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# PER SPEC TIVE



# ABOUT THIS ISSUE

**H**ENDRIK “HENK” HART IS the original Senior Member at the Institute for Christian Studies, having joined ICS in its very first days in 1966 and serving as an anchor of the academic and spiritual community through to his retirement in 2001. Henk’s work has spanned the disciplines of ontology (*Understanding our World*, 1984), epistemology (“Knowing Other-wise,” 1997), and philosophy of religion (*Search for Community* with Kai Nielsen, 1989). He received his PhD from the Free University in Amsterdam where he also briefly served as head of the Philosophical Institute. Throughout his career, he focused on the dominance of reason in Western culture and sought to read Scripture differently than in doctrinal orthodoxy (*Setting Our Sights by the Morning Star*, 1989).

Since his retirement, Henk has faced many health struggles, but he has nevertheless maintained his deep love for and connection to the ICS community. His spiritual insights, academic pathfinding, and humble conviction have cast many ripples into and beyond this community. ICS would not be the place that it is today without Henk’s years of service, so we present this special issue of *Perspective* in honor of the life that Henk has generously shared with this institution, with his students and colleagues throughout the decades, and with the friends and family that have been blessed to know him.

What follows in these pages cannot do justice to the scope of Henk’s impact on the lives and work of those around him, but it does paint a picture of the various ways Henk has called—and continues to call—us to follow the way of God’s love. We hope this issue bears witness to even a small portion of Henk’s living legacy and the many gifts he has given.

*Philosophy as Responsibility (University Press of America, 2002), edited by Ronald A. Kuipers and Janet Wesseliuss and published on the occasion of Henk’s retirement from ICS, contains a full bibliography of Henk’s writings, as well as pieces from most of this issue’s contributors. If you’d like to read more from Henk or see more detailed accounts of Henk’s impact on these contributors’ academic work, please check out this wonderful resource.*

# AUTHORS



**Ronald A. Kuipers** is ICS’s President. He is also the Director of ICS’s Centre for Philosophy, Religion, and Social Ethics; and Associate Professor of Philosophy of Religion. He has authored several books, including *Critical Faith: Toward a Renewed Understanding of Religious Life and Its Public Accountability* (Rodopi, 2002) and *Richard Rorty* (Bloomsbury, 2013).



**Lambert Zuidervaart** is Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at ICS and the University of Toronto and a Visiting Scholar at Calvin University. His recent books include *Religion, Truth, and Social Transformation* (2016) and *Truth in Husserl, Heidegger, and the Frankfurt School* (2017). Lambert is currently writing a book that proposes a new conception of truth for an allegedly post-truth society.



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**Mark Standish** is a Junior Member at ICS, pursuing his PhD. He is interested in the connection between the body, place, and ritual and their influence on the interpretation of political phenomena. Beyond that, he enjoys writing, sports, and a good pun.



**Nik Ansell** is Associate Professor of Theology at ICS. He teaches and continues to study several areas of systematic and biblical theology including Christology, eschatology, wisdom thinking, and the theology of gender. He is the author of *The Annihilation of Hell: Universal Salvation and the Redemption of Time in the Eschatology of Jürgen Moltmann* (Paternoster, 2013).



Ronald A. Kuipers

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# LIVING UP TO DEATH: THE LEGACY OF HENDRIK HART

ICS President Ron Kuipers was a longtime student of Henk Hart. Here Ron reflects on Henk's legacy as a founding member of the Institute and on Henk's gift for hospitable scholarship.

**T**HIS SUMMER, THE ICS community learned that Henk Hart, ICS's first employee and Professor of Systematic Philosophy from 1967 to 2001, decided to forego further cancer treatment and enter into palliative care. While we have been saddened to hear this news, we have also been cheered as we reflect upon our privilege to have been intimate conspirators in and beneficiaries of a life lived so fully and well. In that spirit, we dedicate this issue of *Perspective* to Henk and his legacy.

The Christian philosopher Paul Ricoeur's final meditations on life, *Living up to Death*, provide an apt description of Henk's choice to complete his days here on earth on his own terms: in his home, overlooking the Toronto Harbour and Island, surrounded by the company of his beloved friends and family. That is, until he dies, Henk will *live*—all the way up to death. But he is also living up to death in a way that *stands up* to death; for his entire life has been, and continues to be, a witness to his deep Christian conviction





that love is stronger than death, and that death and suffering will not have the last word. Perhaps in his dying Henk has courageously chosen to bear witness to the way we should live: in gratitude and joy for the gift of life—living up to death.

It is impossible for me to put into precise words my gratitude for the friendship I have enjoyed with Henk for over 28 years. For roughly 10 of those years (1992-2002), I was Henk's Junior Member mentee at ICS, completing both my master's and PhD degrees under his tutelage. The friendship forged in the fire of those years created a sturdy structure for the ensuing 18, when our contact became less frequent. Five years ago, on the occasion of Henk's 80th birthday, I had the opportunity to articulate what his friendship has meant to me. Using Henk's love of fine food as my guiding metaphor, I concluded my speech with the following words:

*Henk, I simply want you to know that I have experienced my friendship with you as a rich Babette's feast. As my mentor at ICS, you pulled out all the stops, keeping nothing of yourself back. You took all the best stores from your intellectual larder, prepared them lovingly, and laid them out on the table for your wisdom-hungry students to enjoy. We did not go away disappointed. We can now call you an octogenarian, and my sense is that this milestone is just one of God's ways of patting you on the back and saying, "thanks for reaching out for the fullness of life that I promised you when I created you."*

My fervent prayer is that I might be able to pay forward to others, in whatever small ways, all the gifts that I have received from Henk, a man who has dedicated his life to being a witness to the power and possibility

of God's love in both the academy and society at large. Indeed, I have come to know what such love *is* in no small part through the example Henk has set for myself and others, and I can only hope and strive to meet the challenge of emulating that example.

ICS is the institution it is today because of the care that Henk, along with the first generation of Senior Members, has shown for its students and for the people beyond the academy that ICS also serves. While these preacher-teachers didn't always say what everyone *wanted* to hear, they never shied away from saying what they sincerely believed God's people *needed* to hear.

As best he knew how, Henk encouraged anyone who would listen to engage in the difficult yet joyful task of making a hospitable place for all the 'widows, orphans, and strangers' that our society too often casts aside. One need only watch today's news cycle for a few brief minutes to understand that this message is one that our world still desperately needs to hear. At the end of the day, Henk's legacy commits us to the task of encouraging faithfulness in the body of Christ, calling the Church (of which ICS is a part)

to do its utmost to bring healing words and deeds to God's good yet suffering world. Ultimately, such faithful Christian witness is also a way of living up to death. 🌹

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Lambert Zuidervaat

# HENDRIK HART: SPIRITED LOVER OF TRUTH

**I**T WAS A LOVELY day in late August 1983. Henk Hart and I were attending the World Congress of Philosophy at the University of Montreal, and we decided to eat lunch outdoors. We wanted to talk through issues about faith and reason that had come up in our recent correspondence, issues that would return two years later in my essay in *Philosophia Reformata* on Henk's path-breaking book *Understanding Our World*. We found a comfortable place to enjoy our lunch in the welcoming warmth. Soon the question arose whether people can have conceptual knowledge about God. I'll never forget Henk's response. "Whenever I try to think about God," he said in hushed awe, "I get the chills."

Instantly I realized our question was not merely intellectual. It arose from the depths of Henk's experience; it was a profoundly spiritual question. Sitting in the sunlight at Canada's premier Francophone university, surrounded by the world's leading philosophers, and reflecting on a fundamental question for both faith and philosophy, he could still get the chills. Of all I have learned from Henk, perhaps his combination of intellectual openness and spiritual integrity has influenced me the most.

That combination quickly cast its spell when I entered ICS's master's program in 1972. Henk's year-long seminar in systematic philosophy set all of us to

work on Herman Dooyeweerd's *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*. Henk led by example, showing in several brilliant opening sessions how to identify and think through the questions raised by Dooyeweerd's conception of time. Then, week by week, he turned his graduate students loose to tease out other central issues in Dooyeweerd's work. Henk taught us to take Dooyeweerd's contributions seriously. He also showed us how to think for ourselves. That's when I learned to adopt a critically appreciative stance toward my own philosophical tradition, to engage in what I would later call critical retrieval.

Henk also set me on the path of inquiry I still pursue. The idea of truth has been a central theme at every stage of my academic work, from my master's thesis on Kant and doctoral dissertation on Adorno to my current book projects on that very idea. More than any other scholar, Henk has inspired this work and has pointed it in fruitful directions. He explored a new understanding of knowledge and truth throughout his career, beginning with his dissertation on John Dewey's pragmatic conception of truth. Henk's thought-provoking graduate seminars in the early 1970s stirred me to take up a similar project, and his thorough and perceptive comments on my writings since then have both guided and sharpened my reflections.

In fact, just a few years ago I re-read the nearly 870-page systematic philosophy syllabus Henk drafted in the late 1970s. I wanted to revisit the Hartian ideas that launched my inquiry into the idea of truth. Henk's thoughts about the concepts of knowledge and truth in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures have been highly instructive, along with his attempts to make these concepts fruitful in philosophy. Knowledge, Henk has said, is a totality concept: it pertains to all dimensions of human experience, and not only to those where reason prevails. Truth is like that too: it has to do with all the many ways in which humans are called to be faithful, not only with science and logic. So there's much more to knowledge and truth than most of Western philosophy has dreamt of. And reformational philosophy can fashion a different understanding that not only recognizes artistic and political and religious kinds of truth but also sheds new light on the character and importance of scientific truth. This is what Henk

recognized, long before the present-day crises of an allegedly “post-truth” society. This is what, inspired by his pioneering work and impassioned example, I am currently trying to spell out.

Henk is more than an inspiring teacher and colleague, however. He is a dear friend who has accompanied Joyce and me at every stage of our married lives. Before I first met Joyce Recker, she had already moved to Toronto to take care of Esther and Klaas Hart when Anita, their mom, was in the hospital. When Joyce and I fell in love, the Harts warmly welcomed me into their family circle. All four of them had special roles at our wedding. We have celebrated together; we have mourned together; we have walked together through the valley of the shadow of death.

All along the way, Henk has shown me how to live in the hopeful spirit of truth. He is a true philosopher. A former student could ask for no better friend. I am deeply grateful to Henk Hart—my teacher, colleague, and friend—a spirited lover of truth. 🌸





Janet Wesselius

# IN GOD'S GOOD SOIL

**I** REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME I met Henk. I had just moved to Toronto to start my master's in philosophy at ICS in 1988. We had corresponded a very little by mail, but I went in to meet him just before classes started that September. I took the rickety elevator to the 4th floor of 229 College Street and found his office in the northeast corner. I introduced myself and sat down. Immediately, Henk told me about a feminist epistemology book he had just read and asked if I would be interested in studying the book with him. I was delighted—there had been no feminist philosophy classes offered during my undergraduate degree—and I felt reassured that ICS was where I was meant to be. So I stayed for my PhD and continued to work with Henk as my co-promoter at the Free University in Amsterdam.

It would be hard to overstate Henk's influence on me. When I first met him, I would have thought that he would be most influential in terms of my specialization in feminist epistemology. And indeed he was, introducing me to the work of Lorraine Code in particular, and even introducing me to Lorraine Code in person (she was a long time neighbor of Henk and Anita). But as it turned out, Henk was more influential on my understanding of Reformational

philosophy and how it resonated with feminist philosophy, attuning me to how both share a commitment to an integrated, coherent approach that leads to human flourishing. For anyone who is familiar with Reformational philosophy and feminist philosophy, it is no mean feat to see common ground between these two otherwise very different theories. But that's Henk for you: a creative and generous thinker and teacher. He allowed me to work out these similarities for myself—it was my master's thesis after all—but it was he who first gave me the idea. When I went on to write my doctoral dissertation, I realized the appropriateness of the Dutch use of the term doctoral “promoter” rather than “supervisor”: Henk (along with Bob Sweetman) was my stalwart “promoter” (and occasional “prodger”).

Over the years, Henk and Anita became friends to me and my husband Peter, having us over for dinners and taking us to (or lending us) their cottage. We also spent many years working together on AWARE, a support and advocacy group for LGBTQ members of the Christian Reformed Church. One could agree or disagree with Henk (and on this particular issue some certainly did), but he lived his faith, even when doing so caused him trouble. Later on, after I had graduated and was myself a philosophy professor,

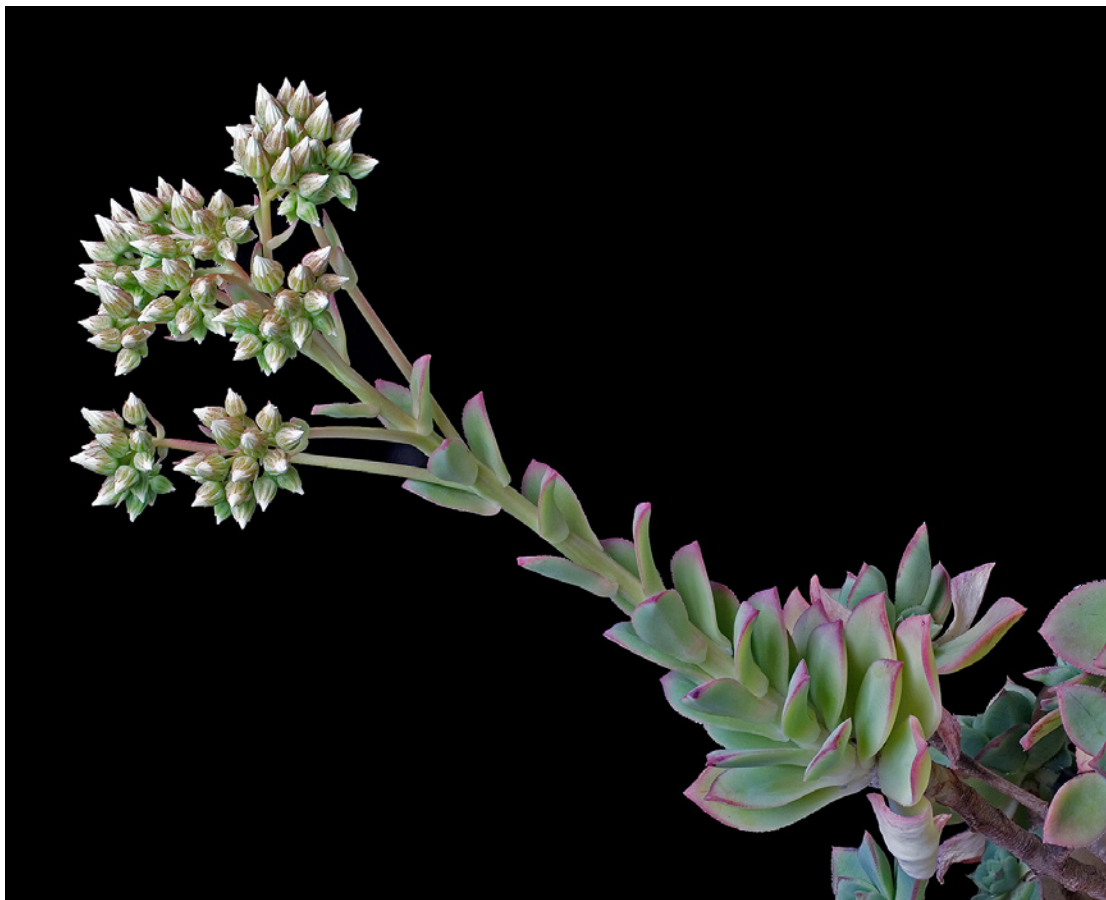


Peter and I would visit Henk and Anita whenever we were in Toronto. I remember one time when we got to their house on Browning Avenue, there was a doll waiting there for our daughter Alynne, whom we had brought with us. Alynne went on to name this doll “Anita” and she was much loved.

These sorts of behaviour are of a piece with Henk’s philosophical work: all bearing witness to his belief that we are entire human beings—not just thinkers—with significant relationships, cares, sufferings, and joys. Through this, Henk thereby taught me that it was never, ultimately, about having a “correct” philosophy. In his inscription to me in my copy of his *Setting Our Sights By the Morning Star*, he wrote: “I hope my philosophy shows up as fruit of the deeper

roots that may be visible in these pages, so that if my teaching shows up barren in years to come, my roots may point to a soil whose life-giving power is without end.” A life-giving philosophy, and a life worth living, need to be rooted in God’s good soil.

Henk has influenced me in so many ways, and I have been so blessed to have him as a mentor and a friend. But one thing he said to me I have always remembered like it was yesterday. I became pregnant while I was writing my dissertation and when I told him, I expected him to say something like “congratulations,” maybe followed by “better hurry up and get that dissertation done.” Instead, he smiled, put his arm around me, and said “nothing you do will ever be as important as being a good parent.” That’s Henk. 🌸





Dean Dettloff

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# IN SEARCH OF ANOTHER WAY: AN INTERVIEW WITH HENDRIK HART

The following are short excerpts of a longer interview Junior Member Dean Dettloff did with Henk Hart in 2016. This interview is one of a series with ICS Senior Members about what animates their work. We're pleased to be able to print this small taste of Henk's reflections here.

**Dean: Looking back over your body of work, a theme of real dialogue and relationship seems evident—especially in your advocacy for LGBT relationships, and even down to your thoughts on epistemology and ontology. What led you to this kind of approach, and how do you think it has affected your work and position as a philosopher in the Calvinist tradition?**

Henk: My abiding interest in philosophy was kindled by a logic course I took at Calvin College now 60 years ago. It was taught by H. Evan Runner and I took it at the request of my father who wanted me to at least be acquainted with the work of someone familiar with the thought of Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd. The course taught me nothing about logic, but inspired me by Runner's exposé of reason in Western Culture and of the fundamental clash between reason and religion as that surfaced in the Enlightenment. His influence led to my graduate work at the Free University and later to my appointment as ICS's first full time employee in 1966.

Early in my career, some ICS constituents began to be suspicious of things I was saying and writing. Most of it was related to how I read Scripture, which puzzled me, but that confluence of events shaped my career more than anything else. I discovered then that I had inherited a conservative orientation to my faith tradition. Once I knew this, I started a long process of taking the measure of conservatism, of finding out how I could move in a different direction without being disloyal to my tradition and, above all, to its orientation to Scripture. From then on my choices of what to read, what to teach, and what to write mostly fit within this context; and my discussion partners were above all people with whom I could fundamentally differ in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

Given my personal dispositions and the course on which I had embarked, it now seems unavoidable that I would become involved in serious conflict. For at this time the LGBT issue began to set an important tone in how Christian communities profiled themselves. My father had raised me with a positive attitude toward these fellow believers and the idea of abandoning them to the conservative wing in my own and most other Christian communities seemed to me an act of betrayal to the spirit of the Gospel. So I began a limited but fairly public outreach to LGBT people, trying to make the church a more welcoming place for them.







**“Reason” is often an ambiguous term in everyday and philosophical discussions alike. What do you mean by reason, and could you say more about how a fixation on reason has shaped the faith tradition of which you are a part and a critic?**

This situation was trying for both ICS and myself and brought with it much pain and frustration. We found enough grace, however, to hold on to each other. For my part I wrote *Setting Our Sights by the Morning Star* to give people an opportunity to appreciate how I read Scripture and ICS generously sold copies of the book.

All of the above provides some relevant background for the way my career took shape as a search for a way forward in a rapidly changing world that would have authenticity and integrity as a way of living redemptively in that world. In this climate, I began to discover that many of the objections to my work did not so much concern the spiritual heart of my faith tradition, but rather the shaping of that tradition by the demands of reason. [...]



The human search for an authoritative boundary to the authentication of knowledge and normativity has without much exception directed Western culture to the ways of rational inquiry. Perhaps the apex of this search for authoritative knowledge (or faith, or revelation) was reached during the Enlightenment, when reason rejected all authority except its own and became the sole source of all epistemic justification without needing to justify its own claim to this entitlement.

Although it seems too early to announce the end of the Enlightenment, its unchallenged authority is no longer viable. Historians of science, like Thomas Kuhn and Michael Polanyi, presented research that began to undermine traditional trust in reason. In another quarter, many women showed in an endlessly persuasive variety of ways that reason, as we knew it, was a male instrument of unwholesome power. Virtually at the same time postmodern thought offered worlds of insight that seemed to bypass the ways of reason. As a result of these developments we have discovered universes of significance that have enriched our lives with “the face of the other,” life understood as narrative, and “women’s ways of knowing,” to mention a few.

Against this background, I have seen, spoken, and written about, and tried to critically understand, reason as a powerful deformation of the promise-laden human gifts of reasoning and thinking. I do not accept that anything in human experience is entitled to rise above the rest as supreme judge, authoritative final norm, or privileged path to knowing. Where traditions have designated these gifts in one way or another as a single road to achieving the essentially human, I have used “reason” as the name for this. In my own vocabulary I have, other than this historical use, no place for this word.

When I started my career, philosophy in North America had neither room nor use for faith. So I devoted most of my career to making space

**What role does your relation to Scripture play in enabling you to address the resistance you've felt from both the Christian community and the philosophical profession to your approach to faith?**

for the legitimacy of a philosophy that honors faith, arguing for the abolition of a hegemony of reason.

The fact that something so important to me seemed professionally off limits of course played a role. But something broader and deeper seemed at stake. Not only are centuries of philosophy before Descartes unthinkable without the significance of faith, but the reality of faith in the full range of human experience urges upon us the question: are significant truth, authenticity, and integrity in human experience possible without an effective awareness of spiritual direction to which we are linked by faith? If faith connects us with significant dimensions of the human condition, as I think it does, what is lost when this mode of access is blocked? Even if what faith contributes is not available to us by faith alone, is that enough to dismiss it altogether? [...]



In the last number of years it helps me to relate to Scripture as an ancient book of wisdom. I was raised to read the texts as repositories of beliefs, of revealed factual information for faith, of doctrines that explained God, of facts of salvation. So my faith was primarily a life of subscribing to the appropriate religious or theological beliefs. Faith was more or less shorthand for a large body of beliefs. Understandably, I was admitted to full membership of the church on the basis of having demonstrated that I knew the church's teachings.

I did not know then that a book of wisdom has a different focus, different expectations. Its texts can be understood as directives on life's journey, as providing guidance on our way. Faith in that context is mostly a matter of trusting those directives and is much less an affirmation of beliefs. Now that Scripture has that different focus for me, I find its guidance liberating and exciting in a personal way. But I am also aware how easily I find kinship with other readers of these texts who share this focus on wisdom.

To read Scripture appropriately we need to be aware of what kind of literature we take it to be. Different books require different styles of reading. A phone book, a cook book, a novel, a biography, a scientific treatise, a survey of theological doctrine, or a travel guide are all read differently. Further, in reading Scripture people can rely on different characterizations. But in all cases, what they read Scripture to be saying is crucially influenced by what kind of book they take it to be. Against this background, what Scripture says is neither fixed nor arbitrarily flexible. [...]





**Looking back at your work on reality, revelation, and limits; how have you come to consider our relationship to God?**

God's presence can be felt in many ways. In profound, focused, total union (with a partner, with nature, with God, with fellow worshippers) we rise beyond comprehension and distinction into a feeling or awareness of being one with all in peace, serenity, and bliss. Our language across spiritual traditions speaks of what we so experience as divine. Though we feel transported beyond the normal, the every-day and the ordinary, we also feel in touch with the truly real depth of all that is.

This kind of awareness allows us to say, all at once, that God is ineffable mystery, and that God is real and can be experienced in feelings and sensations. We feel boundaries blurring as, to some degree, we experience something in its essential truth, its very reality, its being what it is in God. [...] In the Christian tradition the most fundamental meaning of oneness with God, neighbor, community, and creation is love. Love in this profound sense is, like mystery, beyond thought. Fullness of love carries us beyond ourselves into the mystery. Love is our origin and our destiny. Love is God, God is love. Love is sacred. In the Christian tradition the most sacred of rituals, the eucharist, is known as the love meal.

In speaking of love our best language is found in stories and parables, in ritual and song—in metaphor. [...] Over time, the changed meaning of belief has served as a bridge toward interpreting religious faith as our attachment to propositional revelation, leading in time to identify religious communities as communities of doctrinal agreement rather than as communities of sojourners on a way of life. This also affected the meaning of truth. Traditionally truth was related to the truth of one beloved to another. But via the history of belief, truth became primarily attached to facts and propositions, leading away from truth as the fulfillment of the promise revealed in the way of life. In this setting it has become difficult for us to trust ourselves to the guidance of the mystery.

Can myth inspire us beyond belief? Can truth inhabit promise beyond fact? We can only experience such inspiration and promise when we walk the way, when we learn to trust the proof that is in the eating. 🍷





Mark Standish

# SIBLING RIVALRY OR BROTHERLY LOVE?

In 2019, Henk got his hands on a paper of mine, which focused on interpreting the parable of the Good Samaritan through the lens of the book of Malachi. Henk had recently taken a particular interest in Malachi and, after reading my paper, asked whether I had thoughts on Malachi without venturing outside the Hebrew Bible. The article that follows is a snapshot of those thoughts.

**I**N THE FIRST FIVE verses of Malachi, God voices the central tension of the book. On the one hand, God invokes Jacob and Esau's brotherhood as an image of Israel and Edom. On the other, God declares that when Edom is destroyed, Israel will proclaim the greatness of God's name. This tension should lead us to ask: What does God want? Should Israel rejoice at the destruction of their brother? Does the covenant call for a relationship with the nations characterized by fraternity or domination? compassion or fear?

To probe further into these questions, it would be wise to review the arc of Jacob and Esau's relationship. First of all, they were not simply brothers, but twins!

So it's likely that, for a time, even Rebekah assumed that there was just one child in her womb. In this way, the two were connected and almost indistinguishable from before their birth and even during it, for when Esau left Rebekah's womb, Jacob clutched Esau's heel and was dragged out in tow.

Jacob later obscured the borders between him and his brother again when he disguised himself as Esau and tricked Isaac into giving him Esau's blessing. By setting out to secure his own future at the expense of his brother's, Jacob tore himself out of his fraternal relationship, and fled to a distant land. Years later, in the face of another threat, Jacob decided that his only recourse was to return to Esau. But as Jacob was





about to confront Esau, Jacob was overcome with fear and fled again.

As Jacob fled, a man on the road confronted him, but this time instead of running away, he wrestled the man (who, incidentally, turned out to be God). Unlike earlier, Jacob didn't try to separate himself from his combatant. Instead, he engaged the man face-to-face and skin-to-skin, and in the process, found his boundaries blurred. When Jacob and Esau finally did meet after this, they embraced, and Jacob proclaimed that Esau's face was like the face of God.

If we pause here, we see that the structure of the narrative hinges on three 'wrestlings.' First, Esau was Jacob's opponent in the womb. Then, God was Jacob's opponent on the road. Finally Esau and Jacob embrace, and Jacob declares an equivalence between God and Esau. In this way, the narrative implies that God *and* Esau are, at once, Jacob's opponents. Furthermore, it's as if Jacob must risk the solidity of his identity, embracing confrontation instead of avoiding it. Only then can he understand his covenantal relationship to God, and via that revised perspective, understand his covenantal—rather than combative—relationship to his brother.

To return to Malachi, Israel finds itself in a position similar to Jacob's: Israel has endured exile and constantly understands itself as under threat. One of those threats is lodged by their neighbor, Edom. Edom, being the older-brother-nation, has some claim to the identity of God's chosen people, which brings into question Israel's identity. In response to this threat, Israel asks God to render justice—by

which they mean the destruction of Edom. They claim this is how God's name will be made great.

But didn't God just invoke Jacob and Esau? Given the fraternal relationship between Israel and Edom, would God's name really be made great by destroying one of them? Is justice such a zero-sum game that God can only be just towards Israel by destroying Edom?

The answer to this question, given the rest of the book of Malachi and the Jacob/Esau relationship, is a resounding "No."

God is angry in Malachi because, in the face of a confrontation with their twin, Israel asks God to destroy that twin. Israel misses the point of Jacob's wrestling: that Jacob's understanding of God and his brother was shaken when he made himself vulnerable. That is, Israel is naïve to the fact that their relationship with God, and their ability to make God's name great, is in part dependent on *their* relationship with Edom. To this point, because Esau's face is similar to God's, cursing Edom is also cursing God—which is why Malachi concludes by declaring that Elijah will return and "turn the hearts of parents to their children and the hearts of children to their parents, so that I will not come and strike the land with a curse" (Mal. 4:6).

Here we find a final wrestling, mirroring the end of the Jacob/Esau narrative. As the hearts of children and parents are brought together, the exact borders between siblings and between siblings and their parents become difficult to make out. And it is in this vulnerable embrace, where one risks losing one's identity entirely, that justice does not mean annihilation but compassion. This is how God's name will be made great. 🌸

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Nik Ansell

# AND DARKNESS COVERED THE FACE OF THE DEEP: RE-IMAGINING JOHN 1:5

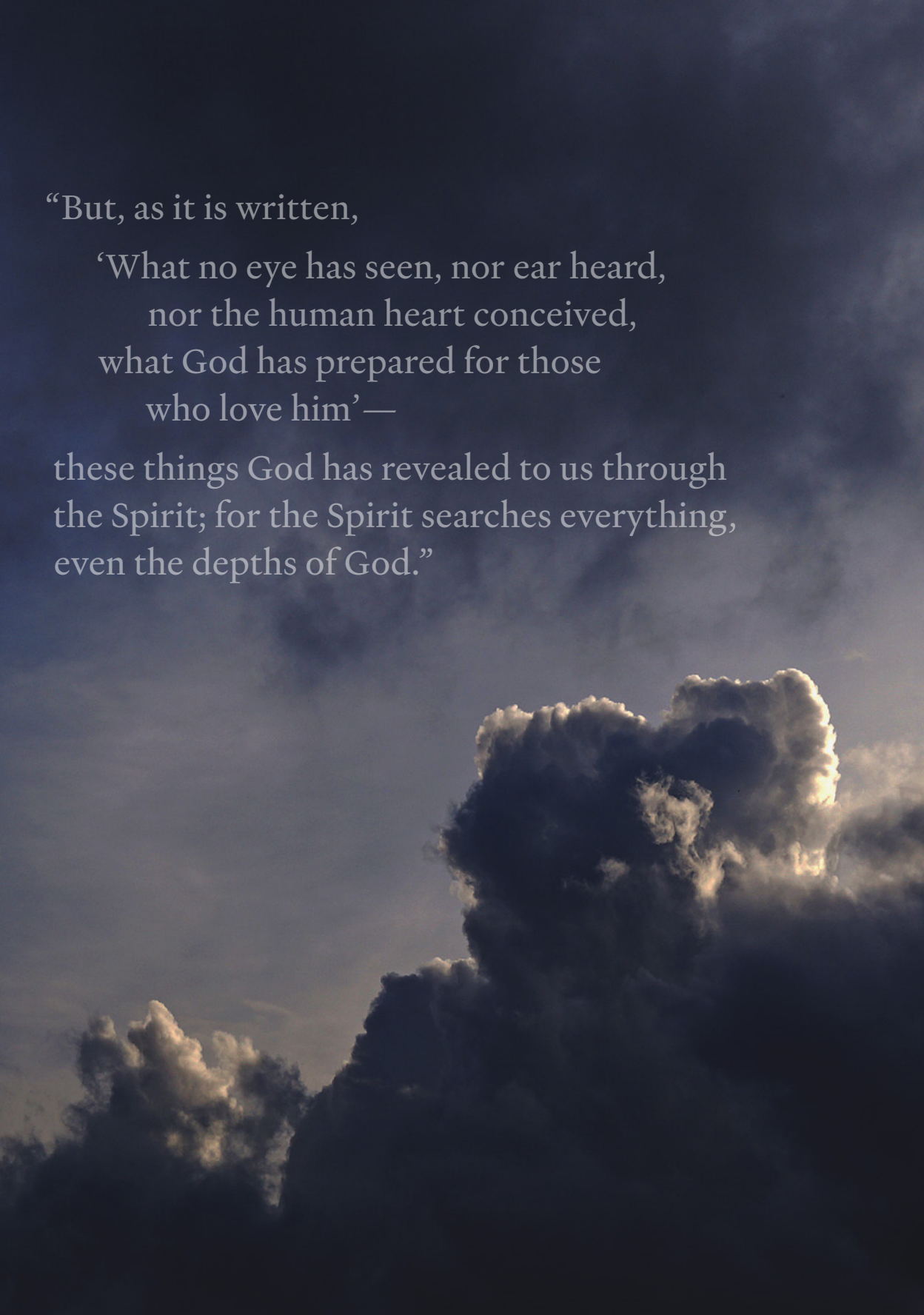
**I**N THIS SHORT PIECE, I am going to reflect on a theme in John's Gospel in the light of the prologue—an approach I learned from Henk Hart. Although I'll make some exegetical moves that I have not heard him make, even these feel indebted to him. So I hope you enjoy them, Henk!

The following line of thought began as I was pondering the significance of the “Let there be light” of Gen 1:3 as referring to God's Glory, only to find my attention drawn back to the previous verse, which tells us (in the NRSV), “darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.”

Knowing full well that no ancient Hebrew could have avoided hearing connotations of the divine Presence here, I have long been in the habit of putting “the Spirit of God” back into the text at this point. On this occasion, however, I found this triggered a new thought: What if I were to suspend hearing my current understanding of John 1:5 (“the light shines

in the darkness”) in the “let there be” of verse 3 and linger a little longer with verse 2? For it dawned on me that “the Spirit of God sweeping over the face of the waters” and “the darkness covering the face of the deep” might well be an instance of “near-synonymous parallelism”—a literary feature found throughout the Bible! If so, the implications were profound. For this would indicate that the primordial darkness of verse 2 was actually an image for God; which would then mean that the divine Glory of verse 3 was shining out of (rather than into) the darkness in the beginning!

This is not as fanciful as it might first appear. In Deuteronomy 5:23–24, Moses tells the people “When you heard the voice out of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire... you said, ‘Look, [YHWH] our God has shown us his glory and greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the fire.’” Furthermore, a connection between this passage and Genesis 1:2–3 is surely what Paul has in mind in 2 Corinthians 4:6 when he writes, “For it is the God

The background of the entire image is a dramatic sky. It features large, dark, and textured clouds that appear to be illuminated from below, creating a strong silhouette effect. The light source, likely the sun or moon, is positioned behind the clouds, casting a warm, golden glow that highlights the edges of the cloud formations. The overall atmosphere is one of mystery and grandeur.

“But, as it is written,

‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,  
nor the human heart conceived,  
what God has prepared for those  
who love him’ —

these things God has revealed to us through  
the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything,  
even the depths of God.”



who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

So what are we to make of John 1:5? One thing that can trip us up is that when we get to John 3:19—“And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil”—we tend to draw a parallel between the light coming “into” the world here and the light of 1:5 (and thus of Gen 1:2) shining “into” the darkness. But John’s choice of prepositions is entirely wrong for this. In fact, if he wanted us to imagine the divine Glory issuing forth, in an ongoing way, out of the divine Darkness, such that the “light shines in [i.e., (from) within] the darkness,” I don’t know how he could have worded it better!

Even the reference to darkness and judgment in John 3:19 does not rule this out. For while this verse does draw on Genesis in its own way, it is the contrast between Day and Night subsequent to Genesis 1:2 that is in view. Similarly, while there is little doubt that the light is being resisted, this is not by the darkness but by those who prefer to live in it compared to the light. Quite what this all means is best understood if we try to read 3:19 in the light of 1:5, rather than vice versa!

Here, I suggest, it will also help to bring 12:35 alongside 3:19, as this second light-dark, judgment text also uses the hard-to-translate verb found in 1:5b. The theme throughout is that a New Day is dawning and those who refuse to be a light to the Gentiles (a key to 12:36, 46 indicated by the scope of 1:4) will be left behind in the age that is passing away (see 1 John 2:8). In 12:35, Jesus warns, “The light is with

you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you”—the latter phrase forming a linguistic parallel with the earlier “and the darkness did not overcome it” of 1:5b. The divine darkness does not overwhelm the

light that continues to shine, says John, in the first part of this verse. Nevertheless, warns Jesus, those who believe that they possess God’s Glory are in grave danger of their light being extinguished entirely.

This apocalyptic note brings us to a second, easily overlooked feature of darkness in John’s Gospel. For rather than marking the end, darkness often heralds a new beginning, this also being a theme of Genesis 1—not least if we read its “evening... morning” refrain in the light of my proposed interpretation of 1:2. What holds for creation there, holds for New Creation here! Indeed, this is why John’s resurrection narrative begins with the words of 20:1, “Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark....”

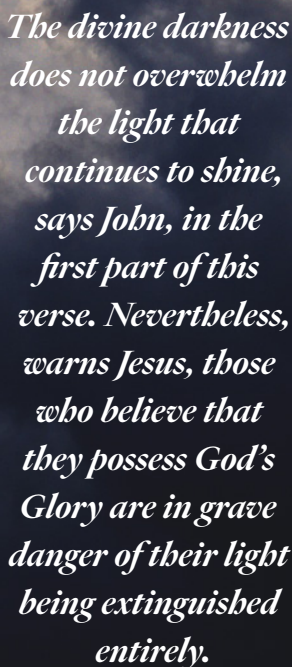
If we read John’s prologue in the light of the Genesis prologue, the primordial Darkness is the unfathomable Depth of divine Love from which God’s Glory and

Light (see 1 John 1:5; 4:16) shine forth. As Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians 2:9–10:

“But, as it is written,

‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,  
nor the human heart conceived,  
what God has prepared for those  
who love him’—

these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.” 🌺



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## Institute opening





Hendrik Hart

## WHY DID I MAKE AN END-OF-LIFE DONATION TO ICS?

This past year, Henk gave a substantial gift to ICS and wrote this reflection as a way of explaining the gratitude behind the donation. We are deeply grateful for this gift—just one more example of Henk’s boundless generosity toward the life and mission of ICS.

**M**Y EARLIEST CONNECTION TO what eventually became ICS goes back more than 60 years. I was a student then at what is now Calvin University and philosophy professor H. Evan Runner set out a spiritual direction in his teaching that I felt called to follow. I am now a Senior Member Emeritus at the institution that was Runner’s dream when I first took a class with him in January of 1956. And I still follow the spiritual direction he taught me, the same direction that has animated ICS from its beginning and still inspires it today.

ICS was never simply a place of employment for me. Instead, it was the setting for my life, filled with challenges and blessings. There were periods of hardship, sometimes related to making ends meet, sometimes having to do with conflicts. But these times of stress did not tempt me to abandon my commitment to this unique community of scholars. Students and colleagues became lifelong friends. Our common bond was our

focus on the spiritual roots of understanding our world.

ICS has always been small and likely always will be. A free standing academic institution is not cut out to grow into the size of a university. But though small, a place like ICS can be significant. Canadian universities recognize this in their admiration for ICS. When colleagues from these universities read ICS theses as outside examiners, they usually express their amazement that a small underfunded and understaffed school can deliver results at such a high level.

ICS is unusual not only in the quality of its work but also, and perhaps even more, in the character of that work. A graduate school with a focus on the spirituality of the academic enterprise does not easily fit into the prevailing secular mood of our age. That’s another reason for ICS’s small size. But it’s also a reason for how well it is respected and for why its graduates are teaching all over the world. ICS not only strives to maintain its academic excellence, but also its spiritual integrity. My end-of-life donation says thank you for all of this. 🌻



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photo: female Common Yellowthroat by Kevin van der Leek

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