especially verses 35-37. These verses speak of creation ordinances (another word for law). Taken as a unit (Jeremiah 31:31-37), the covenant-keeping God links His creation and redemptive ordinances in a unity (they both speak with the same voice). Not only is the Holy Spirit an active instrument in redemption, He was (and is) an active instrument in creation (Genesis 1:2; Psalm 104:30). The word law, therefore, represents the totality of the way the covenant-keeping God acts towards the creation, both human

and inanimate. One example of creation ordinances would be His command word that governs the motion of the Sun, Moon, and stars (see Psalm 147:15-18 and Psalm 148 for further examples of these creation ordinances).

The Scriptures also speak of the Lord Jesus Christ as an active instrument in creation. In Colossians 1:15-17, the Apostle Paul proclaims that in Christ everything (i.e., the entire created realm whether visible or invisible) was made and in Christ everything holds together (coheres or inter-

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connects). God the Father created all things in, through, and for the second person of the Trinity, who is the wisdom and glory of God incarnate (Colossians 2:3; cf. Proverbs 8:12-31; Psalm 104:24; John 1:14). The Apostle John states that in Christ, the logos of God, the entire created realm was made and without Him nothing was made (John 1:1-3). Logos in the Greek means “word, communication, governing agent, or law personified.” The writer to the Hebrews portrays the Son of God as the personal governing principle, the command word of power that upholds every aspect of the created order (Hebrews 1:1-3). We can therefore conclude that the Christ is not only the mediator of redemption; He is the mediator of creation.

As Christian educators, we seek to unfold God and His creation to our students. We desire to lead our students first to Christ and His redemption and then, building on that foundation, to make known to them the revelation of Christ in creation. By the Holy Spirit, we can possess the very mind of Christ (I

it is only the New Covenant Christian, empowered and taught by the Holy Spirit, who can truly know God’s creation. We can never know exhaustively, but we can know truly. We can know truly because we have a standard for knowing truly. We can know truly because in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossian 2:3), i.e., the Christian embraces, using philosophical terms, a revelational epistemology. Although we see as in a mirror dimly (I Corinthians 13:12), please note that we can see. We have been graced in Christ by His Spirit with epistemological self-consciousness (or “eyesight” – see Psalm 36:9).

The covenant breaker may be able to discern coherences and connectedness (i.e., creation laws), but he does so on borrowed premises. He borrows from Christian theism (by

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God’s common grace) every time he articulates a general law or principle. He can delve into the inner sanctum of an atom and talk about mesons and gluons, but he will never be able to unfold the true nature of the wisdom and power

that holds the sub-microscopic world together. The covenant breaking astronomer may use Newton’s law of universal gravitation to predict the position of planets and stars, but he will never be able to unfold the true nature of that binding, mysterious “force” that governs the cosmos. The covenant breaker cannot justify or identify the unity that governs the whole of the created order because he embraces a rationalistic epistemology. His reason is therefore blinded by his willful rebellion (Ephesians 4:17-20). It is only the Christian, whose reason is submitted to the transform-

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ing power of Christ (Romans 12:1-2), who can know that the person of Christ is the true unity who holds the diversity of the created order—microscopic and macroscopic—together.

What privilege, opportunity, grandeur, and responsibility we therefore possess as Christian educators (to whom much is given, much is required). It is only by a biblical Christian epistemology that we can justify the amazing correlation between

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the human mind (what goes on inside our minds) and the physical creation (what goes on outside our minds). This correlation has mystified some of the greatest minds of modern science, specifically Albert Einstein (1879-1955) who once said, "The eternal mystery of the world is its comprehensibility." God the Holy Spirit, who imparts His laws in

creation also imparts the same laws in our minds and hearts. Our minds and the physical world cohere (i.e., are comprehensible) because the biblical God is the author of both.

By being created and re-created (i.e., reborn) in God's image, the covenant keeper can truly know the ultimate meaning and purpose of law (something the covenant breaker can never truly know). These laws reflect the mind

and wisdom of Christ. The Christian is also in the potential position to discover more of the treasures of creation by the instruction of the Spirit of God (Proverbs 25:2). As Christian educators, it is therefore our responsibility to honor the Christ who upholds every iota of the created realm. May God by His Spirit grace you to do so.

James D. Nickel, B.A., B.Th., B.Miss., M.A., is married with three grown children, and lives in Shreveport, Louisiana. He is the author of **Mathematics: Is God Silent?** ([1990] 2001) and the forthcoming textbook **Mathematics: Building on Foundations**. For more information about his work, writings, services, and textbook projects, see www.biblicalchristianworldview.net

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Congratulations to ACCS Seniors

Jeff Faulkner & Jordan Needham

Mr. Faulkner, a senior at Providence Classical School in Spring, TX, has received an appointment to the US Air Force Academy.

Mr. Needham, a senior at Regents School of Austin (TX) has received an appointment to the US Naval Academy. His elder brother, Mr. Joshua Needham, also a Regents School graduate, is currently attending the US Air Force Academy.

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