

Authentic Response to God: Interviews With Roger J. Newell

Copyright 2013 Grace Communion International

Table of Contents

Introduction

Responding to God in an Authentic Way

Insights of C.S. Lewis

Theology and Nazi History

About the Publisher

Grace Communion Seminary

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Introduction

This is a transcript of three interviews conducted as part of the *You're Included* series, sponsored by Grace Communion International. We have more than 100 interviews available. You may watch them or download video or audio at www.gci.org/YI.

Please understand that when people speak, thoughts are not always put into well-formed sentences, and sometimes thoughts are not completed. In the following transcripts, we have removed occasional words that did not seem to contribute any meaning to the sentence. In some cases we could not figure out what word was intended. We apologize for any transcription errors, and if you notice any, we welcome your assistance.

Grace Communion International is in broad agreement with the theology of the people we interview, but GCI does not endorse every detail of every interview. The opinions expressed are those of the interviewees. We thank them for their time and their willingness to participate.

We incur substantial production costs for these interviews and transcripts. Donations in support of this ministry may be made at www.gci.org/donate.

Our guest in these interviews is Roger J. Newell, Associate Professor of Religious Studies at George Fox University and author of *Passion's Progress: The Meanings of Love* and *The Feeling Intellect: Reading the Bible With C. S. Lewis*. Dr. Newell completed his doctoral studies under Professor James Torrance in Aberdeen, Scotland, then served for eight years as a pastor in Durham, England, followed by five years as a pastor of Lake Grove Presbyterian Church in Portland, Oregon. He assumed his current post at George Fox University in 1997.

The interviewer was J. Michael Feazell, who was then vice president of Grace Communion International.

~~~~~

[back to table of contents](#)

## Responding to God in an Authentic Way

**J. Michael Feazell:** As I understand it, you were the first American student that James Torrance had in doctoral studies in Aberdeen.

**RN:** Right, that was 1978. I arrived just a little bit after Professor Torrance came the previous semester to be the professor there, after having been the teacher in Attenborough, Scotland, for quite a few years. It was a great opportunity and privilege to be one of his early students, to attend his seminars, and to get to know him as a mentor and as a friend.

**JMF:** You mentioned that he instilled the passion in you for pastoral ministry...

**RN:** Right. The time I went there, I was thinking maybe I wasn't sure if I was going to do pastoral work or just pursue teaching. But having studied with Professor Torrance, I became more aware of a call that I really did want to pastor. He inspired in me a sense that the parish, the local church, is the laboratory where people come to know the living God and we become participants in that and roll up our sleeves. That was very significant, and I wanted to do that.

**JMF:** So you spent a little over a decade in pastoral ministry before you began teaching in George Fox.

**RN:** Thirteen years.

**JMF:** That would bring to your theology a real, practical, meaningful, tone that we don't often see in theology.

**RN:** I was also fortunate in having studied with Ray Anderson at Fuller Seminary. Ray had made it important, and modeled for this same kind of connection and integration between pastoral care and pastoral work and the best theology one can articulate.

**JMF:** We had the privilege of having Ray on this program. In some of the writings you've done, you've written about the encounter between Mary and the angel Gabriel. Gabriel announces to Mary what's going to happen to her and then her response to that, and then you tied that in with *our* response. Could you talk about that?

**RN:** The reason I started in with the story of Mary as a way of trying to understand how a person responds to God is because, in a way, she's the first one in the Church who has the word spoken to her by the angel. She's the one through whom the Word becomes incarnate. Her response becomes, in some ways, a way to begin to understand what it means and how you and I can learn many years later to begin to respond. She is a great example to see what is going on in learning how to respond to God. I wanted to start with her.

**JMF:** One of the things with Mary that you point out is that her response is not some ideal, high, moral, Christian, so called, godly response, as we think of that sometimes – she’s a little worried about it, upset, to some degree – there are all kinds of questions she has, it’s a very human response.

**RN:** Yes. If we take the halo pre-arranged off her, then it’s important to realize that she, as the text says very clearly, was deeply troubled. She is a young woman going to her prayers, as a devout, young Jewish maiden, and what she got in her prayers that day was not what she was looking forward to, and it wasn’t expected, and the text is clear that she was deeply troubled by what happened, and she was also afraid.

If they had wanted to make her into some kind of an idealized portrait, they would have air-brushed that very human response away. But instead, there it is, and this is how she responded. It’s part of her journey to then saying, “I’m the handmaid of the Lord, and let it be to me according your will.” It’s all included, and that’s an important key, an important thing for us to remember – that there is no perfect way to respond to God except to be genuine and honest before God. If there’s fear, if there’s trouble – things going on in my life – that’s part of what I openly and honestly bring to the table. God accepts that.

**JMF:** In preaching and teaching that, we tend to hear the admonition that jumps us right to the very end – let it be unto me as the Lord has spoken, without acknowledging the fact that there is a journey to get to that spot. It’s a human journey, and the honesty that you spoke of, being a part of what we are able to have as a part of our response – admitting to God, dealing with God, like Jacob did – this wrestling with God over issues, is part of the Christian experience. That has become lost in some of the liturgy and some of the teaching and preaching we hear today.

**RN:** I suppose it’s inevitable that we jump too quickly to the last word, and we don’t always listen to the next-to-the-last word. We hurry to the happy ending, maybe, or the perfection, and the real journey that people have sometimes is telescoped or narrowed. Maybe that’s part of the fact that in our culture everybody’s in a hurry. The pastor’s in a hurry, he wants to have perfected saints. Sinners are very messy to deal with, and if you could clean them up more quickly, maybe everybody’s job would be a little easier.

But for whatever reason, that doesn’t seem to be how we are formed. To try to prematurely, or shrink-wrap Christians and make them saints, in a way that’s artificial, like hot-house plants, doesn’t seem to work. We may have to begin to unlearn the false responses that we make to God

because we think everybody expects them of us. But they aren't from our own hearts. We have to sometimes unlearn those manufactured approaches and learn to respond to God genuinely as did Mary.

**JMF:** You talked about the “ought” and the “should,” how did you put that...

**RN:** The danger is that, in the urgency or the anxiety we preachers sometimes have to get people to the bottom line, we can pressurize people to make the response we think they ought to make... Maybe we lack confidence that God is going to do what he intends to do, and so we feel like we have to pull the strings a little bit. So we can put pressure on people, and as a result, instead of letting people respond to the good news, we have this twist, and sometimes we turn the good news into “should” news.

This is something that's been talked about, I think very perceptively, by C.S. Lewis, and why he wrote the *Chronicles of Narnia*. He says that one of the things he thought that was inhibiting people from really hearing the gospel is that... He talked about the stained-glass window in Sunday School associations, whereby one was told, one ought to be grateful to God, one ought to be thankful. And having heard this so often, it caused the person to focus on themselves and their response, rather than on the object, the reality of God, which naturally evokes a response. Inadvertently, we in the church too often turn the good news into “should” news. It's not our intention, but what it means is the recipients take their eyes off the source and try to manufacture a response that we think is expected, and ironically, that cuts off our feelings, and our feelings freeze up.

**JMF:** Don't we do that a lot, especially in worship: we try to make ourselves feel something, we're not sure exactly how we should feel, but we know, not to be holy and not to be sanctimonious or something, and so we try to will ourselves into the right feeling – and, as you say, our attention is totally on ourselves instead of on the object of our worship.

**RN:** That's right, and the problem is that we become self-centered in our worship, either focusing on our virtue, in patting ourselves on the back and thinking well done, or we become focused on our failures, our inadequacies and whether our self-centered response to God becomes inflated, congratulating ourselves, self-righteous on the one hand, or we become discouraged and deflated and put ourselves down on the other. Both are ways of getting in the way and not being responsive, trying to create some kind of virtue in ourselves.

This always leaves us frustrated, either in a negative way or a positive way – the Pharisee

thinking, “Thank you God that I’m not like other people. Wow, I’m really good at this responding to God.” Or on the other hand, a person who feels like, “Everything I do is hopeless, and I can’t.” Like Martin Luther, when he was a monk, whatever he did wasn’t good enough. He was constantly berating himself and criticizing himself and he had made himself miserable

**JMF:** Jesus told a parable about two sons. One responded right away with the right words by saying, “I go, sir” when his father told him to go work in the field. And the other one refused, but in the end, the one who responded with the wrong words is the one who did what he was asked, and the other one didn’t.

**RN:** Right. Even though he said he would, and so the words came easily, but actions, once the father looked the other way, were nowhere to be found. It reminds us of how important our response is meant to be: not just a verbal one, but with our whole hearts. The second sentence is a great example of somebody who took him a while. At first he let his father know (was it his father or the master, I forget), “I’m not doing this.” But it percolated, he thought about it, and he was honest and genuine in his initial, “No,” but as he thought about it, he thought, “I think I’m going to do what I was asked.” That had integrity.

**JMF:** We have a fear of responding in a way other than rightly, and that contributes to wanting to look at ourselves and analyze how we’re responding, how we’re thinking. But aren’t we freed to respond freely and honestly, if we remember that it isn’t our response that matters. Jesus has already responded for us perfectly as the human who stands in for us before the Father. If we can rest in that, we don’t have to worry about or think about or second guess how we’re responding.

**RN:** Yes. I’ve been wrestling with the whole relationship between God’s reaching to us and coming to us and our responding to this. I’ve been re-reading Dietrich Bonhoeffer and his wrestling with this issue in his little book, *The Cost of Discipleship*. He talks about the danger of cheap grace – grace that comes without any response on our part, because it’s all been done for us. He says, this is what’s wrong with Germany. He’s writing in 1937, when Fascism has basically taken over a country of good doctrinally Lutheran justification-by-faith Christians. Somehow their response seems to have been perverted. He is trying to recover a sense of response that has integrity.

This is where he makes a great point that grace is absolutely free. It’s absolutely free, but it’s always costly, because it cost God everything. It cost him sending his own Son, so therefore, it

could never be had by us by anything other than by a deep response of gratitude and thanksgiving – that is far more than verbal.

Professor Torrance used to bring this home in an important way when he talked about God's grace being unconditionally free. But he says, as a result, the response is, "Therefore," not "If you." It's not, "If you believe, if you have faith, I will love you, and so on."

But because our God, in Christ, has loved us and given us himself so freely, therefore, we want to respond. That freedom to respond is evoked by the reality of God – not by some sense of obligation on my part to earn merit, but the most natural way of responding to such a good gift.

**JMF:** It's freeing to know that our response is taken up by Christ, in such a way that it matters and that it's healed. There's a tendency toward carrying unnecessary guilt and carrying an unnecessary burden of second-guessing everything we do and worrying that God might not be accepting us and is probably fed up with us and is angry at us. But how freeing is it to know that as we respond, out of gratitude and a heart of appreciation for one who has healed our responses and made them right, when I'm thinking rightly about that, it keeps me in a channel of rest and freedom. The less I'm focused on myself and how I'm responding, the better I respond. It's when I'm focused on myself and my responses that I seem to be heading to the edges all the time and bouncing down the river instead of going down the middle.

**RN:** Absolutely. Another way that helps me understand this better is to be aware that my response to God is always an accompanied response. It's not initiative. It's not me taking charge. It's not me asserting myself, but it's learning, like those people we read about in Scripture, to realize that my response, whether it's initial fear, initial hesitation or initially being deeply troubled, is accompanied.

This is part of the importance of the humanity of Jesus, that Jesus became human, fully human. Whatever response that we make is never autonomous, or on our own, but it's shared with Jesus himself, in his own humanity connecting with our humanity. That is part of the freedom and the freeing experience of knowing that my response is not isolated, in some kind of splendor of its own religiosity or whatever, but is taken hold of and brought before God the Father by Jesus the Son.

**JMF:** You've written about Apollinarianism, which you call functional Apollinarianism, and how it affects our worship patterns and even contemporary music. Could you describe Apollinarianism and functional Apollinarianism, and how does it affect our worship patterns?

**RN:** This is a complicated issue ... maybe we could get into this little bit further later on. But what I would say now is that Apollinarianism focuses on the sovereignty or the deity of Christ, but forgets or sets aside the real humanity of Jesus. Sometimes this affects us when we have a worship experience, when we go to church, in which we have forgotten that Jesus is truly human and Christ in his humanity accompanies us in our prayers, in our worship. We have forgotten that we have a priest – a priest in his humanity who accompanies our worship, again to the Father.

But if we don't have that sense of Jesus as humanity and we just have a sense of Christ's exalted Lordship, then we sometimes think, I've got to substitute, I need to somehow intercede for myself, or maybe my pastor has to somehow become the bridge. We can inadvertently put all our marbles on these very frail humans – myself, or my pastor, or whoever – to somehow create the connection between ourselves and God, and we end up with a functional Unitarianism in our worship and our prayers....

**JMF:** Which is as though Jesus is high and exalted, and we think of him that way, and we re-create the gulf between humanity and God by focusing on Jesus as high and exalted...

**RN:** Pure deity. God alone, God only. The uniqueness of our faith as Christians is that God has in Jesus become truly human as well as truly divine.

**JMF:** He is the bridge and the mediator as a human being. [**RN:** That's right.] Many people think of Jesus as being human when he was on earth during the Incarnation itself, and then when he's resurrected and ascends to the Father, he's not human anymore – now he is the exalted God, with God, and we lose the human connectedness, but in fact, he remains human...

**RN:** Yes. This is a very profound and important thing, that our humanity has been taken up into God through Jesus, and our humanity is no longer apart from Jesus. This is a tremendously important thing to think of. The implications continue to multiply as we ponder what this means. Certainly, part of what it means is that my human response to God should never be seen in isolation from Jesus as accompanying me in his humanity. This is the great theme of the book of Hebrews, that Jesus is our high priest, who in all things knows what we're going through, he's tempted as we are and yet without sin. He knows what it's like to be human, and he knows that from the deepest place of what it means to be a human being – in terms of all our human frailty.

That is the humanity he has worn and recovered and then taken up to God. That includes me and all my awkwardness, my brokenness and my imperfections, as well as my strengths. That's



been accompanied, and that's what I'm learning to offer back up to God. Not in a way that's uniquely set apart...in some kind of isolated offering to God. It's this communion, a communion of love, with the human Jesus.

**JMF:** We're one with him as he is one with the Father. There's no other way to be human except to be human in Christ – where we live and move and have our being in him and not just as the exalted, resurrected One, which he is, but as the human being – the glorified human.

**RN:** Even in his glory – remember those wonderful words from Charles or John Wesley – rich wounds he had visible above and beauty glorified – even in his being exalted, his wounds are still visible – his humanity has not been discarded as being something extraneous to the Incarnation, extraneous to the reality of God, but has been brought together again. This is the healing, the bringing together of heaven and earth, where God's will shall come, and his will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven. Jesus is the firstfruits of all that. He is going to take all creation with him, and he has done that. And he will do that, but it's an *accompaniment* now. Creation will no longer be cut off and separated from the Redeemer – from its Creator and Redeemer.

**JMF:** Reminds of one of the last scenes of Jesus in the Gospels, with the disciples, after his resurrection... They're out fishing, and he's on the shore, and he wants them to come and have breakfast with him. This is the resurrected Christ, it's very intimate ...

**RN:** And very physical [**JMF:** ... real], eating food, and this part of the sheer earthiness of our humanity, and this is included.

**JMF:** You are working on a new book?

**RN:** Yeah. The things we were talking about initially, about Mary and the meaning of her response... This has been one of the great challenges for me, to try to make sense out of it... encouraging discipleship, encouraging others to grow and develop as a pastor, and in my own journey to be faithful to Christ in a way that becomes and continues to be healthy and real and not artificial and contrived in order to earn approval – from either others, or one's congregation, or from God. But rather comes out of a heart of genuine response to the good news.

I started with Mary, but I'm really trying to make sense out of what I see as a tremendous gift that C.S. Lewis, in his writings, has given the church about teaching people how to respond to God ... and in his instance, how to respond to literature. What is it about? Why was Lewis such a great reader? Why was he so receptive that he could get to the very heart of what he was

reading and pull out what really mattered?

There's a wonderful wisdom in his whole approach to literature, which I think he learned, and it came to him in his own journey of faith – he learned to recover a faith that he lost to the “should” news, and he learned how to recover and receive again the grace of God as he went through a very difficult time. You know, losing his mother to cancer as a young boy and then his father virtually as well, because his father sends him off to boarding school, and he becomes an atheist.

All the while he was trying to be open and exploring what life is about, but he had some relentless willingness to be open and to ask awkward questions of reality and of himself, too, and ask questions of himself, and eventually this leads him back to faith. Applying some of those lessons, which he, as a world-class literary critic, a wonderfully gifted reader, applying that to learning how to be open in reading of Scripture, our sourcebook.

**JMF:** Like many, I'm a big fan of C.S. Lewis' writings, so I'm looking forward to that; I hope it's published soon and can't wait to read it.

**RN:** Thank you, me too. I'm working away, trying to get it in a presentable shape.

~~~~~

[back to table of contents](#)

Insights of C.S. Lewis

JMF: [At the time of this interview] You're working on a book and putting the final touches on it now. Can you tell us about that?

RN: Yes, my concern is to try to try out the implications of Trinitarian theology for how we read Scripture. I found a wonderful guide in this with the writings of C.S. Lewis, who has himself had to work through a lot of false starts of trying to respond to God, and he learned through the writings of George MacDonald and through encounters with Christians, that he had sold Christianity prematurely as not a helpful way, that he had to let go of as he grew up.

He had grown up in a legalistic Protestant environment in Northern Ireland, and some of his experiences there had caused him to have this attitude. But to watch how he recovers and had his faith restored is.... He's articulate, he explains it so well, then he applies it to the reading of literature, and I'm taking some of those lessons in trying to describe how one can recover an understanding of the grace of God – and not just a conceptual understanding, but a felt, emotional congruence with the truth. I want to shed some light on that and show how his way of reading can help us recover the meaning of what Scripture is all about.

JMF: Anything new on C.S. Lewis is bound to be flying off bookshelves, we look forward to reading that. You deal in the book with *The Chronicles of Narnia* and how Lewis deals with judgment and redemption and freedom and such issues through those stories.

RN: The central part of our faith has to do with the judgment of God, which is surprisingly also where we meet God's grace. This is clearly shown in the death of Jesus on the cross, in which is the judgment of the world, and yet also is where we encounter the grace of God at its most penetrating. How can these two, judgment and grace – we tend to think of them as opposites – how can they come together and both convict us of our sin, and also bring us healing and hope, so that we aren't just the victims of our failures, morally and every other way.

Lewis does a wonderful job of showing how the judgment of the children. The scene in the first novel, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, is a moment of extreme judgment and also a radical intervention of grace. This is something that he doesn't forget as he gets older.

The last novel he writes, *Till We Have Faces* – the climax of the book is this wonderfully talented but flawed woman who is the queen of this Oldia Greek city state who is now ready to die. She's an old woman and has to come to grips with her entire life and how she came to power and especially how she treated her little sister, who is a beautiful woman. She has to come to

terms with the fact of how she really felt about... she has convinced herself that she's been only loving towards her sister, but now she has to see herself as she really was, and this is part of her judgment, and this is a devastating experience when she finds the truth about how selfish her love was. (This is a great theme of Lewis in his book *The Four Loves*, also – how love can be ironically selfish.) Helping people can sometimes, because we love them, be very selfish, and so she has to figure out a way to face this truth.

And yet the miracle of this judgment is also, it's accompanied by grace. That's the hope. Lewis' sense is that, in his career as a writer, about this amazing juxtaposition of judgment and grace. If we read the Old Testament carefully and see how the Old Testament is fulfilled in the New, this is our hope, too – that the judgment of God is not mutually exclusive from the grace of God, and that's our hope.

JMF: You reminded me, when you were talking about how love can be misused, of another episode in one of Lewis' books, *The Great Divorce*. The woman rode the bus up to heaven from hell, and she is touring with everyone else, but she's the one who had devoted her whole life to just service – helping everybody in the family and doing work for them. But she was always angry because they'd never seemed to appreciate how much she did for them and what sacrifices she made for them and so on. Her expression of love was actually negative for her and for those around her.

RN: Yes. Lewis has this image again in the *Four Loves*. He has Miss Fidget, who worked herself tirelessly for her family and inadvertently wore her family out by trying to accommodate all of her care. As a pastor, I think of how many times I was involved in caring for people in ways that were maybe a lot more focused on my own role, or my being a servant of God, that became much more self-serving than I would like to admit.

Part of the healing process is taking that, so one can learn to see that our love is often a wounded thing, and we need to be forgiven even of our attempts at love. This is the radical hope of grace, that even our virtue has to be forgiven, but there's hope in that. Even at the places where we may seem to have a virtue. Karl Barth says that religion can be the place where human beings most fiercely resist or challenge God.

We wear religious clothing, and as a professional Christian, as a minister, you wear Christian garb. One of the great challenges of living faithfully is to learn that those clothes are simply that, and to learn ways to be neither rejecting of every effort to give and to show love,

faith working through love on the one hand, but also to realize that anything that has validity in those acts of love and service of love, giving a cup of cold water in Jesus' name or going and visiting a sick person, etc., always needs to be under the mercy of God and the grace of God, that it won't be a self-serving sacrifice in some way to draw honor or attention to yourself. That's an important part of the lesson of an ongoing journey of leadership in the church.

JMF: Henri Nouwen's book *Wounded Healer* gets into pastoral recognition of our own need, like Hebrews talks about – the priests like ourselves who are sinners too, and accepting that, coming from that foundation as we serve and help others.

RN: Here's a place where Trinitarian theology is very therapeutic for us, just putting our lives back together. At the very heart of who God is, there is this perfect communion of giving and receiving love. It's this equi-poise of free unconditional giving and then this free responsiveness between Father and the Son and the Spirit from all eternity, and we get to be included in that and brought into that. That means that my service learns not only the art of giving gracefully but also the art of receiving gracefully. This changes the dynamics of a pastor and his flock, a teacher and the students, and all the rest of it.

It becomes more of a communion rather than identifying love with just one side of that equation – giving a cup of cold water in Jesus' name – but also it's so blessed when *you* are thirsty and somebody gives you a drink, and you don't have to earn it, you can simply receive it and look them in the eyes and say, "thank you." Sometimes our families, our children, our spouses, our congregation, give us that wonderful gift, if we are willing to receive it and not always having to be on the giving end. That's a very humbling part of maturing.

JMF: The whole communion, being part of that relationship, Father, Son, and Spirit, totally changes the pastoral/penitent or lay relationship. (You've touched on that to some degree, I don't want to talk about this right now, we'll get to it later, you've done work with, and working now on political theology in Germany from the '30s up through 1989, and some of that plays into the relationship between leadership in the church and those that are being served.) Before we get to that, I want to go back to the judgment scene in *Lion, Witch and Wardrobe* and get you talk about that a little bit more.

RN: That's maybe the central point in the *Narnia* series, and probably weighing it, because when you read the four Gospels, the death of Jesus is so central and so focused, and attention is paid to that. It is a scene of the judgment of all humankind, and the cross is the climactic moment

when the sins of the whole world are judged. And the miracle is, is that it's not simply condemning the world and rejecting it, because God did not come into the world to condemn the world but that the world, through Jesus, might be saved.

So in the moment of our deepest having to come to terms with our judgment, that our sins have put Christ on the cross, he has taken our place, he has come alongside us and he has spoken from the deepest place in our humanity, this word of hope and forgiveness is given so we can begin, from the bottom of our beings, to begin to live a different kind of life, a response, a genuine response of thanksgiving and gratitude for this gift.

So there it is, like the scene in *Narnia* where the little boy Edmund deserves to be killed because of his betrayal of his family. At that point of his most vulnerability and most sure of being guilty, he's rescued. There's an intervention there, and later in the story you realize how costly this intervention is on the part of the great lion, Aslan. But there's hope, that even when Edmund is most guilty, and he has to face the kind of person he's become, in doing that, he also discovers the depth of God's meeting him and coming alongside him, not to condemn him, but to rescue him. That changes the tone of everything, and it changes the tone of our lives.

JMF: Don't we all walk in the shoes, or take the journey of each of those characters? We're all Edmund at one time or another, in one way or another – needing the grace of redemption. But we're also Lucy and Susan having to forgive, and we're also Peter having to deal with that response to the betrayal and the anger, of being the responsible one who has been thwarted and hurt by the betrayal. All of us need the redemption that comes at that point.

RN: Yes. That that highlights the fact that we don't do this in isolation from each other. When I sin, or when I continually, maybe forget something – sins of omission as well as commission – that has consequences to my relationships of everyone: friends, family, strangers, community. Part of what takes place in the *Narnia* that's so lovely is you learn how the children learn to forgive one another – what has happened vertically, begins to be experienced horizontally, in the way they learned to treat each other in a new way. That's the challenge of being a family of God, a communion of faith in the church and in our families – to practice the art of forgiveness. It's the great challenge and hope of Christian living.

St. Augustine says something wonderful about the hope of trying to come to terms with the terrible challenges of betrayal – the greatest sins Augustine talks about – how the one place where the gospel really addresses the frailty and brokenness of people is, that the church has the

audacity to practice the forgiveness of sins. When you hear this preached and taught and lived out, it's a costly thing, it's not a simple thing. When a community catches the meaning of this, you know the gospel of Jesus Christ is being preached and being lived.

JMF: You bring out in *The Chronicles of Narnia* – as you used those as a springboard – the difference between a felt response and an obligation, in terms of responding to God.

RN: This is an important part of it, isn't it? The reason life is so difficult sometimes is because we might know something we say in our head, but our hearts are not connected to where our head is, so how do we have a *felt* at-one-ment as well as a cognitive one? This is one of the gifts that I think Lewis brings to us in the *Chronicles* – he helps to pull out what's in the Gospels, but we've just grown by our Sunday School associations. He says we have this subtle turning of good news into “should” news, and how do we recover that?

How do you discover the reality of thanksgiving and forgiveness and gratitude? It inheres in our response to God because this kind of grace has its natural inter-correlate – a response of gratitude. That is the emotion that is most congruent with the grace of God. So, whatever is getting in the way of that – fear, anger, or guilt – part of what I need to discover is, where I feel like resistance is coming at me in this way, part of what I need to do is just open that up – whatever that is, whether it's an anger, or fear, or guilt, open that up and see what I'm going to find there at the bottom of that, isn't just rejection and condemnation – but actually hope that even in my most unattractive, un-healed, un-loving part within myself, the grace of God will not reject me and turn away from me. It causes me to come clean on this so I can begin to live in a new way – a way of being reconciled to God and to my neighbor and to my family and so on. Again, that's *good* news. It's not “should” news.

JMF: There's a freedom that we have, that we don't even realize we have, that you show in the course of Lewis unfolding the story of Shasta in *A Horse and His Boy*. Could you talk about that a little?

RN: It's especially touching because the great thing in America is freedom. We love freedom, and this country prides ourselves on our commitment to freedom and liberty and so on. One of the things that's interesting about Shasta is he is an orphan boy who's grown up in a totalitarian hierarchical society in which freedom is not very available, but his whole desire is to become free, and so he's on a journey to run away from where he's an orphan in this not-very-nice culture of Calormen and to get back to Narnia, get back to freedom and to become free. He

discovers, like I guess we all do, that becoming free he's brought with him into Narnia a lot of slave habits of thought, and a slave has certain qualities (that are internalized) which make a free response to people, or free response to life, very difficult.

The other irony of that story is the little girl he meets, who goes with him on this journey to freedom – to Narnia – is on the opposite side of the political-economic spectrum. She's a wealthy, aristocratic child, and she's being forced to marry somebody she doesn't want to marry, so she wants her freedom, too.

The two of them together on this journey have to find out what freedom is all about. That means that she has to give up her attitudes of superiority, and Shasta has to give up his attitude of inferiority complex, which was always putting himself down and always feeling basically he's not very worthy; these are classic descriptions of a slave's mentality. C.S. Lewis does an interesting study in words, and he describes in his book a study in words, what are some typical attitudes of slaves, slave habits of thought – he takes this from Aristotle and some of the other ancient Greek writers. One of the dangers of growing up a slave and being in a slave-holding society is the sense of inferiority that you're constantly pre-occupied with and therefore need to prove yourself or put yourself down or something.

The other thing is the sense of, as a slave you're typified as always looking after yourself. This is actually a phrase in Aristotle – a slave is always thinking about himself and not with the common good. It's interesting that part of what Shasta has to discover in real freedom is not just constantly thinking “what's in it for me?” – the angle of looking after number one, this kind of language, that's a slave mentality. Part of his discovery of the freedom he has in Narnia is that he can begin to be healed of this self-preoccupation by having this deep sense of commitment to other people and by being bound to their welfare. Now he has a freedom to be a different kind of person, not just the person who's constantly looking for “what's in it for me.”

Aravis, the girl, discovers the freedom to not look down on people – which is a terrible way to live, even as it is a terrible way to live to constantly be looking up. But to look at people eye-to-eye and seeing them as humans and real people, free citizens of Narnia, and to begin to relate to people in an entirely new way – this is tremendously liberating.

JMF: My favorite passage in all the *Chronicles of Narnia* is the scene in *The Silver Chair* where in the depths of the underground realm of the green witch, the children are captured and the prince is captured, and Puddleglum (a marsh character) is also there. She's putting out some

kind of smoke that causes them to get drowsy. Even though they're trying to find their way up to Narnia, up to the surface, she's telling them, there's no such thing as the sun, and there's no such thing as the upper world, and there's no such thing as Narnia, and all of this is just a figment of your imagination – and *this* is the real world, and you need to stay here with me where, this is all there is.

Everyone is drowsy, they're coming under the spell that she has kept the prince under, captured with, all this time, and Puddleglum, as a last desperate act, sticks his foot in the fire, and burns himself. He regains his senses and remembers what is real, and he says, "Look, even if you're right and there is no sun, and there is no Narnia, and there is no Aslan, I'd rather spend my life searching for those things than to live here in this place you call the real world."

RN: That's a wonderful confession of Lewis' faith and belief that the bottom line is, that I'm going to live as a Narnian even if there is no Narnia. It makes me think of Job in the Old Testament where it says, "Though God slay me, I will trust him." It makes me think of this strong affirmation of trusting in God that comes in Romans, where Paul says, "Let God be true and every man a liar."

There is a fundamental reality here that, even if it isn't popular, even if it's been a camouflage and hidden, and there's smoke and mirrors everywhere telling you that all that really matters in life is whatever contemporary fashions are, either the materialism, or certain kinds of temptations that are played within our contemporary culture (and they're unavoidable), there is a fundamental reality that pierces through all that.

Luther says, "Faith doesn't create God, or create this reality – faith sees what is there." Seeing that which is invisible. It's there, and faith doesn't create it. Faith is gripped by it, and this is the power inside of old Puddleglum, which is an insight and an experience that is very important for all of us.

JMF: It's a mix of doubt where we need something like that to cling to and hold on to, because we all go through these periods of doubt, and our faith becomes cloudy and misty and weak. It isn't a static thing where I have a strong faith and it just stays like that. It spikes and then it looks like the stock market does today. But Lewis deals with that in a number of ways as you move through the *Chronicles of Narnia*.

RN: That's right – faith and doubt are not mutually exclusive. Ray Anderson used to say, "Faith grows on the narrow ledge of doubt." That's a lovely way of expressing that, and one of

the things that's very impressive about Lewis is how he continually has this deep honoring of people who ask tough questions. One of his heroes is Puddleglum, who tends to look on the difficult, the dark side of life. He's not going to pretend that things are okay. In the New Testament, one of our heroes of faith is Thomas, because he's not willing just to hear a feel-good story about the resurrection that isn't real. He says, "You guys sound pretty happy, you seem pretty convinced that things would work out okay, but unless I can see, unless I can touch this risen Lord, I'm not going to, just for the sake of camaraderie or just for the sake of everyone feeling good, to go along with this."

The beautiful thing is, the disciples don't say, "Get out of here, Thomas. You're not one of us anymore, because you're being awkward here." He says, "I want to be a follower of Christ, and I don't want to pretend I don't have these doubts, but I don't want to leave you guys, I'm here with you." It's in that context then that the risen Christ appears to Thomas. He doesn't scold Thomas or anything, he just meets with Thomas and says, "Blessed are those who don't have this privilege that you have, Thomas, but your questions are not bad questions." The only bad questions, when we have doubts, it's the bad side of that when we cover them up or try to pretend.

Augustine has this wonderful prayer that we sing in some of these Taize songs, "Let not my doubts and my darkness speak to thee Lord, let your light shine upon them." So we open them up; we don't hide them away. We allow them to surface because they need God's touch also. They need to be open. Many wonderful questions are in the New Testament, and like Mary, we were talking about Mary last time, and Mary asked the toughest questions that anybody has ever asked about the virgin birth. She asked them not in a casual way, but in an honest and heartfelt way: "How can these things be?" She doesn't hide those things, and that's to her credit. That means that she's really engaging God with her deep self, not just a superficial self.

JMF: Do you have a title for the book?

RN: *The Feeling Intellect: Reading the Bible with C.S. Lewis*. He is the dialogue partner, and he provides a style or a way of being receptive and open. I try to apply that style to some things he addressed, and then some issues that we have to deal with now in more contemporary situations.

JMF: We look forward to reading it. I had hoped we would get to the political theology of Germany, but it looks like you have to come back for that. So hopefully, we'll see you again.

~~~~~

[back to table of contents](#)

## Theology and Nazi History

**JMF:** You're working on a very interesting project, and I'd like to ask you to talk about that today.

**RN:** It's a fascinating study of what is the relevance of theology to church history, particularly to the tragic history of Germany from 1933 to 1989, but maybe even before that. What was going on in the heart of Protestant Germany with this great tradition of Lutheran theology, and the justification by grace alone of the sinner, and many other great themes of the Christian life? What happened that this became the soil upon which two world wars began and was so devastating for Europe and so devastating for the German people?

I'm trying to explore what was the relationship between church and state, the way that the pastors and the theologians of the church understood their relationship to this state, that allowed for this to take place, and then what were the remedies or what were the signs of hope and resistance and of, ultimately, reconciliation that led to, much to everyone's surprise, in 1989, a peaceful reunification of Germany? Those are the questions I am trying to look into and make some sense of – trying to understand, from my own point of view, how did the theology of grace, the theology of Father, Son, and Spirit, become crucial in this transition period and redemption of a very dark period of modern history?

**JMF:** Let's talk first about the beginning of the transition, in 1933, Hitler's rise to power, and how the church was looking at that and responding to that at the beginning.

**RN:** Maybe we can back up a little bit to 1933 to give us our context, which was Germany was devastated by the first world war and the complexity of having seen itself as a Christian nation with a Christian leader, a Christian Kaiser, and so on, and the church totally supporting the war effort, and then being devastated by a complete failure in terms of the war, being financially overwhelmed by the cost of war (the cost in lives, the cost in resources) and then trying to rebuild itself in a way that, maybe in retrospect, the fundamental questions didn't get addressed.

They were burdened with what they felt was a deeply unfair sense of responsibility and guilt for the entire enterprise. They felt like they had had a lot of help in plunging the world into war. I don't know how much people are aware of. They had to sign a document at Versailles in which they took total responsibility for the war, the war guilt clause. They had to live with the idea that it was all their fault, and they chafed under this as well. This sense of resentment, the new

government that had to sign onto this, the Weimar Republic, and their enemies were forcing them to sign this. The French, British, and Americans created an atmosphere in which the rise of someone like a fierce nationalist, a nationalism on steroids, like Adolf Hitler and the National Socialist Party, could begin to emerge.

The church, meanwhile, is torn, because on the one hand they want to be faithful to the state, and on the other hand the question is what is the relationship between the people who come to church faithfully Sunday by Sunday (it's a state church, the Evangelische Kirche; taxes are raised and the state organizes that and supports the church through them) on the one hand, and also this sense of a prophetic ministry and holding kings and emperors accountable to Scripture.

This is the tension at the heart of any church/state relationship, whether it's formal, as in Germany, or whether it's more informal, as it is in the United States, where we have a separation of church and state formally, but informally we have a Billy Graham swearing in presidents every four years, a chaplain to the U.S. Senate who is usually a Protestant clergyman and so forth. These are the issues that were made acute in the devastation of two world wars (I'm jumping ahead in the story), after the first world war created a sense of confusion, and wanting some answers for what had gone wrong in the first world war.

**JMF:** How is the church coping with that in terms of preaching? When people went to church, what did they hear? What kind of solace or comfort or response was given?

**RN:** Too often when people went to church, there was a terrible temptation to basically blame the other guy and not to take responsibility. Instead of confessing their own sins, there was a tendency to confess the sins of the countries they had gone to war with. This sense of injured merit and having been mistreated was a lingering bitterness, which was then picked up on by the national socialists and by Hitler. It fueled into this sense of "we want justice" in the world, saying we want to be respected and we don't want to be treated the way we felt like we were treated at the Versailles treaty after the war. The church was often complicit in saying yes, we weren't well treated, we need to be, this wasn't all our fault, and we haven't been treated fairly.

**JMF:** What was the perspective of fault? How were they viewing the causes and the blame for the war?

**RN:** There was certainly a sense, as you can imagine, that there was a sense of the nations becoming hungry for, maybe dominance is the best word, in terms of power and influence in global trade and markets and political influence. It's hard for us to look back on this and realize

the extent to which the Germans felt like they had been (unfairly) blamed for the devastation of the First World War. But that's how they felt, and the church, in terms of its pastoral care strategy, chose to put a sympathetic arm around the shoulder of German society and say, "Yeah, you weren't treated well."

Instead of saying, "Wait, how did we get into this, what caused us to become such a militaristic society that we chose to go to war to solve our problems rather than to use other means?", there was tendency to be overly sympathetic with the nation and to identify, in a not very helpful way, with the nation's sense of mistreatment.

**JMF:** So the German people were feeling that they were drawn into or forced into, by political and economic circumstances, toward war by the rest of the political situation in Europe, and therefore it was more of a shared blame?

**RN:** That's probably the case. And as a result, they wanted more evenhanded treatment after the war. Unfortunately, they didn't get that. They had to sign a document saying they were at sole fault of the war. They had tremendous war debt repayments that they had to pay the Allies, and they had to give up some of their territory both toward the French on one side and parts of Germany in the east that were taken over by other eastern European countries, like Poland and what we now call the Czech Republic. They felt like they had been scapegoated.

This was part of their resentment. They resented the country, the power, the political system that took over after the Kaiser had to go. They started the republic, and they tended to resent their own government for signing this document. There was a simmering discontent. It was this kind of negative, you might say negative political energy, that Hitler took hold of and fanned these flames. He tried to say that Germany had been treated unjustly and needed to find its proper place in the world again and to contribute. Part of its gifts that it was going to contribute to the world was its leadership, the Führer principle.

**JMF:** Were there voices in the church that were contrary to this general theme of commiserating with the political viewpoint?

**RN:** There are some interesting studies of individuals who made some very significant transitions from on the one hand supporting Hitler as yes, he'll give us back our sense of standing in the world, he's going to stand tall for Germany.

For instance, the famous Pastor Martin Niemöller had been a U-Boat commander in World War I, had become pastor of a very affluent suburban congregation in Berlin, and he voted for

Hitler, and he thought this was the right step forward. But in the course of time from 1933 to 1937, Niemöller had become increasingly disillusioned with what he was seeing with Hitler. He saw him not just wanting to restore Germany to a place of leadership in the world, but rather to take the church and the other institutions of the people and subsume them under the dominance of the government, the ideology of National Socialism.

At this point, from being a patriotic German, he began to challenge the state, and to say you're trying to accommodate everything through Fascism or the national socialist message, and you're subverting the church's message of a gospel of salvation in grace, and you're saying that there are other forces, other powers, other voices in nature and in history, namely the voice of the Führer, who's coming alongside, and it is being unequally yoked on an equal basis with the revelation of God in Christ, and this is idolatry.

This didn't go down very well with Hitler and the national socialists. And so from being a very well-regarded parish pastor in 1933 who had voted for Hitler, in 1937, we find Martin Niemöller in a concentration camp.

**JMF:** You mentioned a famous quote by Niemöller in regard to this transition he was making.

**RN:** He says in 1933 they started to imprison the communists just because they were a political alternative, and they were articulating that, and they had newspapers and had voices in the political sphere. One of the first things that happened when Hitler took power was he put a lot of their leadership in jail or in concentration camps. Then he started to arrest and put in jail the trade union members, which he had implied he would all along, but then he finally started doing the same to Jews and putting them in jail and concentration camps and so on.

Niemöller's famous quote was: "They came for the Communists, but I was not a Communist, so I didn't stand up for them, I didn't say anything. They came for the trade unionists, but I was not that, so I did not do anything. Then they came for the Jews, but I was not a Jew. Then finally they came for me, but there was nobody to stand up for me."

He ties this back, in many of his sermons, to Matthew chapter 25, when Jesus says, "Inasmuch as you did it unto the least of these, you did it unto me. If you visited the sick, visited those in prison, fed the hungry, you did it to me."

Niemöller is saying in retrospect that, I saw people being mistreated, but I wasn't a Communist, I wasn't a trade union member, I wasn't a Jew, so I just walked by on the other side.

He says this is the sense in which I failed, and we as a church failed to stand up for the most vulnerable members of our society. Even though from 1937 to 1945 Niemoller was in a concentration camp, what was he doing from 1933 to 1937 when he had freedom to speak out, freedom to say this is wrong, these people are not being treated well.

Because of his own prejudices and his own opinions politically, he just let them rot in jail. He also had an implicit anti-Semitic streak in him, and he was happy to let these people get their just desserts, as long as he was free to preach the gospel. But in retrospect, he realized that that was a guilt that he had to own up to. Even though he was a concentration camp survivor, he stood in solidarity with the many Germans who implicitly or complicitly allowed Hitler to take over power and to be so devastating in his behavior toward the world.

**JMF:** As Hitler took power, there was a certain color of Christianity that he projected so the church would lend its support. How did that progress? How was he able to move from at least the color of Christianity to what amounted to a worship of the Führer eventually?

**RN:** That's right. Hitler was a wolf in sheep's clothing. He said very openly, when he was elected, in a famous radio address, that the foundation of our society is always and will always be Christianity, and we stand for a heroic faith, a positive Christianity in the Protestant tradition of Luther, and this will be the foundation upon which we build our new Germany. That made patriotic Lutherans feel very good, and we had a leader who was going to be somebody we could trust and so on. Many Protestant pastors and theologians were, I don't know what other word to use but *seduced* by this kind of language. After all, it says in the book of Romans chapter 13 that we are to submit to the government and to obey it.

There was a tradition of that in Germany that goes back to Luther, and his siding with the princes against the peasants in the peasants' rebellion, and all this seemed in order. As long as the church was free to preach the gospel in the church, then it was the responsibility of the church to pray for the state, to pray for the prime minister or the chancellor, to pray for them, and that was a happy harmony between church and state. Hitler took advantage of this to begin to, in a totalitarian way, take over the various aspects of German culture, science, education, and so on, and also the church. It was under his orbit, and Christian language was used to basically to make it subservient to the purposes of German culture or an ideology of the German folk, the German people, as the natural leaders or rulers of the world.

**JMF:** You've done a lot of work with the writings of C.S. Lewis and how they speak to the



church and to the gospel, so I can't help but think of the Narnia Chronicles and the last book, *The Last Battle*, and a very similar thing happening with the ape...

**RN:** ...who would not believe. The donkey and the ape have a clever idea of taking this old lion skin and putting it on the donkey and pretending that Aslan has come back, and the people naively believe the ape.

**JMF:** So he's able to do what he does in taking power over everybody and subjugating everyone all in the name of Aslan, even though this was not Aslan at all. It was similar in the way Hitler's regime was co-opting Christianity to achieve its own ends.

**RN:** It took a lot of courage for Christians to begin to be not only suspicious that something seemed to be going wrong, but after being so hopeful that this was going to be whole new day, it took the courage of people like Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Niemöller and others to begin to say no, wait a second, this language and the way they are behaving, their use of force, their practice of arresting people at night, there's some lies going on here. The truth is being missed.

The racism that began to become very open and naked in the society, they could not in good conscience say this is Christian heroic piety in the tradition of Martin Luther. This is something that has become very twisted, and we have to call a spade to spade and speak out here. This was the glory of the confessing church, the branch of the church that resisted Hitler.

It was a challenge that was not successful, in that Hitler was clever enough to divide his opposition into a camp that was wanting to be more conciliatory and deferential to the power of his authority and one that was going to be more of a challenge, such as Martin Niemöller and Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He was able to divide and hence to conquer. The confessing church found itself in increasingly compromising situations, such as every pastor signing a personal oath of loyalty to the Führer, and things like this which compromised its stand against Hitler.

Someone like Karl Barth refused to sign – based on his beliefs about what was going on here, he couldn't do that. So he was kicked out of his position as a professor of theology at the university and he was deported to Switzerland. But what do you do if you're not a Swiss citizen – you're a German citizen – what do you do? If you don't sign this personal oath of loyalty, you lose your job. The pastors had to sign this oath of loyalty or they couldn't stay being pastors. When the confessing church decided... they backed down, as it were, to show they are good

patriotic Germans, these are examples in which the church, sadly even the confessing church, began to compromise itself to a point where its resistance to Hitler capitulated.

**JMF:** Dietrich Bonhoeffer, being a German citizen, had no recourse as far as being deported, so what happened there?

**RN:** It's complicated, but Bonhoeffer for a while was a pastor in London at a German-speaking congregation. He went and studied in New York at Union Seminary, he was a pastor in Spain for a while for German congregations there, and so on. But in the end of the day, he felt duty-bound to come back and be with his people. He could see the war was coming, and he felt like he needed to be there to support the German people during this terrible destiny they were going to have to go through and take the whole world through with them.

It was at that point that he got involved in the opposition of a political nature to Hitler, through his family connections, even involved in a plot to kill Hitler, for which he was a conspirator. He was put in a concentration camp when all this didn't succeed, and he ended up being killed in a concentration camp just a week or two before the Allies liberated that part of Germany in 1945.

**JMF:** How does Trinitarian theology come to bear on this whole thing?

**RN:** It's a wonderful thing to look into, and I'm having a wonderful time exploring, just trying to make sense out of all this. What I can tell you now is: it seems that one of the fundamental healing things that took place, despite all the tragedy here, is that the church and people like Barth and Bonhoeffer and others began to understand that Jesus isn't just the Lord of the church. He's the Lord of all the nations, that he's the Sovereign of all nations, and you can't neatly divide God up as the Father, the Lord of the state, and Jesus the Son, the Savior, as Lord of the church, and the two can just happily coexist.

But what they began to see is that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is the Lord of heaven and of earth, of all the tribes and tongues. This understanding enabled them to break through this traditional split between church and state and to hold kings and chancellors accountable to the one Sovereign of heaven and earth.

This, ultimately, bears fruit as the country is split between the eastern and western by the Allies after the war, and the constant ongoing work of the church, even during the time of communist East Germany, was to bear witness to and hold the state accountable to the Lordship of Christ. They did this, in retrospect, in an astonishing way with the peaceful nonviolent

movements of prayer meetings and candlelit rallies around East Germany, which ended in the fall of the Berlin Wall and the nonviolent reunification of Germany. The role of the church in this and the thread from Barth down to the movement in Leipzig is part of what I'm trying to highlight and draw attention to.

**JMF:** When can we expect to see it?

**RN:** There's so much information out there, and I'm trying to put it together in a way that's more understandable and accessible to English-speaking folk. But it's a wonderful story.

**JMF:** We'll look forward to it. Thank for being with us again. Sorry we're out of time, but hopefully we'll get together again soon.

**RN:** Thank you.

**JMF:** We've been talking with Roger Newell, Associate Professor of Religious Studies at George Fox University. Thanks for being with us. I'm Mike Feazell for *You're Included*.

~~~~~

[back to table of contents](#)

About the publisher...

Grace Communion International is a Christian denomination with more than 47,000 members, worshipping in about 900 congregations in almost 100 nations and territories. We began in 1934 and our main office is in southern California. In the United States, we are members of the National Association of Evangelicals and similar organizations in other nations. We welcome you to visit our website at www.gci.org.

If you want to know more about the gospel of Jesus Christ, we offer help. First, we offer weekly worship services in hundreds of congregations worldwide. Perhaps you'd like to visit us. A typical worship service includes songs of praise, a message based on the Bible, and opportunity to meet people who have found Jesus Christ to be the answer to their spiritual quest. We try to be friendly, but without putting you on the spot. We do not expect visitors to give offerings—there's no obligation. You are a guest.

To find a congregation, write to one of our offices, phone us or visit our website. If we do not have a congregation near you, we encourage you to find another Christian church that teaches the gospel of grace.

We also offer personal counsel. If you have questions about the Bible, salvation or Christian living, we are happy to talk. If you want to discuss faith, baptism or other matters, a pastor near you can discuss these on the phone or set up an appointment for a longer discussion. We are convinced that Jesus offers what people need most, and we are happy to share the good news of what he has done for all humanity. We like to help people find new life in Christ, and to grow in that life. Come and see why we believe it's the best news there could be!

Our work is funded by members of the church who donate part of their income to support the gospel. Jesus told his disciples to share the good news, and that is what we strive to do in our literature, in our worship services, and in our day-to-day lives.

If this e-book has helped you and you want to pay some expenses, all donations are gratefully welcomed, and in several nations, are tax-deductible. If you can't afford to give anything, don't worry about it. It is our gift to you. To make a donation online, go to www.gci.org/participate/donate.

Thank you for letting us share what we value most — Jesus Christ. The good news is too good to keep it to ourselves.

See our website for hundreds of articles, locations of our churches, addresses in various

nations, audio and video messages, and much more.

www.gci.org
Grace Communion International
P.O. Box 5005
Glendora, CA 91740-0730
800-423-4444

You're Included...

Dr. J. Michael Fezell talks to leading Trinitarian theologians about the good news that God loves you, wants you, and includes you in Jesus Christ. Most programs are about 28 minutes long. Our guests have included:

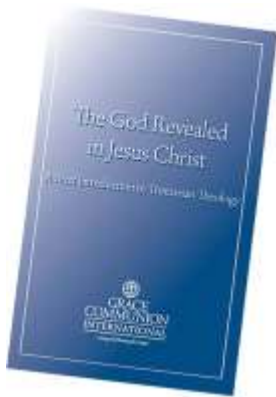
Ray Anderson, Fuller Theological Seminary
Douglas A. Campbell, Duke Divinity School
Elmer Colyer, U. of Dubuque Theological Seminary
Gary Deddo, Grace Communion International
Gordon Fee, Regent College
Trevor Hart, University of St. Andrews
George Hunsinger, Princeton Theological Seminary
C. Baxter Kruger, Perichoresis
Jeff McSwain, Reality Ministries
Paul Louis Metzger, Multnomah University
Paul Molnar, St. John's University
Cherith Fee Nordling, Antioch Leadership Network
Andrew Root, Luther Seminary
Alan Torrance, University of St. Andrews
Robert T. Walker, Edinburgh University
William P. Young, author of *The Shack*

Programs are available free for viewing and downloading at www.youreincluded.org.

Speaking of Life...



Dr. Joseph Tkach, president of Grace Communion International, comments each week, giving a biblical perspective on how we live in the light of God's love. Most programs are about three minutes long – available in video, audio, and text. Go to www.speakingoflife.org.



Want to read more?

Readers in the United States are eligible to receive a free booklet, *The God Revealed in Jesus Christ: A Brief Introduction to Trinitarian Theology*. This booklet explains, in simple language, how all our most important questions are answered by a simple starting point: Who is God? We can be confident that God has planned something excellent for us. To have a hard copy mailed to you, phone 1-800-423-4444. Readers in other nations may read the booklet online at www.gci.org/god/revealed.

~~~~~

[back to table of contents](#)



## **Grace Communion Seminary**

Accredited. Affordable. All online.

Grace Communion Seminary serves the needs of pastors and others engaged in Christian service who want to grow deeper in relationship with our Triune God and to be able to more effectively serve in the Incarnational life of the church.

**Grace** is the essence of our lives. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ reveals God to us, grants us life in him, leads us in forgiving and being forgiven, and gives us salvation. Our Triune God and his grace and love revealed through Jesus Christ is the center of our theology.

**Communion** defines the relationship we have with God, Jesus, and one another (2 Corinthians 13:14). The communion of the Holy Spirit binds us with Jesus, enlivens God's love in our hearts, and unites us as followers of Jesus Christ. We live in inseparable unity in Christ in the perpetual effects of the Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension, and Pentecost.

**Seminary** describes the scope of our educational goal. We offer graduate-level courses on the Internet. You can earn a nationally accredited master's degree entirely online, without any need to travel. We want to help you minister more effectively where you are, not to uproot you. We teach from a perspective of Trinitarian Incarnational theology. For more information, go to [www.gcs.edu](http://www.gcs.edu).

Grace Communion Seminary is accredited by the Accrediting Commission of the Distance Education and Training Council, [www.detc.org](http://www.detc.org). The Accrediting Commission of DETC is listed by the U.S. Department of Education as a nationally recognized accrediting agency, and is a recognized member of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

~~~~~

[back to table of contents](#)