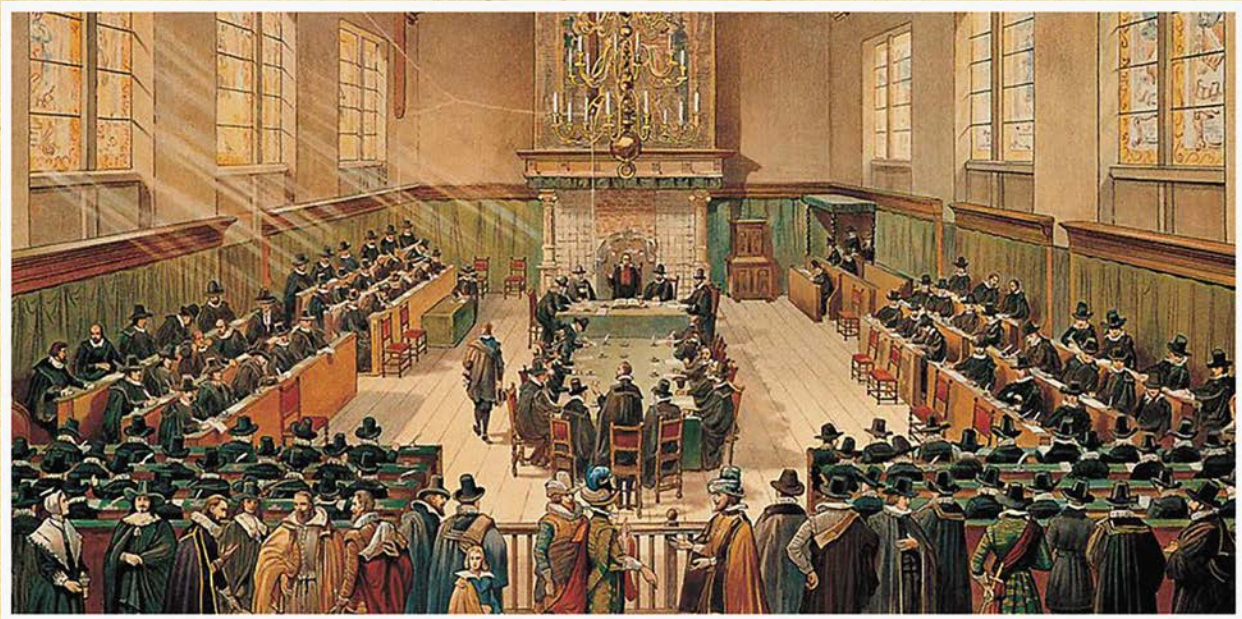


FORUM

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CANONS OF DORDT

WHAT IS THE LEGACY AFTER 400 YEARS?

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Dordt or Dort? What Still Matters?

Is it Dordt or Dort? If you are featuring a Forum issue to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the Synod of Dordrecht, it helps to know how to spell the Canons of Dordt/Dort that resulted from that gathering.

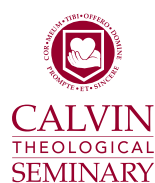
The Synod of Dordrecht was an international synod held in Dordrecht in 1618 - 1619 by the Dutch Reformed Church to settle a controversy focused on responding to the rise of Arminianism.

1618 - 1619 is a long time ago, but the Canons of Dordt/Dort that resulted from that synod has been a key framing document for many Reformed churches, and one of the three forms of confessional unity for the Christian Reformed Church in North America (The other documents being the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession).

This Forum issue will not only commemorate the past, but also look to how Dordt/Dort still functions in our present day and in the days ahead. The articles are meant to begin a conversation and help frame ongoing consideration of the meaning and value of the

Canons of Dordt/Dort. Consider these articles as an appreciation of the Synod of Dordrecht and an invitation to the Church to continue to learn from and be shaped by the deliberations and the results from 400 years ago.

Editorial Note: As we finalized this issue, we faced the question of using the spelling of Dordt or Dort. Though the answer is complicated by a number of factors – including that Dort is an Anglicization of the word Dordt – the accepted spelling is moving to Dordt. Dordt is the original Dutch abbreviation for Dordrecht. While Dort is the more traditional spelling, it seemed fitting to use Dordt for this Forum issue that seeks to bridge the past to our current context.



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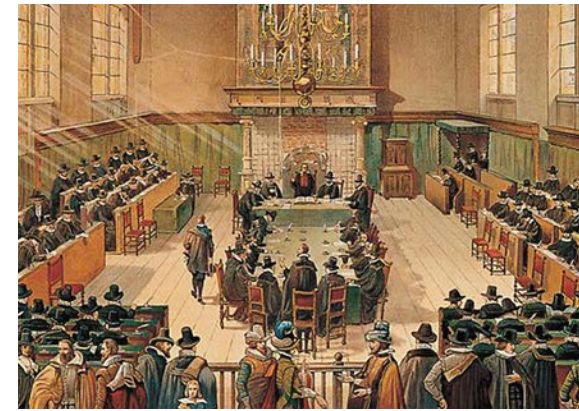
THE CANONS OF DORDT AND THEIR HISTORICAL CONTEXT

KARIN MAAG

Although the Canons of Dordt¹ are one of the three core confessional documents of the Christian Reformed Church, many church members today have a hazy notion at best as to why this text was written and how it grew to play such a normative role for churches in the Reformed tradition, especially those with roots in the Netherlands.

To understand why the Canons became such a central document, we have to go back in time to revisit the political and religious situation in the Netherlands in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The Canons of Dordt were officially adopted by delegates at the Synod of Dordt, which met in 1618-19, four hundred years ago. But the roots of the conflicts that led to the Canons stretch even further back.

By the last quarter of the sixteenth century, the seven provinces that made up the Dutch Republic (the Netherlands today) had taken some significant political and religious steps. By 1579, the seven provinces had joined together in a solemn agreement (the Union of Utrecht) to defend themselves militarily against the pressure of Catholic Spain. By 1581, the seven provinces had unilaterally deposed Philip II of Spain as their monarch. Instead, the seven provinces joined together to run their affairs in a loose confederation, first under the leadership of William of Orange, and then after his assassination in 1584, in an informal shared power arrangement between William's son Maurice of Nassau and the leading Dutch statesman Johan van Oldenbarnevelt. Maurice of Nassau focused mainly on military leadership while van Oldenbarnevelt concentrated on day-to-day political affairs. The good working relationship between these two men broke down, however, as the younger Maurice increasingly resented van Oldenbarnevelt, and was suspicious of the older man's willingness to negotiate an extended truce with Spain, the Dutch Republic's archenemy. These simmering tensions between the two men were only exacerbated by being superimposed on an increasingly acrimonious debate between two factions within the Dutch Reformed church at the time.



¹ Yes, this spelling is correct! The older English spelling was Dort. The Dutch call their city Dordrecht, shortening it to Dordt. Modern scholarly usage has adopted the Dutch spelling.

Although the Dutch revolt from Spain broke ties with Roman Catholicism and made Calvinism the official faith of the Dutch Republic, this decision did not settle religious affairs in the republic. In fact, unresolved issues rapidly came to a head. At the root of these theological and ecclesiological conflicts were two different visions of the church. For the orthodox or hardline Calvinists, the situation was straightforward: although the visible church included everyone (both wheat and weeds, as in Jesus' parable in Matthew 13), God from eternity knew His own, chosen not because of their great faith or piety but out of His grace. The orthodox Calvinists wanted to transform Dutch society into their vision of a more disciplined and pious faith community, along the lines of Reformed Geneva. Thus, they were strong proponents of the legitimacy of church discipline handled by pastors and elders. They saw the civil authorities primarily as upholders and enforcers of the church's decisions. They also objected to what they saw as unwarranted interference of the government in church affairs when it came to selecting pastors, elders, or schoolteachers. Members of this group included pastors and professors across the Dutch Republic, including Franciscus Gomarus, professor of theology at the University of Leiden and the University of Groningen, and Sibbrandus Lubbertus, professor of theology at Franeker University.

By contrast, moderate or liberal Calvinists held very different views on these same issues. They broadly supported the right of the civil authorities to appoint pastors, elders, and schoolteachers, especially given that the government paid pastors and schoolteachers' salaries. They tended to favor a measure of public religious toleration and held that the church should not administer church discipline independently, without government input and oversight. Theologically, they believed that God's offer of salvation was open to all, and that those who were saved were those who responded affirmatively to God's offer of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. The upholders of these ideas included pastors and professors in the Dutch Republic, most notably Jacob Arminius, professor of theology at the University of Leiden from

1603 until his death in 1609. After his death, his supporters issued a document in 1610 known as the Remonstrance, outlining their ideas in five main points. The group thus got its name (Remonstrants) from the title of their document.

In response, their opponents published their own document, known as the Counter-Remonstrance, in 1611. Crucially, they also gained the support of Maurice of Nassau, who threw his weight behind these theological traditionalists in order to gain leverage against van Oldenbarnevelt, who supported the moderate faction within the Dutch Reformed church. By the second decade of the seventeenth century, therefore, the political and religious situation within the Reformed community in the Dutch Republic was very fraught. In August 1618, after van Oldenbarnevelt had established armed city militias in the province of Holland ostensibly to keep the peace but in practice to protect the moderate factions in the Dutch Reformed church, Maurice had him arrested on charges of treason. Meanwhile, the hardliners within the Dutch Reformed church agreed that the only way to bring an end to the doctrinal and ecclesiological conflicts was to call together a synod. In order to give its decisions more legitimacy, the church leadership and the government decided to hold an international synod, inviting a number of delegates from other Reformed churches across Europe to attend.

The Synod of Dordt got underway in November 1618, with nearly a hundred delegates in attendance, including representatives from Geneva, England and Scotland, and the German lands. Given the range of mother tongues among the delegates, the sessions took place in the common language every educated man knew, namely in Latin. The four French Huguenot delegates who had been invited were unable to come, due to the refusal of King Louis XIII to allow them to attend. Delegates addressed a number of matters of concerns in the church, including commissioning a translation of the Scriptures from the original Hebrew and Greek into Dutch (the Statenvertaling), revising the church order, and examining catechetical

How do we know that our salvation is secure?

instruction and the training of pastors. Their main focus, however, was to resolve the theological controversy over the doctrine of election. To that end, thirteen pastors and professors representing the Remonstrant position were summoned to attend the Synod's meetings. Their group was dwarfed by the number of delegates upholding traditionalist positions. However, already from the start of the proceedings, both sides approached the gathering from very different perspectives. The Remonstrants held that they were participating in a conference or a debate to discern the truth of the matter. Their opponents, however, believed that the Remonstrants were being tried for their theological views before a body of their peers. Given the weight of numbers on the Counter-Remonstrant side, the issue was never in doubt. By January 1619, the Remonstrant delegates were ejected from the synod, and by May 6, 1619, their opponents had crafted and ratified the Canons of Dordt, to refute the Remonstrants' views and uphold the Counter-Remonstrants' position on double predestination and election. The international delegates present at the synod voted in favor of the Canons of Dordt as articulating truly Reformed theology. However, the only church body outside the Dutch Republic that officially adopted the Canons was the French Huguenot church, even though their own delegates never attended the Synod.

The victory of the hardliners at the Synod of Dordt mirrored the triumph of Maurice of Nassau and his allies over van Oldenbarnevelt and his supporters. In May 1619, van Oldenbarnevelt was publicly beheaded after a show trial. Other men in his circle were sentenced to imprisonment or banishment. Meanwhile, the Dutch Reformed churches quickly made use of the Canons to enforce Calvinist orthodoxy in their communities. All pastors, professors, and schoolteachers had to sign their names to the document,

confirming that they would uphold its teachings. Those who refused were dismissed from their posts. In the end, two hundred pastors were dismissed. Many of them were also then banished from the territory of the Dutch Republic, only returning after Maurice's death in 1625.

How does knowing more about the historical context of the Canons of Dordt help church members today understand the enduring value of the Canons? First, it is worth remembering that no theological controversy takes place in a vacuum. The Canons were written in response to a very specific conflict within Dutch Reformed Christianity over how the doctrines of predestination and election should be taught. Bearing this context in mind helps modern-day Christians interpret the often-polemical tone of the document. Second, at the heart of the seventeenth-century debates are issues that still resonate for believers today: what role does our response in faith to God's offer of salvation in Christ play in the process? How do we know that our salvation is secure? If we fall away from God, does he turn away from us? The Canons of Dordt does not shy away from these big issues and offers a rich and enduring resource to address these questions together.



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CANONS OF DORDT AND THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

LYLE D. BIERMA

The Canons of Dordt (1619) is probably the least well known of the three confessions of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

The Canons of Dordt (1619) is probably the least well known of the three confessions of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Many of us are better acquainted with the Heidelberg Catechism (1563), and perhaps also with the Belgic Confession (1561). The most we might have learned about the Canons of Dordt (hereafter CD) is that its structure and content can be summarized with the acronym TULIP. However, not only is the CD less well known than the Heidelberg Catechism (hereafter HC), but some people have the impression that it is very different from the HC. Whereas the HC is usually thought of as warm, personal, pastoral, and practical, the CD is often perceived as just the opposite: cold, abstract, harsh, and largely irrelevant. But is that perception accurate? In this 400th anniversary year of the CD, one way to reacquaint ourselves with the document is to explore whether such a comparison with the HC is fair.

There are indeed differences between the two confessions. The CD was composed almost sixty years after the HC, in the Netherlands rather than Germany, by an international synod rather than a small committee, and under a different set of historical circumstances. Furthermore, the HC was intended primarily as a teaching tool for use in churches and schools, whereas the CD was a set of canons, or standards of doctrine, which sought to mark out certain boundaries between truth and error.

THEOLOGICAL IDENTITY

Despite these differences, however, there are also several remarkable similarities. First of all, both confessions tell us something about our theological roots and identity, namely, that we who subscribe to them are children of the Reformation. The teaching of the HC, as many of us have learned, is divided into three main parts, summarized in Q/A 2: “First, how great my sin and misery are; second, how I am set free

How I am to thank God for such deliverance?

from all my sins and misery; third, how I am to thank God for such deliverance.” We sometimes reduce this structure to three words beginning with S: Sin, Salvation, and Service. These are themes that lay at the heart of the Protestant Reformation: the deep-rooted sinfulness

"In order that people may be brought to faith, God mercifully sends messengers of this very joyful message to the people and at the time he wills."

of humanity; salvation in Christ alone by grace alone through faith alone; and service through lives of good works, not to earn favor with God but to thank God for the gift of salvation.

One of the things the CD was trying to do a century later was recapture this Reformation message. In the early 1600s, the Reformed pastor and professor Jacob Arminius (1560-1609) and his followers had set off a theological firestorm in the Netherlands. They did not deny the sinfulness of humanity, but they did place a greater emphasis on the role human beings play in their salvation and less emphasis on the sovereignty of God. The Calvinist party in the debate saw this as a threat to the Reformation doctrine of salvation *sola gratia* (by grace alone). From the Calvinist point of view, Arminians were slipping back into a Roman Catholic understanding of salvation, something Protestants had repudiated just a hundred years before.

The Synod of Dordt, therefore, responded in the CD with a strong restatement of the Reformation themes of sin, salvation, and service: the total depravity of humanity (sin); the unconditional election, limited atonement, and irresistible grace of God (salvation); and the perseverance of the saints (service). In so doing, the synod was reemphasizing and expanding upon the doctrines of sin and grace found in the HC and Belgic Confession. As the synod's Form of Subscription put it, the CD served as an "explanation of some points of the aforesaid doctrine [in the two earlier confessions]." And from then on, this triad of confessions—what we sometimes call the "Three Forms of Unity"—have helped to identify those who subscribe to them as Christians who are Protestant and Protestants who are Reformed.

PASTORAL TONE

A second similarity between the CD and HC may come as a bit of a surprise. The CD tracks not only with the main doctrinal themes of the HC but sometimes with its pastoral and practical approach to doctrine as well. The HC, of course, always seeks to relate doctrine to life and focuses especially on the comfort or assurance that biblical teaching can bring the believer. The CD shows some of these same sensitivities. In its first main point of doctrine (predestination), for example, the authors recognize that divine election and reprobation are not only difficult ideas to understand but can strike terror in the hearts of Christians who wonder whether they are really among the elect and how they can know for sure.

However, as Neal Plantinga once put it, when we reach Article 12 of the CD's first main point, "suddenly the air warms and the atmosphere brightens. We pass from somewhat chilly and technical material into some articles of genuine pastoral concern" (A Place to Stand, p. 134). Article 16 assures believers who are worried about being one of the reprobate that it is not they who need to be concerned. Rather it is "those who have forgotten God and their Savior Jesus Christ and have abandoned themselves wholly to the cares of this world and the pleasures of the flesh [who] have every reason to stand in fear of this teaching." Struggling believers can be comforted by the fact that in real life, assurance of election never happens all at once but "in due time . . . by various stages and in differing measures" (Art. 12). Those "not yet able to make such progress along the way of godliness and faith as they would like" can also be comforted that "our merciful God has promised not to snuff out a smoldering wick

or break a bruised reed" (Art. 16). And Article 14 cautions the church always to teach election "with a spirit of discretion, in a godly and holy manner, at the appropriate time and place ... for the glory of God's most holy name, and for the lively *comfort* of God's people" (italics added).

Similarly, in its treatment of the doctrine of perseverance (fifth main point), the CD recognizes that Christians constantly wrestle with doubts and temptations and thus "do not always experience this full assurance of faith and certainty of perseverance." Nevertheless, "God, the Father of all comfort, 'does not let them be tempted beyond what they can bear ...' (1 Cor. 10:13), and by the Holy Spirit revives in them the assurance of their perseverance" (Art. 11; italics added).

MISSION VISION

Finally, the CD, like the HC, displays some awareness, unusual for early modern Protestantism, of the missional responsibility of the church. HC 86 concludes its answer to the question of why we should do good works with a reference to evangelism by deed or example: "so that by our godly living our neighbors may be won over to Christ." The CD expands this view of the church's outreach by highlighting the Word ministry of the church, even quoting in the first main point (Art. 3) Paul's famous "missionary" text in **Romans 10:14-15**:

"In order that people may be brought to faith, God mercifully sends messengers of this very joyful message to the people and at the time he wills. By this ministry people are called to repentance and faith in Christ crucified. For 'how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without someone preaching? And how shall they preach unless they have been sent?'"

At a time when Protestant attention was still focused largely on the continent of Europe, the CD calls the "messengers of this very joyful message" to conduct this ministry on a global scale: "This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be announced and declared without differentiation or discrimination to all nations and people, to whom God in his good pleasure sends the gospel" (II, Art. 5; italics added). This is because "it was God's will that Christ through the blood of the cross ... should effectively redeem [persons] from every people, tribe, nation, and language" (II, Art. 8). This universal "ministry of the gospel" serves as the means by which God brings his chosen ones to salvation (III/IV, Art. 10).

CONCLUSION

It is fitting that we are celebrating the 400th anniversary of the CD (2019) so soon after the 450th anniversary of the HC (2013) and the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Protestant Reformation (2017). All three are related. The HC summarized the Reformation doctrines of sin and grace, applied them in a personal and practical way, and provided a glimpse of the missional responsibility of the church. A century later the CD did the very same thing, often with greater theological and pastoral depth. Both confessions, therefore, not only point us back to an important part of our Reformed heritage but continue to speak the truths of Scripture into our lives today.



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COMMEMORATING THE 400TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SYNOD OF DORDT IN WORSHIP

KATHY SMITH

This issue of the Forum commemorates the 400th anniversary of the Synod of Dordt (November 1618 - May 1619) and offers a good opportunity to reflect on the importance of that event for establishing the doctrine and practices of the Reformed Protestant churches in northern Europe—and subsequently, around the globe.

The Synod of Dordt was a meeting of church leaders who gathered to guide the developing Reformed churches in their doctrine, and to confirm practices for worship and ministry in those churches. They met in the city of Dordrecht, the oldest city in the province of Holland in the Netherlands, in response to some theological arguments that had been going on for a number of years, promoted by the theologian Arminius and his followers. This group, known as the Remonstrants, questioned the new Reformed beliefs on five main points. The pushback to those points was strong by those who became known as the Counter Remonstrants and were “sticklers” for orthodoxy. The synod meeting was organized to bring these

groups together, but it actually was a trial of the Remonstrants. At the synod, the Remonstrants made their case, but were soon expelled both due to their views and the way they argued them.

The synod proceeded to establish its key points of doctrine in this controversy, responding to the five points of the Remonstrants with five points of their own which were called the “Canons of Dordt” and became one of the confessions of the Reformed churches. Unlike the comprehensive Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons were focused on specific points of doctrine, especially regarding election. But these doctrines brought comfort to believers in those days of persecution, and still do today in churches that hold to the Canons of Dordt, including the CRCNA and churches around the world.

In August 2018 I taught pastors in two different regions of India about Reformed polity, due to their interest in becoming a Christian Reformed denomination. They also wanted to know more about the Reformed confessions, and especially the Canons of Dordt. Their leaders asked me to lecture on T.U.L.I.P., and even gave a small cash prize to the pastor who could recite all five points, in English! Perhaps their interest related to the claim that the tulip actually originated in India.

Back to the Synod of Dordt, after settling those five points, they met a bit longer to deal with a number of practical matters for church life. The international delegates had left, so this was then considered a national synod for the delegates from the Dutch provinces, similar to national synods that had occurred in Dordrecht in 1578, in Middelburg in 1581, and in the Hague in 1586. The delegates addressed many topics about ministers and church governance, but also issues related to worship and liturgy, congregational songs, Sabbath observance, marriage and ordination forms, baptism, and a new translation of the Bible.

The synod affirmed a version of the Belgic Confession as a guide to doctrine—which was a full statement of belief, not responding to particular issues like the Canons. They also approved a Church Order for the governance and organization of the churches—which was approved by governmental authorities as well. It was not the first church order for the Reformed churches, but they hoped this revision would bring unity to the Reformed churches and be adopted in all the provinces. It did become standard in many Reformed churches, and also traveled to North America with Dutch Reformed immigrants. It was the Church Order of the first Reformed church in North America, begun in New York, which was originally called New Amsterdam. That church started the Reformed Church in America (RCA), which was established in 1628, only ten years after the Synod of Dordt, as the oldest Protestant denomination in North America. The RCA used the Church Order of Dordt until 1792, then translated it into English,

which, along with 73 explanatory articles, became the basis for their constitution.

The Christian Reformed Church in North America began in 1857 when a group of Dutch immigrants that had initially joined the RCA seceded from that denomination, finding it too assimilated to American culture. The CRC used the original Dordt Church Order until revising it in 1914 and translating it into English in 1920. But much of the original Dordt Church Order was retained even in a major revision in 1965. Since then, the CRC’s Church Order has been frequently revised, and adjustments are made almost every year in response to overtures from the churches as they continue to adjust to a changing North American context. But the Church Order of Dordt laid the theological basis for a lasting Reformed church structure, which continues to endure in the CRC’s Church Order today.

The Synod of Dordt had a lasting impact on Reformed worship not only through the articles of its Church Order, but also in other decisions about the practices of worship and sacraments. The Synod of Dordt approved a new Bible translation—the Staten-Bijbel, or States Bible, named that way because it was approved by the state when finished in 1637. They had been using the Liesveldt Bible, a literal translation of the German Luther Bible into Dutch. Johannes Bogerman, president of the Synod of Dordt, was a highly trained linguist and expert in the languages of the Bible, so he was part of the group assigned to produce a new translation of the original Hebrew and Greek. They didn’t

How can we remember and commemorate the Synod of Dordt in our worship today?

get support from the civil government until 1624 and by then, two of the six appointees had died. But the translation began in 1626, was completed in 1634, and approved in 1637.

The Synod also produced liturgical forms for ordination, baptism, Lord's Supper, marriage, excommunication and readmission, bringing unity to forms that had been developed in provincial synods before 1618, and mandating their use. An important mandate was that baptism was connected to the preaching of the Word, and not allowed in a separate service.

The synod required that the votum ("Our help is in the name of the Lord...") open the Lord's Day service, and the Aaronic benediction ("The Lord bless you and keep you...") conclude it. It ratified the sacramental forms and these liturgical texts were officially constituted as the Netherlands Liturgy and accorded the same authority as that of the doctrinal standards of the church, which now consisted in the Heidelberg Catechism (1563), the Belgic Confession (1561), and the Canons of the Synod of Dordt.

Thanks to the Church Order of Dordt, the Netherlands Reformed churches sang psalms and not hymns, a practice that also traveled to North America and was adopted by the RCA when it began in 1628 and was still the rule in 1857 when the Christian Reformed Church began. In the CRC, singing only psalms continued until the Church Order was revised and the first Psalter Hymnal was approved in 1934, which introduced the singing of hymns. That Psalter Hymnal was revised in 1957 and 1987, and a joint hymnal was created for the RCA and the CRC in 2014, bringing together the churches that had originally split apart.

The Heidelberg Catechism was re-endorsed by the Synod of Dordt, and parents were exhorted

to teach it in the home. It was required to be taught in the schools, and ministers were required to explain a portion of the catechism every Sunday afternoon in a second Sunday service for educational purposes. This trend continued in the Reformed churches for many years, and in the CRC's Church Order until 2010, when a revision focused on confessional preaching more generally without the required schedule of the Heidelberg's 52 Lord's Days per year. The second worship service required by the Church Order of Dordt is still "ordinarily" to be held in the CRC, though that practice is rapidly changing, with 75% of CRC churches holding only one service per Sunday today.

The Reformed liturgy was grounded in the Synod of Dordt but never approved for required use. On the penultimate day of the Synod—May 28, 1619—the contents of the Netherlands liturgy were listed, and that liturgy was to be revised and added to the confessional documents. However, after the synod adjourned on May 29, the committee assigned this task was so busy getting the Canons and the Acts of the Synod done, that they never finished the liturgy revision. The Canons and the revised Confession were published in 1619, and when the Acts finally appeared in 1620, the committee adjourned, without having provided the standardized Liturgy.

Contextual issues of the 16th century involved breaking away from superstitious practices of the medieval church, especially regarding funerals. In those times, families had little say in how a funeral would go, so the Dordt Church Order changed funerals from ecclesiastical functions to family matters. Following the example of Dordt, the CRC for many years considered funerals to be family affairs, while weddings were allowed to occur within a worship service. Only since 2010 has the CRC Church Order affirmed the congregation's role in funerals as well as weddings.

As we look back 400 years, how can we remember and commemorate the Synod of Dordt in our worship today? Here are a few suggestions:

A prayer of thanksgiving could be offered for the leadership of those attending in 1618-1619 and the ongoing impact of their efforts. This prayer could lead to other petitions, such as prayers for those who live out their faith under threat of persecution today, prayers for those who work to sort out important theological issues, and prayers of confession for the divisive arguments in the Church 400 years ago, some of which continue still today.

Worship could be planned to reflect an historic Dutch Reformed service, beginning with the votum and salutation from Psalm 124:8, "Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth." Genevan psalms could be sung, perhaps unaccompanied, as in that time. The service could proceed entirely a capella, with the organ or other instruments only used before and after the service. Following the Church Order of Dordt, the congregation could sing only psalms!

For the confession of faith, a selection from the Canons of Dordt would be appropriate, and the Bible reading could be taken from a Statenbijbel, and be read in Dutch, if possible. And preaching from the Canons would honor the Synod of Dordt—even though it was preaching from the Heidelberg Catechism that was required by the Church Order of Dordt.

If the service includes the sacraments, the minister could recognize that the way we practice baptism and the Lord's Supper in the Reformed churches today was largely fixed by

the Church Order of Dordt. And perhaps the minister could even use some of the words from the liturgical forms adopted at the Synod of Dordt and acknowledge that the Reformed liturgy was grounded in the Synod of Dordt.

In India last summer, I was asked how the T.U.L.I.P. teachings could be connected to worship, so I suggested the following:

- T** Total depravity > confession of sin
- U** Unconditional election > gratitude / assurance of pardon
- L** Limited atonement > Lord's Supper
- I** Irresistible grace > baptism / dedication of our lives to God
- P** Perseverance of the saints > blessing / depart to serve

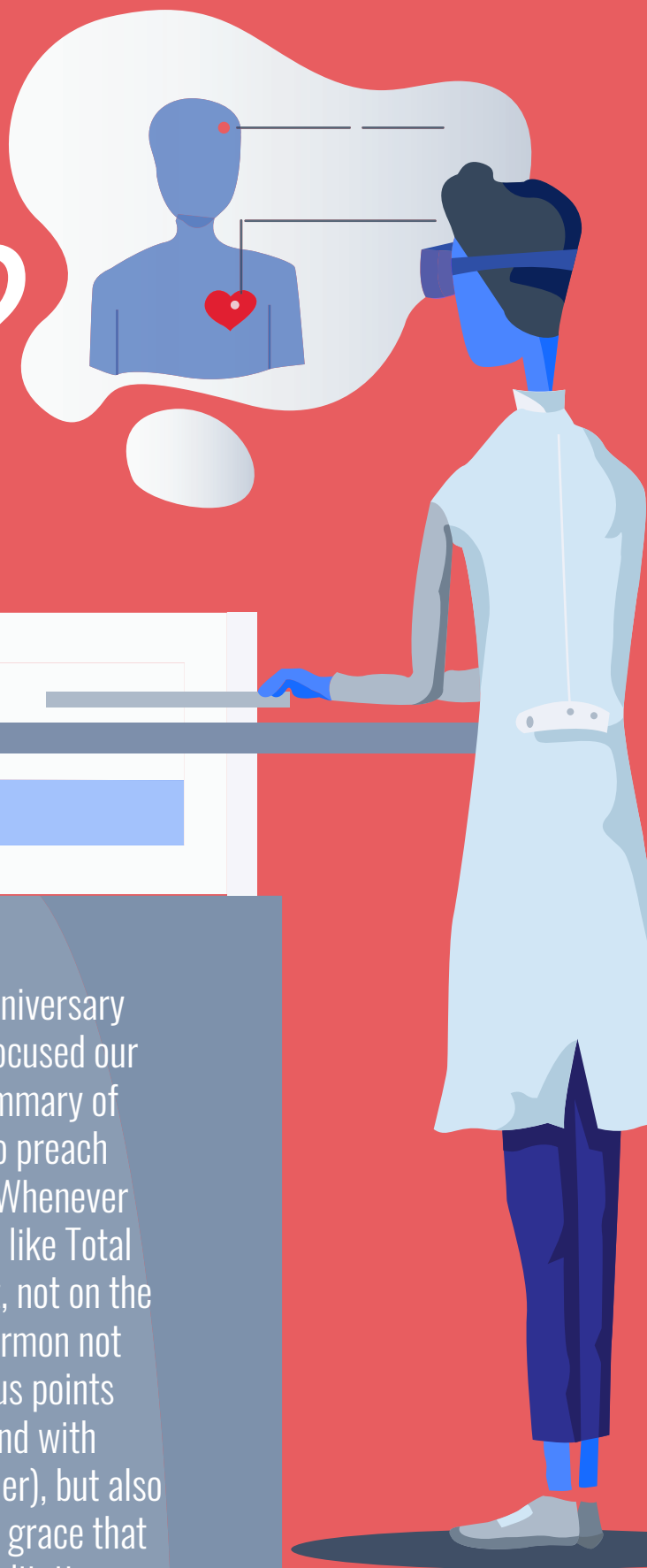
Maybe you can try some of these ideas out in your worship services!



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Christian Worship

HOW BAD IS IT, DOC?

STAN MAST



As part of our celebration of the 400th anniversary of the Canons of Dordt, Calvin Seminary focused our chapel services this fall on the famous summary of that document, the TULIP. I volunteered to preach on the ugliest petal of that lovely flower. Whenever I preach on doctrine, especially a hard one like Total Depravity, I am careful to preach on a text, not on the doctrine. And I do my best to make the sermon not only lively (for example, to illustrate various points I laid down flat on the stage, hobbled around with crutches, and climbed a very tall step ladder), but also enlivening, emphasizing the Good News of grace that overcomes Total Depravity. Here's my meditation on Ephesians 2:1-10, entitled "How Bad is It, Doc?"

This year we are celebrating the 400th anniversary of the Canons of Dordt, a document older than dirt, that many think should be left alone to molder in the grave. But here at Calvin Theological Seminary we want to remember, even revive it. Who better to talk about Total Depravity than me, maybe not older than dirt, but older than anyone else around here, and pretty dirty. In fact, I used to be totally depraved, but no more.

So, I'm glad to talk about Total Depravity. It's a dirty job, but someone has to do it. I mean that literally. Someone has to do it, because it answers a question to which all of us want the right answer. How bad is it, Doc? When you go to the doctor, you want the truth. Our health, our life depends on an accurate diagnosis of our condition.

Most Christians agree that the human race has fallen into sin, but there's significant disagreement about the effects of that fall. How bad are the damages from the fall? Here's a graphic way to think about three very different answers to the question, "How bad is it, Doc?" You might say that the fall was so severe that it left us dead. (Here I'm lying on the stage.) We're alive physically, but dead spiritually, sort of like zombies, the living dead. Left to ourselves, every

*“When you go to the doctor,
you want the truth.”*

human being is like a corpse, unable to move spiritually, incapable of doing the very things we must do to be saved.

Or you might say that the fall was bad, but it didn't kill us. (Here I hobble around the stage with crutches.) It left us crippled. We're like a person with a badly sprained knee who needs crutches. With some help, we are able to do what we must do to be saved. Or you might say that we haven't really fallen at all, so we don't need to be saved. (Here I climb up the stepladder.) We are simply climbing

the ladder to goodness in our own strength, getting better and better as the human race evolves into a higher order of being.

What does the Word of God say about the condition of the human race: corpses, cripples, or climbers? I think the text in Ephesians 2 is very clear, don't you? "As for you, you were dead in your trespasses and sins...." Does Paul mean that, apart from Christ, we are all just as bad as we can possibly be? No, that's not what he says. And that's not what Total Depravity means. We do not believe that everyone is totally rotten, doing only terrible things.

Here's how he describes being dead in sin: "You were dead in your sins, in which you used to live...." "In which" refers to sin as the dominating factor in life. Sin is the sphere or realm in which people live. Think of a prison cell, or a biosphere, an enclosed dome in which people live all day every day, so that everything they think and say and do is conditioned by the biosphere. Total depravity means that sin is the biosphere in which all humans live apart from Christ. Like the residents of a biosphere, they are so used to it that they aren't even aware of it.

Further, says Paul, "you were dead in your sins, in which you once lived, when you followed the ways of the world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air." Being dead in sin means that people follow the world and the devil as their natural masters. In the next verse, Paul adds another of those masters, which he calls "the cravings of our sinful nature," or as older translations put it, "the flesh." People willingly follow the Unholy Trinity of the world, the flesh and the devil.

Paul's gloomy analysis of the human condition ends with this statement: "Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath." Well, of course. How could we be anything else when God is as holy as God is? If we willingly follow the Unholy Trinity, how could the Holy Trinity be anything other than angry with us?

That's what you'd think, but God had other thoughts. We were all dead people walking under the wrath of God, but God did a miracle. "Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in our transgressions—by grace you have been saved." That's why Paul used all those past tenses when he described these Ephesians. You were dead in your sins, but now you are alive with Christ. You were conditioned by sin in all that you did, but now you are conditioned by the Spirit of God in all that you do. You were a slave to sin, but now you are set free by Jesus Christ. You were objects of God's wrath, but now you are the apple of his eye. You were nothing but a sinner, but now you are a child of God who sometimes sins. You were totally depraved, but now you are totally redeemed.

That good news does two things to us: it makes us flourish as human beings and it gives us hope for all the corpses we know. Calvinists who believe in this TULIP should be the most upbeat and joyful people in the world, because we know that as dark and desperate as the human situation is, God does miracles in his grace. He's done them to us, or we wouldn't be here as believers in Christ.

*“Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in our transgressions—
by grace you have been saved.”*

Now we can flourish as human beings. In Christ we can do what God calls us to do. Life is filled with incredible opportunities to live the blessed way God outlines in his Word. In fact, verse 10 says that God is now remaking us into the fantastic works of art, the good creations he always intended.

That should fill us with immense gratitude. We've been raised from the dead; we can spend the rest of our days celebrating our new life in Christ—not as mournful sinners, but as joyful saints. Sure, we should still walk the straight path that leads to life, not trudging like a prisoner on a death march. Rather, we race down the line like a grateful runner who knows the victory has already been won.

Second, this hard truth of Total Depravity and the good news of God's life-giving grace fill us with hope for others. We all know people who are living in sin, enslaved to the Unholy Trinity, and experiencing the wrath of God in their lives. They are our family, our friends, our church members. We try to talk to them, we worry about them and pray for them, but we wonder how they can ever turn their lives around and become followers of Christ.

Here's the good news of grace: What we cannot do and what they cannot do, God can do. He did it for you. He's done it for billions of others. There is living hope for those who seem hopelessly dead in sin. Their total depravity is no match for God's sovereign grace.

Once upon a time there was a man who hated the Church, tried to wipe it off the face of the earth. He was totally depraved, but he didn't know it. He thought he was a totally righteous agent of God's kingdom. But as he travelled to a distant city to eradicate another cancer cell of Christians, he was knocked off his horse by a blinding light and a thunderous voice, assaulted by the sovereign grace of God, arrested by the Lord Jesus, struck blind and made alive. His friends called him Saul. We call him Paul. For the rest of his life he said, I was dead in sin, but God made me alive. "Amazing love, how can it be, that you my Lord, should die for me." (The chapel roof lifted as we closed with this song.)



STAN MAST
Adjunct Professor of Preaching

MARY VANDEN BERG AWARDED HENRY INSTITUTE RESEARCH GRANT



Mary Vanden Berg, Professor of Systematic Theology at Calvin Seminary, was a recent research grant recipient to the Creation Project, part of the Henry Center at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Chicago, IL. The Creation Project aims to “catalyze a field of study around the doctrine of creation that is faithful to Scripture and informed by contemporary scientific research.” Vanden Berg spent the 2018 Fall Semester at the Henry Center.

Recently, Vanden Berg spoke with Scott Hoezee, Director of the Center for Excellence in Preaching at Calvin Seminary, about her time at the Creation Project. Below is a summary of their conversation:

Hoezee began by asking Vanden Berg about her interest in questions of faith and science. Vanden Berg noted that her love of science goes back to her childhood. As an adult, when she became interested in theology, she saw an opportunity to combine her love of science with her love of theology. She began exploring questions at the intersection of these two disciplines.

Hoezee pointed out that the 2019-20 theme of the Creation Project was theological anthropology. He wondered about Vanden Berg’s interest in that theme and how the work that she did at the Henry Center related to that theme.

Vanden Berg’s intent, as she described it, was to explore humans as the image of God from a Reformed perspective. As she began to read widely on the topic, she found herself drawn to Thomas Aquinas’s “Treatise on Man” in his magisterial work, the *Summa Theologia*. She realized that Aquinas has a really holistic understanding of what humans are. And while he does deal with the image of God, as do most theologians, he understands humans in terms of the big package rather than this one little piece. As a result, Vanden Berg shifted from looking

rather narrowly at the image of God, to the broader question of what makes humans unique.

It was exactly at this point, as Vanden Berg notes, that science came more fully into the picture. In part, this is because some scientists suggest that humans aren’t really that unique at all. For example, some scientists suggest that humans are just another animal that walks on two legs instead of four; a tailless monkey or hairless ape. Working off of what she thinks is a basic instinct that humans are unique, Vanden Berg set out to see if and how humans actually are unique by looking at Scripture, theology, and modern science. Does Scripture teach that humans are unique? If so, how should that be understood in light of modern science, especially the fields of paleontology and evolution?

Hoezee then shifted to the more directly theological question concerning the two books of revelation. Vanden Berg expressed some frustration with ongoing misunderstanding of that particular teaching. She noted first of all her affirmation of the basic idea of the unity of knowledge, the notion that all truth is God’s truth. But she went on to explain the importance

understanding exactly what we are talking about when we talk about the “two books” of revelation. The key word is “revelation.”

“The idea behind revelation,” stated Vanden Berg, “is that apart from God making himself known to us, we cannot know God”. Furthermore, God has made himself known to us in two ways: in creation and in Scripture. So when Calvin, in Book I of the *Institutes of Christian Religion*, or Guido de Bres, in the *Belgic Confession*, discuss the two books, they are not talking about how we come to know the structure of a cell or some other scientific knowledge. They are referring to how we come to know God as Article 2 of the *Belgic Confession’s* title makes clear. So the question with respect to the two books of revelation is not what can we know in general from these two sources, but what can we know about God, that is, about “his eternal power and his divinity.”

The overarching point in understanding God’s revelation in two ways or two books is to remind us that while we can come to know something about God from the creation, we will inevitably,



because of sin, distort that knowledge and worship the creature in place of the Creator, as Paul makes clear in *Romans 1*. Thus the need for the second book which Calvin describes as “spectacles.” Through these spectacles, we can come to properly see and ponder “the invisible things of God” in creation. The proper response to that knowledge of God is worship. Through the



spectacles of Scripture, you can look at creation, whether you are in the lab or on a hike, and say, “Look at this amazing world! Imagine the marvelous God who made this.”

As far as whether there is concordance between Scripture and various scientific findings, Vanden Berg was skeptical. She suggested that while there may be ultimate concordance, given that all truth is God’s truth, there is also a lot of mystery in this life between how we see what science is telling us – which is very good – and how we understand Scripture. This could be, she suggested, because they have different purposes. The job of science is not to teach us about God. It is to help us understand the natural world. Scripture’s sole purpose is to teach us about God and the relationship of God and humans in this world, questions that science is not equipped to address.

So what are Vanden Berg’s plans going forward? This fall, she will team-teach a course on science and theology with retired Calvin College Geology Professor, Dr. Ralph Stearley. She also hopes to complete her work on human uniqueness and publish a book on that topic.



To listen to the full conversation, visit theresoundpodcast.com. To learn more about the work of the Creation Project at the Henry Center, visit <https://henrycenter.tiu.edu/creation-project>

The idea behind revelation, is that apart from God making himself known to us, we cannot know God

FACULTY NEWS

NEW BOOKS BY GARY BURGE



Gary Burge, Visiting Professor of New Testament, is working on two books, scheduled to be released later this year. Below, Burge describes these upcoming publications:

The New Testament in Seven Sentences: “This book, being released by Intersity Press, is geared towards students and advanced laity. It outlines seven

great ideas presented in the New Testament, which every thoughtful Christian should master.”

Practical Questions Students Ask: “About four years ago, a friend (Dr. David Lauber) and I edited a book that outlined the major theological questions that always seem to come up in class. We titled it *Theology Questions Everyone Asks*. Students, laity, and pastors found it helpful and it is used by adult education classes. This second book uses the same format that addresses the personal questions students always seem to bring to us in private (e.g. vocation, marriage, wealth, community). It will likely be used as an orientation volume for college students in the U.S. that should be published in late summer or early fall.”

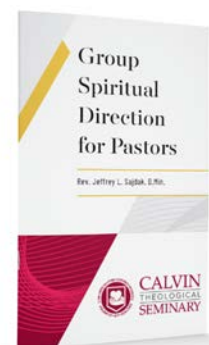
SABBATICAL IN THE NETHERLANDS

Cory Willson, the Jake and Betsy Tuls Assistant Professor of Missiology and Missional Ministry at Calvin Seminary, spent the 2018 Fall Semester on sabbatical. This change in schedule allowed him to travel to the Theological University in Kampen, Netherlands for six weeks as a visiting

scholar. His full schedule included guest lecturing at the university, presenting a paper at the Neo-Calvinism and Europe Conference in Belgium, and participating in the retirement celebration of Cornelis van der Kooi from the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Netherlands. In addition, Willson's time in the Netherlands included working on a manuscript for an upcoming book for Baker Academic, focused on work, worship, and missions.

DEAN SAJDAK PENS GROUP SPIRITUAL DIRECTION BOOKLET

While pastoring in Iowa, Calvin Seminary's Dean of Students, Jeff Sajdak, knew he and his colleagues needed supportive companions in order to flourish in ministry. Sajdak gathered monthly with seven colleagues to do spiritual direction together. The result was greater joy in ministry, clearer discernment, and healthier ministry practice. Sajdak's new booklet, **Group Spiritual Direction for Pastors** (based on his D.Min thesis project) provides guidance for pastors and others to nurture spiritual companionship. It's available as a free download on the Christian Reformed Church Pastors' Spiritual Vitality Toolkit at www.crcna.org/spe/pastors-spiritual-vitality-toolkit



NEW FACES

CHRIS DINH CONTROLLER

I was born and raised in Lansing, Michigan where I spent the first 18 years of my life. My family and I have spent a lot of time in and around west Michigan as Grand Rapids is the first place my family landed after leaving Vietnam in the late 1970s. I attended Western Michigan University where I studied accounting as an undergraduate and then returned for a master's in business. Shortly thereafter, I moved to Ann Arbor and began working.



While working and living in Ann Arbor, I met my wife and we served faithfully together at a church for about 5 years. While serving at this church, my wife and I were given the opportunity to move to Grand Rapids to help with a church plant. While we were entirely content staying where we were at, we felt God calling us to come to Grand Rapids and help build His Kingdom.

We are excited to be here and enjoy all the things that Grand Rapids has to offer. I am so happy to have found Calvin Theological Seminary, and I cannot wait to build relationships with those of you in and around the seminary.

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PARTNERING TOGETHER



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Christian Schools International (CSI) and Calvin Theological Seminary are very excited to announce that they are partnering together to offer Christian school Bible teachers an amazing opportunity.

Available summer 2019, teachers will be able to enroll in an online program at Calvin Theological Seminary for a graduate certificate in Bible instruction. The fully online, 15-credit program has courses that have been carefully selected with the K-12 Christian school Bible teacher in mind. Additionally, with year-round courses available, including summer options, and the opportunity for scholarships, the certificate program is designed to fit the full lives of teachers. This program is the result of very intentional discussions and feedback CSI has been having with administrators and Bible teachers in their member schools.

Teacher training varies among educational institutions, and not all teachers in a Christian school come from a Christian college or have the same training in biblical studies. Yet, most Christian schools require and/or expect a strong knowledge of biblical worldview and the Bible to be incorporated into their teaching.

Rachael Heyboer, Director of Product Development at CSI, states the goal of the partnership in this way: "What this certificate

provides is an ability to give the support and additional knowledge base to already amazing teachers of faith that boosts their instruction to the next level and helps strengthen the Christian school community to meet their mission and values as they serve the next generation of Christ followers."

Aaron Einfeld, Director of Admissions and Enrollment Management at Calvin Seminary agrees. "We are thrilled to support Bible teachers in their sacred task of encouraging vibrant faith development in their students," says Einfeld. "A core part of our mission has always been to equip students with the ability to read, interpret, and apply the Bible to living a Christian life. Our faculty have committed their lives to rigorous study of the Bible. We anticipate that this new certificate program will bring vibrancy to the lives of Bible teachers as well as their students."

For more information on the program and partnership, including how to apply, visit www.calvinseminary.edu/csi.

FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF JESUS:

Israel & Jordan

Follow in the footsteps of Jesus during the day and learn more about Jesus during study sessions at night!

Travel to New Testament sites connected with Jesus' life: Bethlehem, Nazareth, Herod the Great's harbor in Caesarea, Capernaum, Bethsaida, Caesarea Philippi, and the major biblical sites in Jerusalem. Other exciting activities include a boat ride on the Sea of Galilee, floating in the Dead Sea, and visits to Masada, Qumran,



Capernaum

OCTOBER 10 - 22, 2019

and the Herodium. This tour also uniquely involves key sites in Jordan: Bethany, Machaerus, Mount Nebo, and the amazing city of Petra. Most days conclude with an evening study session that involves an inspirational lesson about Jesus' life and ministry or the background of the NT.

Join host Jeff Weima, professor of New Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary and leading biblical scholar, for this life-impacting tour!

For more information, contact Dr. Jeffrey A. D. Weima
616-328-3110 | weimje@calvinseminary.edu
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AVAILABLE CONFERENCES & LECTURES

Calvin Seminary aims to create an innovative learning environment, in part by supplementing the learning happening in the classroom with other events, such as guest lectures and conferences. These events are not only for current students, but also serve as a resource for alumni, church leaders, and any other stakeholder interested in the life of the church and in theological education. These events are often recorded and are made available at www.calvinseminary.edu. See the list below to get a taste of what these events cover. Unless noted, all these events are available to watch at www.calvinseminary.edu/news.



THE STOB LECTURE COLLOQUIUM WITH WILLIE JENNINGS

JANUARY 2019

Jennings is the Associate Professor of Systematic Theology and Africana Studies at Yale University. He was joined by Calvin Seminary Professor Danjuma Gibson to discuss growing up in Grand Rapids, his journey and interest in theological education, and his insight on theology, race, and the future of seminary education.

THE SYMPOSIUM ON WORSHIP

JANUARY 2019

This annual conference is hosted by the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship (CICW) and brings a large number of attendees from a variety of denominations to the campus of Calvin Seminary and College. While not available on Calvin Seminary's website, the Institute releases materials from the conference each year, including recordings of lectures and panel conversation. These materials can be found on the CICW resource webpage: www.worship.calvin.edu/resources.



A CONVERSATION WITH GEORGE MARSDEN

MARCH 2019

In recognition of his 80th birthday, Calvin Seminary hosted George Marsden, Professor of History Emeritus at Notre Dame and the Distinguished Scholar in the History of Christianity here at Calvin Seminary. In his engaging conversation with James Bratt, Professor of History Emeritus at Calvin College and adjunct professor at Calvin Seminary, Marsden covers a variety of areas. His career and interests span an important moment in the North American Church.



THE INAUGURAL VAN ZANTEN LECTURE SERIES

APRIL 2019

This new lecture series recognizes the ministry of Rev. Tony and Donna Van Zanten and their commitment to raising up leaders for the urban church. Rev. Emmett Harrison (Oakdale Park Christian Reformed in Grand Rapids) moderated a conversation with Rev. John Algera (recently retired from Madison CRC in Paterson, NJ) and Rev. David Beelen (Madison Square in Grand Rapids, MI). Beelen and Algera offered reflections on what they've learned in their rich and storied careers in urban ministry and what they see as opportunities and challenges of the future.



DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI: CHAPLIN INSOON HOAGLAND

Chaplain InSoon Hoagland was born in Suncheon, Junnam Providence, South Korea. She holds an associate degree as a clinical technician and national board-certified medical technologist. With the goal of furthering her studies, Hoagland came to America in 1989.



Over the years, Hoagland has earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology from Trinity Christian College (Palos Heights, IL), a Master of Divinity degree from Calvin Theological Seminary, and a Master of Arts degree in psychology and counseling, with a specialty in marriage and family therapy, from the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor (Belton, TX). She is a certified pastoral counselor and clinical chaplain.

Currently, Hoagland is working on her doctoral degree in counselor education and supervision at Kansas State University. Hoagland is also working part time as a graduate research assistant at the National Academic Advising Association Center for Research at KSU. She owns her own private practice, specializing in marriage and family therapy, and loves to work with children's mental health issues while she pursues her doctoral degree. Hoagland is a certified instructor for prevention and relationship enhancement in the military and also instructs a partner program for singles. Additionally, Hoagland is a licensed marriage and family therapist, licensed clinical marriage and family therapist, and a

clinical fellow for the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy.

The Christian Reformed Church in North America endorses Chaplain Hoagland; Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church (Grand Rapids, MI) is Hoagland's calling church. She is currently serving as a committee member of the Christian Reformed Church's Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee and is also a chaplaincy and care advisory committee member.

Hoagland was commissioned as 2nd Lieutenant in April 1996 and entered the active Army chaplaincy in January 1998 at Fort Jackson, South Carolina while she was attending Calvin Theological Seminary. Her past assignments include: battalion chaplain, 2nd Field Artillery BN, Fort Sill, OK; 1-40th Field Artillery BN, Fort Sill OK (Jan 1999 - June 2001); 302nd Forward Support BN, Camp Casey, South Korea (June 2001 - June 2002); 1-4 Aviation Regiment, Fort Hood, TX (July 2002 - April 2004) and deployed to Iraq for 12 months (March 2003 - April 2004); Squadron Chaplain, 1-6th Aviation Squadron, Fort Hood, TX; battalion chaplain (2004 - 2005), 303rd Military

Intelligence BN, West Fort Hood, TX (2005); the Chaplain Captain Career Course at Fort Jackson, SC; battalion chaplain (2006), 215th Combat Support Battalion, Fort Hood, TX and deployed to Iraq for 14 months (Oct 2006 - Nov 2007); Fort Hood, TX for Army Advanced Civilian schooling specializing in family life chaplaincy (May 2008 - Aug 2009); Division Family Life Chaplain, 2nd Infantry Division, Camp Red Cloud, South Korea (Sep 2009 - May 2012); brigade chaplain, 2nd Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB), Camp Humphreys, South Korea (June 2012 - Aug 2014); Pastoral Care Coordinator/Chaplain Resource Manager, US Army Garrison (USAG) Fort Leavenworth, KS (Sep 2014 - Feb 2018).

Hoagland's awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal (3 Oak Leaf Clusters), Army Commendation Medal (5 Oak Leaf Clusters), Army Achievement Medal (3 Oak Leaf Clusters), National Defense Service Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal Campaign Stars (2 Oak Leaf Clusters), Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Korea Defense Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, and Overseas Service Ribbon (5).

She has been married to Daniel Hoagland for 14 years, and they have a 13-year-old son, Elijah, who loves math, music, singing, playing musical instruments, practicing Taekwondo, and playing chess.

Chaplain Hoagland offers some words of encouragement to the 2019 graduates:

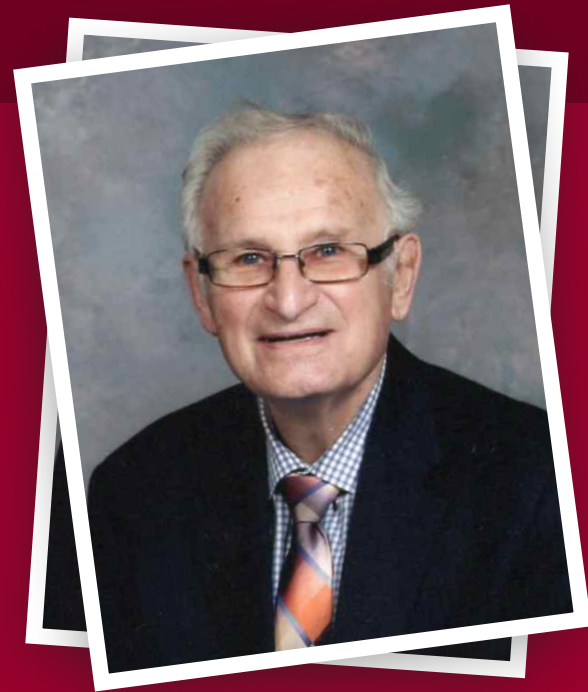
1. Remember what the Lord requires of you as you live out your calling.

*“He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.
And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8)*

2. Be all you can be according to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5: 1-11) and know that your reward is in heaven. Be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.
3. Be the imitators of Jesus Christ, our Risen Lord.

May God bless you with His love, protection, and guidance as you live out your calling!

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI:
ARIE G. VAN EEK



Born the oldest of seven children, baptized by pastor and teacher Dr. S.U. Zuidema, raised in rural poverty under Nazi oppression in the Netherlands, I was a fly on the wall in weekly family discussions of Reformed sermons carrying double Bible-based meanings of faith community and discrete political resistance. Early high school tutoring in my uncle's tri-stall garage whetted my appetite for learning, for languages, and for civic pride.

All of this was interrupted by emigration to Canada. But my parents were very gracious in allowing two years of high school. My pastor, home missionary Adam Persenaire, opened in me a suppressed desire for college studies and preparation for bilingual pastoral leadership among post-war immigrant congregations. To seven years at Calvin College and Seminary, I added a year at Westminster – to further study Hebrew, Greek, and biblical theology.

After my ordination in 1958, my faithful and supportive wife Ellen (Ploegstra) and I, along with our two children, moved to Exeter, Ontario. Among many new Canadian

congregations, we were moved to strengthen the growing congregations of Fort William (now Thunder Bay), First Calgary, and Kildonan Winnipeg, adding three more children along the way.

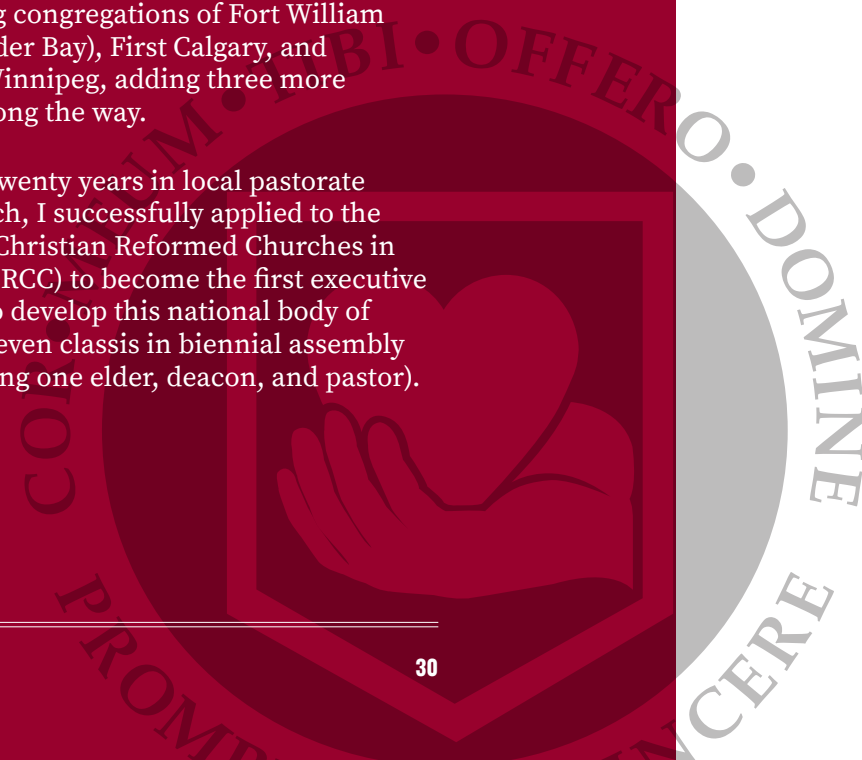
Following twenty years in local pastorate and outreach, I successfully applied to the Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC) to become the first executive secretary to develop this national body of Canada's eleven classis in biennial assembly (each sending one elder, deacon, and pastor).

My job description allowed for service and creative imagination in developing the following church-supported ministries (with CCRCC-appointed supervisory committees sustaining each):

- The Interchurch Relations Committee met twice a year with representatives from Evangelical Lutheran, Presbyterian, Baptist, Reformed, and Mennonite denominations to help other Canadian denominations know our creedal base and witness.
- The Committee for Contact with the government sought to develop biblical witness to current public issues.
- The Refugee Committee answered our government's invitation to sign up for a national "private" refugee sponsorship program. 40 years since inception, CRC congregations have settled some 7,000 new Canadians with benefits for all involved.
- The First Nations Ministries Committee reached out to Canada's First Nations people trying to live in our cities. Urban spiritual programs have continued under maturing native leadership in Winnipeg, Regina, and Edmonton.
- Vision Television: When Canadian broadcast services had refused the last Christian broadcast program, the CCRCC joined major denominations in securing a broadcast license for the faith-based network, "Vision."
- Worldwide Christian Schools: Following through on mission tours to several Central American countries, I joined "Edu-Deo" (formerly, Worldwide Christian Schools) in teaching and promoting Christian Education in Guatemala, Honduras, the Dominican Republic, and several African countries.
- With no protection in law for the unborn, Beginnings Family Services was started to fill a vital need. Beginnings just marked 30 years of ministry of counselling with prospective and adoptive parents of the unborn. Last year alone, this ministry placed 17 newborns in new families across Canada, and supported countless others who chose to raise their child. Since retiring, I support this ministry as I am able and have also continued to assist Crossroads Bible Studies among prisoners.

Outstanding in my memories, my annual report to Synod was "not debatable" – hence this stymied any engagement on initiatives reported.

To Calvin Seminary's aspiring pastors, I ask: Are you called to carry forward God's Word? Don't stand in its way. Convey that you care – as one humble recipient among them. Have you been awed and exhorted by the possibilities the first hearers embraced? Exegete! Insist on a Christo-centric pulpit. Believe in the work of the Holy Spirit – in and through you. Let your pastoral visits inform your pulpit message. Out of the seminary classroom, apply what you shared while in it. And in everything you do, every breath you draw, Soli Deo Gloria!



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