

Calvin University

Calvin Digital Commons

Calvin Theological Seminary Forum (2002-)

Calvin Theological Seminary Publications

Spring 4-1-2006

Calvin Theological Seminary Forum

John W. Cooper

Duane Kelderman

Jeff Bulthuis

Brian McLaren

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.calvin.edu/cts_forum

Recommended Citation

Cooper, John W.; Kelderman, Duane; Bulthuis, Jeff; and McLaren, Brian, "Calvin Theological Seminary Forum" (2006). *Calvin Theological Seminary Forum (2002-)*. 14.

https://digitalcommons.calvin.edu/cts_forum/14

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Calvin Theological Seminary Publications at Calvin Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Calvin Theological Seminary Forum (2002-) by an authorized administrator of Calvin Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@calvin.edu.

CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

FORUM

Always Reforming

SPRING 2006

FORUM

Providing Theological Leadership
for the Church

Volume 13, Number 2
Spring 2006

REFLECTIONS ON ALWAYS REFORMING

3

Reformed and Always Reforming
by John W. Cooper

5

What Happens When People
Believe Jesus Is Lord of All?
by Duane Kelderman

7

A Student Reflects on his
Timothy Institute Experience
by Jeff Bulthuis

8

Always Reforming: A Conversation
with Brian McLaren

11

Preaching the Heidelberg
to Postmoderns
by Stan Mast

DEPARTMENTS

| | |
|--------------------------------|----|
| Making Connections | 13 |
| Continuing Education | 14 |
| News | 15 |

Photography on pp. 8-10, 14 by Steve Huyser-Honig
 The *Calvin Theological Seminary Forum* is published in
 Winter, Spring and Fall editions.
 Calvin Theological Seminary, 3233 Burton St. SE, Grand
 Rapids, MI 49546.
 The *Forum* is available at www.calvinseminary.edu
 Editorial Committee: John Cooper, Editor; Mariano
 Avila, John Bolt, Duane Kelderman, Kathy Smith
 Designer: Paul Stoub, Stoub Graphics

© 2006 Calvin Theological Seminary

PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT NO. 40063614
 RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO:
 CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
 3475 MAINWAY, LCD STN 1
 BURLINGTON, ON L7M 1A9
 email: forum@calvinseminary.edu

from the president

Cornelius Plantinga, Jr.



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

For years I joined many in speaking of things that are “distinctively Reformed.” I liked to think and speak in this way of certain doctrines (the sovereignty of God) and practices (following the Ten Commandments as a guide to the Christian life). “Distinctively Reformed,” I would say. The phrase had a private club feel to it that you could enjoy with a little spasm of pride. “Members Only,” the phrase seemed to say.

Well, I’m older now and see some things I hadn’t seen before. I no longer speak of doctrines and practices as “distinctively Reformed” because the phrase is ambiguous. It could be taken to mean *uniquely* Reformed, as if we are the only kind of Christians who believe these doctrines or follow these practices. But we aren’t. We have a unique combination of doctrines and practices, but the individual items belong, in some form or another, to other editions of Christianity besides our own.

So I now speak of doctrines and practices that are “characteristically Reformed.” I mean to speak of things that show we are “in character” as Reformed people.

Here’s a sampling of characteristically Reformed beliefs:

- In what it teaches, Scripture is our only infallible rule of faith and life.
- Christians are to believe whatever Scripture teaches, but especially the amazing grace of God in Jesus Christ.
- Creation declares the glory of God, especially to the student of science.
- All that God has created is potentially redeemable.
- Everything but God and some angels has been corrupted by the fall.
- Without regenerating grace, fallen human beings grasp at idols, none of which can save anybody. Idolatry is thus Exhibit A of folly and of the tragedy of the fall.
- The kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world are sworn foes.
- If all has been created good and all is corrupt, then all—including social structures—must be redeemed. What follows is that “all of life is religious,” a vast playing field of opportunities for the victorious power of the gospel.

One more belief: It’s not good enough to stand pat with our worldview and practices. To be Reformed is to be constantly reforming according to God’s word. That’s what this issue of the *Forum* is about. God bless you in your reading and reflecting and reforming.

Grace and peace,

REFLECTIONS

REFLECTIONS ON ALWAYS REFORMING

Reformed and Always Reforming

E*clesia reformata semper reformanda*—“a reformed church always reforming”—has been the motto of our denominational heritage for almost five hundred years. The Reformation aimed to purge the church of unbiblical traditions and keep it faithful to Scripture alone. Our spiritual ancestors attempted to live by the motto as they faced new religious challenges and as culture changed. Often the issues were clear, as when the authority of the Bible was denied by modern rationalism. But sometimes the line between what is Reformed and what needs reforming has been debated, as with the role of women in church and society.

By God’s grace, the Christian Reformed Church still seeks to be a reforming Reformed church. The current religious and cultural situation in North America both supports and challenges our identity as we seek to carry out Christ’s commission. This is evident in our doctrine, worship, church government, and our Christian lifestyle.

Doctrine

We are ecumenically Christian as well as Reformed. We affirm the Apostles’, Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds with the Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and confessional Protestant churches. We also share a great deal with millions of North American Christians who are generally biblical in doctrine, evangelical in piety, and engaged as Christians in society.

We are distinctively Reformed in our emphasis on the sovereignty of God in creation and redemption, focusing on God’s covenant and Kingdom. This theme is central in the Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, Canons of Dort, and in our well-developed theology.

Some North American values challenge our doctrine. Evangelical theology and our political systems emphasize personal freedom, so in contrast, the Reformed emphasis on God’s sovereignty can seem deterministic. Some wonder why we insist on infant baptism, which seems opposed to personal respon-

by John W. Cooper
Professor of
Philosophical Theology



sibility. More broadly, our culture does not nurture the sort of sustained thinking about deep questions that is necessary for theology. North Americans are more practical, excelling in science and technology, business and economics, pop culture and entertainment. Is that why many CRC members are not as interested in Bible knowledge and Reformed doctrine as our grandparents? The pressure to reduce Reformed Christianity to generic Christianity is felt in traditional churches and new church plants alike.

Worship

We worship when the Sovereign Triune God brings us together as his covenant people. God welcomes, forgives, instructs, empowers, blesses, and sends us forth again to serve him in the world. We respond to God’s acts with praise, confession, petition, and recommitment. Thus worship is a genuine dialogue of God with his people, a reaffirmation of the covenant of redemption in Jesus Christ.

Our approach to worship shares much with other Christian traditions and has benefited from them. It has also been enriched by our culture’s emphasis on fellowship and hospitality, its use of media, its openness to emotional expression, and its desire that worship styles reflect the whole population.

●
*By God’s grace,
the Christian Reformed
Church still seeks to
be a reforming
Reformed church.*
●

Reformed and Always Reforming

But some cultural dynamics have the potential to undermine Reformed worship. We can be addicted to novelty and entertainment and a desire to feel good. We like the sort of informality and spontaneity that can impede meaningful dialogue with God. Our casual attitude and egalitarianism can diminish the quality of worship and our respect for the special role of the minister. Church services and television talk-shows look more alike than they used to.

Church Polity

Our church government and administration fit well with much of the democratic-business ethos of our culture. The denomination consists of congregations who covenant together to abide by our denominational confessions, church order, and synodical decisions. In congregations, members vote on officebearers and other important issues. In our councils, ministers, elders, and deacons are equal in dignity and authority, although different in function. We can learn a lot about efficiency, organization, administration, and outreach from business and marketing.

But some aspects of Reformed church polity are in tension with democracy and free enterprise. We believe the church is a Christocracy, not a democracy. Officebearers get their authority from Christ, not from the congregation, and are not bound by popular opinion. Because officebearers are equal in authority, the minister or a couple of elders should not “run” the church. Thus the heroic leadership and benevolent dictator models that work in some businesses and in some other cultures do not belong in our churches. Similarly, business models and values that conflict with Scripture, doctrine, and church order must not become the rationale for council decisions and ministry strategies.

Lifestyle

“Reformed and reforming” also involves our lifestyle. Here, too, North American culture both supports and undermines us. Reformed theologian Abraham Kuyper’s *Lectures on Calvinism* endorse democratic constitutional government, a pluralistic society, a relatively free economy, universal

The pressure to reduce Reformed Christianity to generic Christianity is felt in traditional churches and new church plants alike.

education, a robust work ethic, and a strong sense of civic responsibility. Grateful for these blessings, Reformed Christians contribute to all aspects of North American society and culture.

But Kuyper also emphasized Reformed identity. Our participation in business, politics, education, popular culture, and recreation ought to apply relevant biblical principles and not compromise them. Pressure to fit in with other Christians and with non-Christians in public life is strong. Perhaps a test of our Reformed identity is whether we are still persuaded by the rationale for Christian schools, or whether we can take critical distance from all political parties.

And what about our personal lifestyles? Most of us are more comfortable with conspicuous consumerism than our grandparents. We spend a greater percent of

The healthiest, most authentic way of being Reformed and reforming occurs when we both affirm our principles and apply them wisely wherever we find ourselves.

our energy and income on recreation and entertainment than they did and less on Scripture, prayer, church activities, and criticizing popular culture. Were they too “puritan”? Are we too self-indulgent?

Reformed and Reforming: A Modest Proposal

We must avoid two mistakes. We cannot simply circle the wagons, reiterate our principles, and pine for times when things were clearer. We must be engaged and reforming. We also cannot forget, ignore, or compromise our principles as we engage the world. We must be Reformed. The healthiest, most authentic way of being Reformed and reforming occurs when we both affirm our principles and apply them wisely wherever we find ourselves. Then genuine reform takes place. In established churches and new church developments, in our worship and our work, in our personal lifestyles and in public culture—when we are intentionally Reformed and authentically engaged, we will be not only true to ourselves, but faithful to the Lord.

For further reading on the theme of “always reforming,” we suggest the following resources:

Authentic Worship in a Changing Culture.

Grand Rapids, Mich.: CRC Publications, 1997.

De Moor, Robert. *Reformed: What It Means, Why It Matters.* Grand Rapids, Mich.: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2001.

De Moor, Robert. *Speaking of God...: A User's Guide to Our Contemporary Testimony.* Grand Rapids, Mich.: CRC Publications, 1996.

Mouw, Richard. *Calvinism in the Las Vegas Airport: Making Connections in Today's World.* Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004.

What It Means to Be Reformed: An Identity Statement. Christian Reformed Church in North America. Grand Rapids, Mich.: CRC Publications, 2002.

Also, see www.crcna.org for the Christian Reformed Church's positions on various ethical and doctrinal issues, and for synodical reports, including the 2006 report on war and peace.

What Happens When People Believe Jesus Is Lord of All?

Ask a Christian Reformed Church member what it means to be Reformed and one of the answers you'll probably get is "It means to have a world and life view" or "It means to recognize the Lordship of Christ over *all* things." That's a good answer, but what does it mean? Do we understand what that means today? Does it make a difference in the way we practice our faith?

In this article I want to answer those questions through the lens of a powerful experience I had a few months ago. Along with four seminarians and retired seminary professor Mel Hugen, I went to Uganda and Kenya to observe the Timothy Institute, an innovative leadership training program for pastors and other Christian leaders primarily in African churches.

In the middle of a war-torn, disease-wearied, economically depressed land, these pastors embraced a fuller understanding of the Lordship of Christ and dared to dream about the difference it could make to their people and nations.

Jesus Is Lord

The words "Jesus is Lord," of course, come straight from the Bible. Paul concludes that great hymn of praise to Christ, "At the name of Jesus every knee should bend and every tongue should confess that *Jesus Christ is Lord*, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:11). Another biblical phrase that Reformed Christians use to make the same point is "Our God reigns."

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who

announces salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns." (Isa. 52:7)

This affirmation that Jesus is Lord runs up against a tendency in our modern world to compartmentalize Christ's rule, to split the world into two parts—the sacred and the secular—and claim that Jesus is Lord only of the sacred. In this view it's fine for Christians to have their little Jesus in their little sacred world.

Christians talk about Jesus in their homes and at church, but that's their private business and has no impact in the public square.

But when Reformed Christians hear such sacred/secular, private/public talk, they remember the words of Jesus: "All authority on heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matt. 28:18); and the teaching of Paul that God "raised [Christ] from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above *all*

by
Duane Kelderman
Vice President for
Administration



rule and authority and power and dominion, and above *every* name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come" (Eph. 1:20-21).

All of Life

In Uganda, it was delightful to see pastors discern that Christ's Lordship over all of life affects not only Christians' worship but also their work—that, in fact, worship on Sunday and

work on Monday are *both* acts of service and obedience to God. We could see the look of discovery in their eyes as they learned that hard work, and honest work, and fair treatment of workers, and sharing what one earns from work are all as much a part of being a Christian as showing up at church on Sunday. These pastors learned that because all people are imagebearers of God, they deserve to be treated fairly and humanely. They also learned that Christians may, indeed must, call upon their

government to be honest, their police to treat people with respect, their judges to be impartial. All because Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

I could see these pastors' understanding of their Christian faith expand before my very eyes! The Pentecostal pastors began to see how much bigger the Christian faith is than one's interior religious experience. The Anglican pastors began to see how Christianity should be affecting how the rich and powerful in their congregations run their businesses and the government on Monday.



In the middle of a war-torn, disease-wearied, economically depressed land, these pastors embraced a fuller understanding of the Lordship of Christ and dared to dream about the difference it could make to their people and nations.

In Uganda, it was delightful to see pastors discern that Christ's Lordship over all of life affects not only Christians' worship but also their work.

What Happens ... ▶

Davis Omanyo, CRWRC consultant in Uganda, explained why this full-orbed Christianity, where Jesus Christ is Lord over all spheres of life, is the only hope for Africa—and why the rulers of Africa fear this Christianity. He explained that only Christianity awakens in people a deep sense of dignity and self-respect—dignity and self-respect born of being royalty, children of the King—that translates into a call for justice and freedom, a positive vision of life as God intended it, a Shalom vision where peace, justice, and righteousness reign. Davis explained that Christianity is the only power that can overcome the hopelessness and despair of people who have been oppressed and abused by their leaders for centuries. Only Christ deals death to old ways of living and raises people up to a new life, a new community, an alternative way of living that shines as light in the darkness, and that makes clear to everyone that there is a better way to live! It was heartening to hear Davis tell many stories in which the African churches have declared Jesus' Lordship and communities have been renewed.

Back in North America

It was a powerful experience to have a front-row seat as these African pastors discovered fuller dimensions of the Lordship of Christ. It was equally powerful to reflect, from the vantage point of my Africa experience, upon the truth of Christ's Lordship over all as it is claimed and lived out in North America.

I was struck, first, at how often we Christians in North America who profess Christ's Lordship over all often live with a pretty diminished, shrunken view of his Lordship. We talk about a world and life view, but how does our Christian faith actually impact the way we run our business, use our time, spend our money, impart values to our children? How, and how often, do we call our leaders to a higher standard of peace, justice, and righteousness? Are we aware of



how North American governmental policies often work against the basic welfare of people around the world? How much do those who govern in North America really fear Christianity? Is Christianity in North America a lion that commands fear and respect from the principalities and powers because they know they will be held to higher standards of justice and truth, or is Christianity more like a harmless cocker spaniel that mainly keeps people in a good mood and self-absorbed, but more "of the world" than transforming the world?

At the same time I also appreciated anew, from the vantage point of the Africa crisis, how indebted North American society is to a Christian world and life view for the very foundations of its common life. North American Christians are often sharply divided on political and economic approaches, but all would agree, I think, that it's easy to take for granted a government built up upon principles of human dignity, liberty, and justice. It's easy to take for granted a general internalized respect for authority as ordained by God and expressed through government that actually leads most people to stop at stop signs, not steal their neighbor's lawn chairs, and pay their taxes. It's easy to take for granted a deep cultural value that creates a court system with pretty honest judges and a decent, though not perfect, record of just and fair decisions. Although racism and prejudice are major problems in North American society, it's easy to take for granted the very principle of equal protection of the law for all people, regardless of skin

color or economic status. Although police sometimes do terrible things to citizens in North America, it's easy to take for granted that as a society we deplore such behavior and do our best to stop it when we hear of it. Although the U.S. system of medical care is broken, I was thankful, after watching women dying of AIDS stumble out of a clinic and begin a six-mile walk back home

in the burning sun, often carrying a child, for laws that prevent hospitals from refusing medical care for the poorest of the poor. In short, it's easy for us in North America to so focus upon our shortcomings that we overlook societal values of human dignity, justice, and compassion that are the cultural capital, in part, of Christians whose vision of life and society has been shaped by the claim of God upon all of life.

What Happens When People Believe Jesus Christ Is Lord?

Finally, I was struck at how this Reformed vision of the Lordship of Christ so powerfully affects the way Christians practice their faith. I thought of the activities of fellow Christians and church members that I have observed across the CRC:

- A local congregation rehabilitating a boarded-up house
- Deacons maintaining a food pantry
- Christians praying for the poor
- A college student being a big brother to a kid whose dad is in jail
- People volunteering their time to put a new roof on the house of a family whose medical bills leave the family destitute
- An experienced mom mentoring a single mom who courageously bore and kept her baby
- A business owner taking a risk on hiring someone just released from prison
- A Christian school meeting the needs of people with physical and mental disabilities
- Church members tutoring neighborhood students in math and reading

- A group of farmers harvesting the crops of a widow whose husband died three months ago
- Christian pediatricians and lawyers and optometrists volunteering their professional services in a Christian community center
- A support group for persons struggling with substance abuse

More than merely believing that Jesus is Lord of all, the Reformed Christians I know put that belief into practice in amazing and life-changing ways.

Back in Africa

It's difficult for North American Christians to appreciate the staggering challenges of the African church. But Jesus Christ *is* Lord. Because Christ is Lord, African Christians worship with infectious joy, strong faith, inexhaustible hope, and sacrificial love for one another. Because Jesus Christ is Lord, these pastors went back to their churches full of courage and confidence. And the faith of our African brothers and sisters strengthened our faith. By the end of our time together it was no longer clear who was ministering to whom. And the question wasn't important. The church of Jesus Christ in North America and Africa was stronger because together we affirmed that Jesus is Lord.

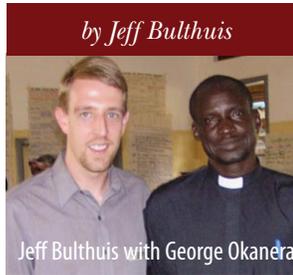
A Student Reflects on his Timothy Institute Experience

One of the greatest challenges for the church in Africa is the training of pastors and church leaders. The Timothy Institute (<http://timothyinstitute.calvinseminary.edu>) is addressing this challenge

in exciting ways! Along with three other Calvin Theological Seminary students and vice president Duane Kelderman, I recently was privileged to see firsthand how the Timothy Institute is positively impacting the churches in Uganda and Kenya.

In November our group spent eleven days in Uganda and Kenya with Mel Huguen, the director of the Timothy Institute and Professor Emeritus of Pastoral Care at Calvin Seminary. The first several days were spent in Uganda at a workshop for church leaders. It was the fourth in a series of four workshops.

Over the past four years, these leaders have met together for one week each year. During that week, leaders participate in intense workshops that equip them to



Jeff Bulthuis with George Okanera

serve their churches better. Workshops focus on pastoral care, preaching, stewardship, catechesis, and worship. At the end of the week, leaders make action plans in order to implement what they've learned in the ministry of the church. One year later—at

the beginning of the next workshop—they publicly report how they have or have not implemented their plans. At the end of the fourth workshop, the leaders are certified as *teachers* of the program—it is their responsibility to pass on the program to elders and other leaders in their area. In this way, the program self-propagates.

The leaders attending the workshop offered wonderful examples of faith. One man told us about congregation members living in displacement camps who were tithing on their rations of rice, firewood, and water. Another pastor told me that his mother, brother, and daughter had been killed by a rebel group—and he had lost the ability to see in one of his eyes after being kidnapped and beaten by the group. Despite these hardships, these churches were growing in both quantity and quality. Indeed, the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church.

During the second half of the trip, we spent time with Charles Muturi, an Anglican pastor from Nairobi, Kenya, who had gone through the program five years ago. The ministry of his church was flourishing! We were thankful to see how abundantly God had blessed the training given by the Timothy Institute and the implementation of it by this pastor.

I gratefully share with you the words of thanksgiving that I received from a worship leader who attended the workshops: "Above all, my gratitude is to the dear Christians of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Since I cannot wait to shake their hands together and to shine a face of smiles to them directly in the glory of God's name, I wish to do it in this simple letter before you go." Praise the Lord for providing for his church!

More about the Timothy Institute

The Timothy Institute (formerly Project Africa) is a wonderful example of inter-agency collaboration in the Christian Reformed Church. World Missions, Calvin Theological Seminary, and the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee have all worked closely together to develop training resources and train pastors and lay leaders for work in their churches. Funding for the program has come from these agencies, the CRC Foundation, and many individual donors.

Harold Kallemeyn has been a key developer and champion of the Timothy Institute. Working for World Missions in Francophone Africa, Harold has developed materials, led countless training sessions, and been a key networker in advancing the program to many countries in Africa and now also to Central America.

Kallemeyn has recently completed another exciting project: the development of a catechism that seeks to translate the basic teachings of the Christian faith in a question-and-answer format that is contextually appropriate for many churches in Africa. In response to a request from West African pastors for such a catechism, Kallemeyn started a consultation with sixty leaders in several continents, which in 2004 led to the publication of *I Belong to God*, a simple text based on classical Reformed confessions, but easier and shorter. In several French-speaking African countries, the French version has been used widely. Translations are underway in about ten indigenous languages.



Harold Kallemeyn

Always Reforming

A Conversation with Brian McLaren

On January 26, during the Calvin Symposium on Worship, members of the CTS Forum editorial committee had a conversation with Brian McLaren on the topic of “always reforming.” Earlier in the day, McLaren participated as a panelist with pastors and theologians from a range of Christian traditions from Protestant evangelical to Roman Catholic. (For a report, see <http://www.calvin.edu/worship/recent/seminar06/>.)

Forum: In your book *A Generous Orthodoxy* you write about Calvinism and the concept of “always reforming.” What do you mean by that phrase?

McLaren: One of the things I love about the Reformed tradition is the story of John Calvin. Here he was, between the ages of 19 and 26 when he wrote the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. The system of medieval Catholicism was being rejected and there was nothing to replace it yet, and he steps right into the middle of this crisis and by the grace of God has confidence to try to fill the vacuum and provide resources. So that puts in the heart of the Reformed tradition an example of innovation, of courage, of seeing the need of the moment and stepping in to address it.

Forum: You often critique the church in your writing. What’s *right* about the church today, in spite of the ongoing need to be always reforming?

McLaren: So many things are right about the church, and I’m sorry if I seem overly critical and fail to stress the positive sides enough. In many, many places in our country hardly anybody is caring for the community, but there are churches where people are watching out for the elderly widow who has no one to be there for her, or the mentally handicapped child and her parents, or the homeless man who lives under the bridge. Every week, if all

*So many things are right about the church. . . .
The number of things that are being done,
and done well, is just staggering.*



Brian McLaren is a pastor, author, and leading spokesperson for the emergent church movement, which consists of churches especially focused on reaching people in the grip of the current culture. He is trying to deal seriously with post-modern people who are asking the fundamental questions that Christian preachers and teachers need to be especially sensitive to—not only in *what* they teach and preach, but also in *how* they do these things and lead the ministry of the church. Pastors and missionaries have long understood that the context of ministry is a critical component in deciding how the gospel will be communicated in other cultures. McLaren is challenging the church to address the contextualization question in this culture more seriously, especially for young people who find it increasingly difficult to relate to traditional Christian structures.

the stories of heroic and compassionate acts in local congregations were told, we would be so inspired. And then we could add all of the incredibly important things that happen because the Word is preached week after week, because people teach Sunday school classes, and make sure kids learn the basics of the Scriptures and learn to pray. The number of things that are being done, and done well, is just staggering.

I discovered a new insight into this matter a couple of years ago when I was in central Africa, where in all of these slums of incredible poverty, people make less than \$50 per person per year; and yet on block after block of this ghetto, you would hear

the sound of singing! Every church has five, six, or seven choirs, and the kids and the old people are singing, and this is bringing people together, and it’s involving them in beauty, and it’s giving them something important to participate in.

Forum: In many of your writings you warn about an overconfidence among some Christians in what they think they know and understand about God and his ways. Some might wonder, are there things you *are* sure of? You wouldn’t want preachers saying, “I think so,” instead of, “This is the Word of the Lord.” Is it possible for humility about what we can know *for sure* to go too far, so that we become too timid?

McLaren: Absolutely, it is possible and that's a great danger. I love the term Lesslie Newbigin used—he talked about having a “proper confidence.” When white people were confident they could read in Colossians, “Slaves, obey your masters,” and use that to legitimize their perpetuation of slavery, we could say they had an excessive confidence. When the colonists came and thought the Native Americans were heathens and demon-possessed, so therefore we could take away their land, we look back and say, that was excessive confidence. But for Dr. King to stand up to the majority and the powers of this culture in the 1960s and say, “I have a dream of something better and I am willing to have the government try to stop me, but I am going to stand up for what is right”; and for Desmond Tutu to stand up and know that his life was in danger again and again, you need to have very high confidence. In fact, you have to believe in resurrection, because you're facing a high probability that if you keep standing up for what's right, you're going to die for it. That's the kind of confidence we need. Finding that balance is not easy for any of us, and that is part of our great challenge. Excessive confidence is dangerous, and insufficient confidence is deadly; proper confidence is what we need. And I think humility and faith are our indispensable allies in that search for proper confidence. Faith to know that God speaks, and humility to acknowledge that we might not hear fully or correctly.

Forum: A lot of students and pastors today talk about “preaching to postmoderns” in a way that suggests “postmoderns” are some wholly distinct group of people and preaching that works for postmoderns is a wholly distinct kind of preaching that is effective only with postmoderns. But isn't it the case that effective preaching to postmoderns is also effective preaching *period*? That is, it's preaching that has corrected itself from previous excesses—too cognitive, too moralistic, not relational enough, not narrative enough, not mission-oriented enough—and in the process has become more biblical, more aligned to the gospel? But at that point it's preaching that is more effective for anyone who hears it, not just a particular group, right?



Paul wants to get rid of obstacles to the gospel and he wants to in some ways mirror the incarnation of Christ to meet people where they are.

McLaren: I'm very sympathetic to what you are saying. In 1 Corinthians 9 Paul talks about becoming all things to all people. Now, we always say you can't be all things to all people, but that's what he says he is trying to do. I think what we mean is, you can't be all things to all people at the same time and at every moment. But Paul wants to get rid of obstacles to the gospel and he wants to in some ways mirror the incarnation of Christ to meet people where they are. So that approach seems to be basic good communication. It is not anything unique to postmoderns, whatever they are, but it is just good communication, and good gospel.

Forum: One of the things that we appreciate about what you've written is the emphasis on narrative, wonder, mystery, and community. That's been very constructive and enriching to a tradition that is maybe too cognitively and doctrinally focused. But has your critique of overemphasis on doctrine perhaps run the risk of alienating the very people you need to be reaching with this message—that some just don't hear it, because they hear a rejection of propositional truths presented in a dogmatic way?

McLaren: Obviously there are things that we can say are true with confidence, such as “Jesus rose from the dead.” But when people have too much confidence—no room for questions—it drives away the very people we should want to walk with. We need to give them room to ask their questions. There has been a lot of controversy about this whole issue of propositional truth and

all of the other adjectives of truth—absolute truth, objective truth, etc. But here is a very difficult challenge that will help you understand where I am coming from. The people who perhaps are perpetuating that kind of excessive certainty, rather than a proper confidence—I don't think I am ever going to convince them of anything. If they are oblivious to contradiction and impenetrable as far as a second thought goes, they aren't going to listen to me, or anybody else. Here's one of the reasons why that type of thinking is destructive pastorally: What happens when their own son or daughter grows up to be a teenager and has questions, and they are incapable of even permitting a question to happen in their presence? So often I end up dealing with people who are damaged by that kind of treatment. So, you try to respond to those people pastorally, and what will help them will not make the people who did the damage happy. If you toned down what you said so you would at least be listened to by some of those people, you wouldn't help the other people pastorally. You would sound like part of the problem. So these are choices that we make. And I just hope that other people will succeed with the people with whom I completely fail to communicate. I just don't think I can succeed with everybody.

I should also add that at heart, I am an evangelist—that's my primary gift and calling. The writing I do related to the church is just trying to help the church understand some problems that are getting in the way of its evangelistic mission. I am so grateful for scholars who will really

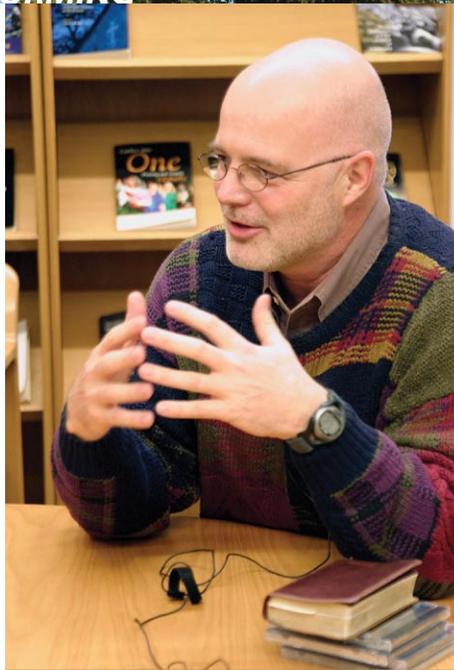
Always Reforming ► be able to do incredibly important and painstaking work in the scholarly world to deal with some of these things. I think of Kevin Vanhoozer and some others who are getting a hearing with people who hate what I am doing. I think Vanhoozer says some things very similar to what I am saying, but in a language they can understand. So, thank God, it works out.

Forum: You have received a bit of criticism. What have you learned from some of the criticism, and where do you think the criticism has been quite unfair?

McLaren: That would be hard to answer off the cuff and in a short amount of time, because there has been relatively little substantive criticism. A lot of the criticism has been based on misunderstanding; in other words, people are criticizing things that I don't explicitly say—in fact, I explicitly say the opposite, or I explicitly put qualifications that don't go where they say I go. So, if you take that away, there has been relatively little substantive critique.

Forum: How does this all relate to *semper reformanda*, “always reforming”?

McLaren: That is where these issues of controversy come in. If, as soon as someone brings up a new idea, such as in the political realm where we need to have an open dialogue about the war in Iraq, and people say, “You're not supporting our troops,” or “You're unpatriotic”—well, that has a way of guaranteeing that there can't be healthy dialogue. In the same way in the theological world, if when we are trying to raise significant questions that are worth discussing, we are attacked for raising them and people say things like “you're betraying the gospel,” that's the kind of language that I don't think invites the possibility of continual reform. It entrenches people. The other thing it does is tell all the people who have honest questions that this is not a safe place, and it increases the chance that those people will be driven away from the community of faith. It seems to me that a movement that engages in that kind of boundary maintenance keeps constricting its boundaries and makes continuing reformation less and less likely, and maybe impossible.



The writing I do related to the church is just trying to help the church understand some problems that are getting in the way of its evangelistic mission.

This is the great thing in the Reformed tradition—the great reason to keep going back and take seriously some of those Reformation *solas* that I tweaked a little bit in my book [*A Generous Orthodoxy*]. But, for example, when I raise a question

about atonement based on the gospels and the teaching of Jesus about the kingdom of God, and say, “Maybe the message of Jesus is really centered on the kingdom and is not *only* about atonement”—if we can't have a discussion like that, we shut off the possibility that we will experience reformation. We even shut off the possibility of hearing voices of Scripture that we haven't been listening to. So to me, this becomes a great responsibility of any community, but especially a community that emphasizes the primacy of Scripture over systems and even over the status quo.

Forum: Is it possible for a church to actually ever be all those words in the subtitle of *A Generous Orthodoxy: Why I Am a Missional, Evangelical, Post/Protestant, Liberal/Conservative, Mystical/Poetic, Biblical, Charismatic/Contemplative, Fundamentalist/Calvinist, Anabaptist/Anglican, Methodist, Catholic, Green, Incarnational, Depressed-yet-Hopeful, Emergent, Unfinished CHRISTIAN*?

McLaren: No, in fact I wish I would have made the title something like *Stumbling toward a Generous Orthodoxy*, or *Reaching toward a Generous Orthodoxy*. I hoped that the book would have a certain kind of humor about it, but a whole lot of people didn't take it with any humor, and just said, “That doesn't make any sense,” which starts us off on the wrong foot. I wish the title had been more humorous and a little less prepossessing, and that would have made the subtitle a little more effective.

What is the shape of theological education likely to be a half-century from now? What should it be? In the February 21 issue of *Christian Century*, Brian McLaren responds to these questions with a recipe: “Seminary programs should be one part monastery, one part seminar and one part mission agency” (p. 22). McLaren argues for reforms to theological education that have already been developing at CTS. “One part monastery” is an emphasis on communal spiritual formation; “one part seminar” focuses on the integration of classroom disciplines with everyday practices of ministry through theological reflection on case studies; and “one part mission agency” calls for students “to live and serve for several weeks among the poor in the U.S. and abroad.” At CTS the new “Theological Education as Formation for Ministry” emphasis, with a new course that is followed by Formation for Ministry (FFM) groups and cross-cultural internships, is helping CTS to function as “monastery, seminar, and mission agency.” As students live in community and practice spiritual disciplines, reflect on and discuss actual ministry situations in light of theological doctrines and biblical interpretation, and serve in cross-cultural settings, they are formed into spiritually grounded, reflective ministers equipped to understand and care about people in whatever context they find themselves in ministry.

Preaching the Heidelberg to Postmoderns

One of the greatest contemporary challenges to the Reformed faith in North America is the postmodernism that has permeated every facet of our culture. How can Reformed preachers effectively address congregations steeped in that philosophy?

Recently, sponsored by the new Center for Excellence in Preaching (CEP) at Calvin Theological Seminary, I led a group of new church planters in a seminar that explored how we could use the Heidelberg Catechism in preaching to postmoderns. At first, this idea seemed a bit counter-intuitive to these front-line warriors. When you're dealing with seekers who don't even accept the authority of the Bible, why would you complicate matters by adding another layer of admittedly human authority to your presentation of the gospel? "I've never used the Catechism," said one highly successful veteran of the home mission fields. But he and his colleagues were willing to try this experimental seminar.

We focused on five characteristics of postmodernism, each of which presents both opportunities and obstacles to the preacher who uses the Catechism as a guide to preaching. First, postmodernism is both deeply suspicious of the institutional church, and profoundly uninformed about the basics of Christianity. In his fine book *Preaching to a Post-Modern World* Graham Johnston writes, "The great narratives of Judeo-Christian belief, the pivotal stories of the Bible's characters, the epoch of the life and death of Jesus Christ, either are not known or do not carry the meaning-making significance they did to previous generations" (p. 15).

Here the Catechism's warm, clear, systematic summary of the Christian faith can be an invaluable guide in presenting the basics to postmoderns. Containing the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments,

and the Lord's Prayer, the Catechism is a crash course in "mere Christianity" from a Reformed perspective.

On the other hand, the anti-institutionalism inherent in postmodernism may mean that we won't be able to parade the Catechism up front in a worship service. Rather, it may have to function behind the scenes as a guide for the preacher. And given postmodernism's distaste for dogmatism, we'll need to use it in more of a teaching than a preaching mode.

Second, the pluralism of postmodernism leaves its adherents with blurred morality and relative truth, but it also makes them respectful of other people's traditions. "This openness to the validity of the personal story of each person means that—at least in theory—anyone should be able to have his or her own story and should be free to tell it" (Johnston, p. 110). The Catechism can help us tell our story in a warm and personal way. Can you think of a better way to present the Reformed tradition to postmoderns?

Of course, as we tell our story in this cultural climate, we'll need to walk that thin

by Stan Mast
Pastor of LaGrave
Avenue CRC in Grand
Rapids, Michigan



line between being convinced that our story is objectively true and being sensitive to the postmodern conviction that there is no objective truth. Dogmatism is the kiss of death for postmoderns.

Third, given its uneasiness with absolute truth claims, postmodernism is very pragmatic. "Is it true or rational?" is not as important a question as "Does it work?" *Forum* readers who are familiar with the Catechism will quickly see its value here. Think of how

pragmatic the Catechism is in its exposition of the gospel. "What is your only comfort in life . . . ?" "What must you know to live . . . in the joy of this comfort?" "How does all this benefit you?" "What good does it do to believe all this?" Of course, the Catechism is not merely pragmatic; it cares about the truth of its doctrine. That will be a challenge to postmoderns, but the Catechism nearly always presents that truth in terms of the benefits that come to those who believe it.

Fourth, postmoderns are, not surprisingly, intensely relational. As Matthew Arnold put it in his poem "Dover Beach," if "the sea of faith . . . [is] retreating," then "let us be true to one another." Community is the answer to the loss of meaning. "While baby boomers value success and achievement, baby busters value belonging and acceptance. . . . That desire for acceptance and belonging stems from the loneliness and alienation of splintered family attachments" (Johnston, p. 55).

Here the central theme of the Catechism will speak tenderly to the longings of a disconnected generation looking for a place "where everybody knows your name." Our only comfort in life and in death is that we belong to someone who will never fail us or forsake us. Of course, we must be sure that what we preach is matched by a church community that actually practices acceptance.

The Catechism can help us tell our story in a warm and personal way. Can you think of a better way to present the Reformed tradition to postmoderns?

Preaching the Heidelberg

Finally, postmoderns are oriented toward experience and, thus, to the deep existential questions of human experience. Here, again, the Catechism is an invaluable help, since its three divisions address all the major issues of life. The Sin section speaks to the human problem—Who am I? What's wrong with me? How did things get this way? The Salvation piece gives us the divine solution—What will it take to fix the world and me? What do I have to do to experience change in my life? And the Service part lays out the human response—What is the heart of truly spiritual living? How can I keep in touch with the transcendent?

When these church planters were asked to present a sermon series on the whole Catechism and individual sermons on each of its sections, they produced some incred-

ibly creative and profound sermons. For example, Rev. Peter Choi, a church planter in Ann Arbor, Michigan, developed a whole series of sermons based on the

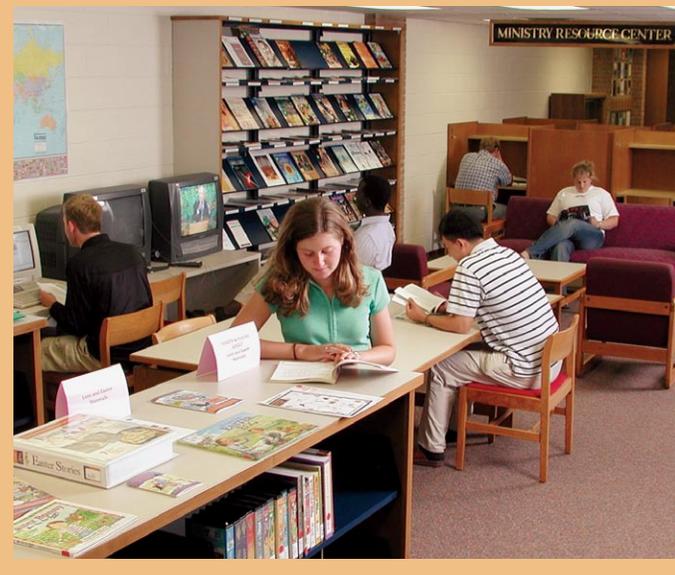
The central theme of the Catechism will speak tenderly to the longings of a disconnected generation looking for a place "where everybody knows your name."

Catechism's theme of belonging. Entitled "Homeless in Ann Arbor," it moved a postmodern listener from the broken sidewalks of sin to communion with the Lord around the (kitchen) table. For more detail on Rev. Choi's series, check out the church planters' resources at the Center for Excellence in Preaching website (<http://cep.calvinseminary.edu>). Our study also revealed that the Catechism can be used in some creative liturgical ways. In one church, for example, Q&A 1 were used as a kind of Reformed "altar call" after the sermon. The next Sunday, Lord's Day 2 became part of the service of reconciliation, combining a call to repentance and a summary of God's law and a powerfully brief confession of sin. All in all, our time together demonstrated that one of the oldest statements of the Reformed faith is unexpectedly relevant to this postmodern age.

The Ministry Resource Center (MRC) is a premier collection of practical resources for all aspects of congregational ministry and now is a circulating library. The MRC provides biblically and theologically sound resources for Calvin students serving in Christian ministry leadership positions, as well as for seminarians, Calvin staff, faculty, and alumni, and church leaders. Check it out at <http://www.calvin.edu/library/mrc/> or come to the Hekman Library in person. You will be welcome!



Ministry Resource Center



In 1977, Chuck Colson was in Oxford to speak at the Oxford Debating Society. While there, he met with Walter Hooper, the executor of the C. S. Lewis estate. They spent the better part of a day looking at all of C. S. Lewis's things: papers, writings, etc. When Chuck went to leave that day, Walter Hooper gave Chuck a box, instructing Chuck not to open the box until he (Chuck) was on his way back to London. Later, Chuck opened the box to find a pipe and a letter from Walter Hooper explaining that he wanted Chuck to have the pipe because Chuck was carrying on the work of Lewis.

President and Charles W. Colson Professor of Theology Cornelius Plantinga Jr. holds C. S. Lewis's pipe.



New Seminary Club Explores Church Planting

by Benjamin Spalink, Master of Divinity Student

In August 2005, Calvin Theological Seminary invited fourteen alumni church planters to participate in a consultation with faculty, staff, and students. These alumni spoke highly of the theological training they received but voiced concerns over their lack of exposure to church planting while in seminary. Among the initiatives resulting from this consultation was the student formation of the New Church Development Club. When church planters hear about this club, they consistently use one word—cool! The students were interested in church planting, but also wanted cultural change—a seminary in which students were knowledgeable about and interested in doing church planting.

Rev. Jim Osterhouse of Christian Reformed Home Missions (CRHM) serves as the advisor for this club. His participation is vital because he serves as a liaison between CRHM and CTS, where he teaches church planting, and is able to link students to church planting mentors. Rev. Osterhouse's regular presence at the seminary and club meetings has opened doors for students to learn more about church planting.

Talking about church planting has been good for students, but the club also needed exposure to new church development ministry. So, with the generous help of CRHM, Jim Osterhouse, Kris Vos of Crossroads Community Church in Schererville, Indiana, and I coordinated a weekend trip to Chicago in February. Sixteen students, three significant others, and professor of missions Pieter Tuit attended.

The trip's purpose was to allow students to meet church planters and get a taste of church planting in urban and suburban settings. The group met with Chicago-area church planters, toured inner-city ministries, ate local ethnic food, and lodged with hospitable church planters. The high point of the trip was worshipping with host families on Sunday morning. After spending much time talking about church planting, actually attending worship helped solidify what many of us had been thinking: there



is an exciting vibrancy in the worship of a new church.

Another highlight of the trip was an insider's tour of Chicago led by Rev. Bob Price, Intercultural Church Director at CRHM, which included stops at Louis Farrakhan's mosque and the famous Jim's Polish Sausage, known for being the *first* Polish sausage shop in Chicago. Rev. Tony Van Zanten, longtime inner-city missionary, and his wife, Donna, hosted the group for prayer and song at their home. Rev. James Wolf blessed us during a stop at Chicago's West Side Christian School with testimonies of God's provision for the school in procuring valuable nearby property.

A number of the students had expressed previous interest in church planting and found the trip to be a confirmation of that dream. Seeing how some new churches broke the mold of what church "should" look like was liberating and exciting, as in our surprise to see a video game arcade in the youth clubhouse at Crossroads Community Church.

Others reacted with a little more hesitation, especially some spouses who expressed concern over what they perceived to be the glorious expectation of the church planter's spouse. Rev. John and Iliana Zayas of the GAP Community Church told of the blessings of team ministry and advocated for the full involvement of both spouses. Other church planters

shared the unique struggles of church planting—finding adequate leaders, raising money, bridging cultural and economic gaps. Many students were relieved to hear that success is *not* in numbers, but that "making it" is entirely up to God.

During the weekend other themes came through too: planting must be a prayer-filled venture for visionary leaders who have a heart for the lost, and a group effort. The willingness of the Chicago area church planters to host and meet with the club was a testimony to their commitment to their shared vision. In fact, they meet once a month to pray, to coordinate their efforts, and to encourage one another.

CTS and CRHM believe in the importance of church planting for the future of the CRC as one of the most effective means of doing evangelism and of diversifying a historically ethnic denomination. The New Church Development Club hopes that through this event and others like it, more seminarians will consider church planting for their vocation.



Church planters Rik Stevenson, Peter Choi, Greg Llerena, and Andy Sytsma were panelists during Mission Emphasis week at CTS.

Eugene Peterson Visits CTS for Calvin Symposium on Worship

For many of this year's 1,600 attendees at the Calvin Symposium on Worship, including 187 CTS students, staff, and faculty, the weekend was not only a time for learning about and experiencing renewal in worship; it was also a spiritually formative weekend. The conference theme "I will be with you" was highlighted in memorable sermons by Eugene Peterson, Albert Aymer, Mary Hulst, Thomas G. Long, Michael Quicke, Laura Smit, and CTS preaching professors John Rottman and Duane Kelderman. These preachers were all sponsored by the seminary's Center for Excellence in Preaching. Other CTS faculty and staff presenters included Mariano Avila, Lyle Bierma, Heidi De Jonge, Robert De Vries, Betsy Steele Halstead, Scott Hoeszee, Neal Plantinga, David Rylaarsdam, Kathy Smith, Howard Vanderwell, Jeff Weima, and symposium organizers John Witvliet and Emily Brink. Audio files of many sessions are posted online at www.calvin.edu/worship/sympos.

Eugene Peterson, pastor, teacher, and author of *The Message* and other books on spiritual formation and pastoral ministry, was interviewed by Calvin College chaplain Dale Cooper in the CTS student center. More than two hundred people listened as Peterson answered questions with humor and quiet wisdom, speaking on the joys and the challenges of ministry and forming Christian communities. A few excerpts follow:

Cooper: What's been most fulfilling for you as a pastor?

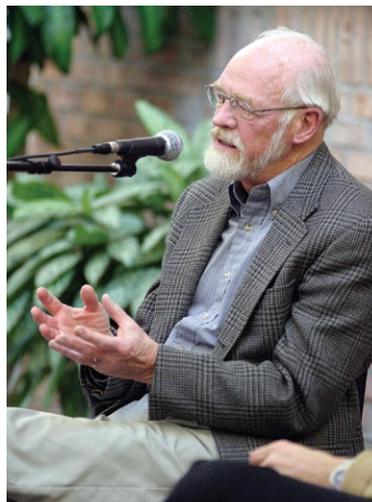
Peterson: Being part of a worshiping community that was being formed into the likeness of Christ. I knew I wanted to preach the gospel and form a community with a biblical, Holy Spirit identity. For twenty-nine years it was slow going. I thought the easy part would be to form the community. It turned out to be the opposite! It took ten years for a community to be formed around the act of worship.

Cooper: Now that you've moved to teaching, what do you miss?

Peterson: I miss the congregation most. I was surprised that I didn't miss preaching as much as the intricate miracle of people with nothing in common being gradually formed into a relationship that makes them a Christian community.

Cooper: What would you say to those going into the pastorate now?

Peterson: Be determined to find out what it means for you to be a pastor—shaped by the biblical revelation, the Christian tradition. It's not easy. The whole American culture is in a conspiracy to seduce you from being a pastor. Nobody wants you to be a pastor! They want religion on their terms. But



being a pastor is being a leader of a counter-revolution. It's a life of love and sacrifice and belief, not self-fulfillment and consumerism. You have to be personal and you have to be local. You can't do a personal gospel in an impersonal way. The Trinity is the most important symbol for pastors to work with—it's relational. Every congregation is

unique—pay attention to what's there. The local, the present. Don't try to bring in models of what others have done.

Cooper: What is a pastoral identity?

Peterson: Pastoral identity is not a vocational identity—it's your identity with these people. You're not a leader in exercising power—that's the worst attitude a pastor can desire or think is important. You're not manipulating people, but caring about people and their relationship with Christ. I started writing about being a pastor—*Working the Angles, Five Smooth Stones*—reimagining my life as a pastor in the biblical Reformed Christian tradition. It takes a lot of guts to do what you're supposed to do—develop this community, patiently, without manipulation.

Student: What do you do personally to keep up your relationship with God?

Peterson: You can't copy me. It's your spirit that's being formed by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit doesn't mass produce. It's a creative Spirit working with you, a creative person. Sometimes it helps to have a spiritual director. Be wary of imposed strategies or disciplines. Spiritual discipline isn't a harness; it's a creative thing. You can't quantify or codify spiritual formation. But you can find ways that work for you. Some people can't pray without walking.

It's easy to think this is time we do for God. But spiritual formation is what God does for us, not what we do for God. The minute we think we're in charge, we lose the whole thing.

The entire conversation is available for listening online in the lecture archive at www.calvinseminary.edu.

Winning Author Gives Fireside Chat at CTS

On Friday, January 13, Book of the Quarter author Lauren Winner came to CTS for a fireside chat following her January Series lecture at Calvin College. Winner spoke to about 120 members of the seminary community and Book of the Quarter reading groups about her memoir, *Girl Meets God*, which recounts



her journey from Judaism to Christianity. In discussing the book, she pointed out that it is more about God than about the girl—herself. But, even more importantly,

it's about the *meeting*—in her words, "the unfolding of a year of trying to figure out what it meant to have met up with this carpenter and taken these baptismal vows." She attributed the current popularity of the genre of memoir to the fact that "we live in a moment where a lot of people are interested in entering into someone else's spiritual story." To hear

more of her story and her reflections on writing memoirs, listen to the entire fireside chat in the CTS online lecture archive at www.calvinseminary.edu.

Professor Nydam Visits Indonesian Seminary

Aletheia Theological Institute sits in the lush green hills of East Java, Indonesia, as a seminary of the Church of Christ our Lord. This denomination of about sixty congregations, a church that is committed to a Reformed perspective on the Christian faith, is composed of Chinese and Indonesian Christians in a Muslim land. Regularly, students from this denomination study at Calvin Theological Seminary to further their pastoral and teaching skills in order to serve the Christian community of Indonesia, where 95 percent of the people are followers of Muhammed and about 3 percent are followers of Jesus. The current seminary president, Kornelius A. Setiawan, was a Th.M. graduate of CTS in 1991.



On occasion CTS faculty cross the

Pacific to serve as a resource to Aletheia. In February 2006, as part of his sabbatical assignment, CTS pastoral care professor Rev. Ron Nydam spent two weeks at Aletheia, teaching and preaching, playing and praying with students. He led a three-

day seminary retreat on the topic of “Transformative Pastors,” talking about the character of pastors and the challenges of creating healthy relationships with congregations that further Christian ministry. Ron also taught a week-long class on the subject of providing pastoral care to those who are dying and their families, a subject not much talked about in Indonesian culture.

Currently, CTS is sending books to Aletheia for their school’s nearly completed library, as many of the students there have become nearly fluent in the English

language. And Calvin Seminary benefits as well from first-hand contact with past and future CTS students and the opportunity to gain a “big world” view of how the Reformed faith is thriving in other parts of God’s world.

2006 Recipients of the Distinguished Alumni Awards

Rev. Jason Chen

Jason Chen was born in Xiamen, China, in 1938 and immigrated to the Philippines with his family at the age of nine. Following graduation from the University of Santo Tomas in Manila, he began his theological training at Calvin Theological Seminary where he earned a Bachelor of Divinity in 1967 and a Master of Divinity in 1980. He was ordained into the ministry of the Word during the fall of 1970 when the Second Christian Reformed Church of Pella, Iowa, called him to the Geneva Campus Ministry (Geneva Forum) at the University of Iowa. Jason served as its director from the fall of 1971 until his retirement in February 2005.



Jason’s passion at the University was the integration of faith and learning. Through his much-copied Genevan Lecture Series;

his ministry to Asians on campus; his spiritual and intellectual counsel to students, staff, and faculty; and his stalwart witness to the Christian’s life of the mind, Rev. Jason Chen has influenced people for Jesus Christ across the world and in every sphere of society.

Rev. Norman Meyer

Norm Meyer was born and raised in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Norm’s high school speech teacher planted the seed of ministry in his mind and encouraged him to let it grow, which he faithfully did. After graduating from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1962, Norm began his ministry in Willmar, Minnesota, where he pastored a congregation of persons from German and Dutch descent that had migrated from nearby farming communities into the “city.” In 1966 Norm accepted a call to Calvin CRC in Muskegon, Michigan, a “blended” congregation of three distinctly



different groups of people. Norm worked tirelessly in Muskegon until 1990, and then served as Interim Ministry Pastor for CRC Home Missions. In 1994 Norm began ministry at Brookside CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he served until he retired in 2002, forty years after his ordination. During this last period, he

was also President of the Board of CTS for five years.

As a pastor, Norm Meyer was beloved for his faithful preaching and teaching, his compassionate pastoral care, his friendship to all. He embodied the role of intelligent, humane servant. Norman Meyer died of cancer in October, 2004. His parting words to his congregation on the Sunday he revealed his grim diagnosis came from a depth of centuries: “God is good, all the time! All the time, God is good!”

Norm brought glory to God through a life of regular, persistent church ministry.



Formation for Ministry

Formation for Ministry is the integrating principle of all seminary education at Calvin Theological Seminary.

- Formation goes beyond merely dispensing information.
- Formation focuses upon the whole person: head, heart, hands, all in the context of community.
- Formation transcends the separation between academic and practical.
- Formation seeks to make every part of the seminary experience form students into increasingly faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.
- Formation is *more* demanding than academic achievement alone in that it involves accountability for not just academic excellence, but one's total faith life, relational health, and personal commitment to ministry.

Calvin Theological Seminary's goal is to be a community in which, by the Spirit of God and through many activities and relationships, Christ forms students into his likeness and prepares them for ministry. Their ministry will, in turn, involve them in forming others into Christ's likeness.



CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A community of faith. A center of learning. A life of ministry.

3233 Burton Street SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546 • 800-388-6034 • www.calvinseminary.edu

CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

3233 Burton St. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

Publications Mail Agreement No. 40063614
3475 Mainway, LCD STN 1
Burlington ON L7M 1A9

| |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Non-profit org. U.S. Postage PAID Grand Rapids, MI Permit No. 657 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Address Correction Requested