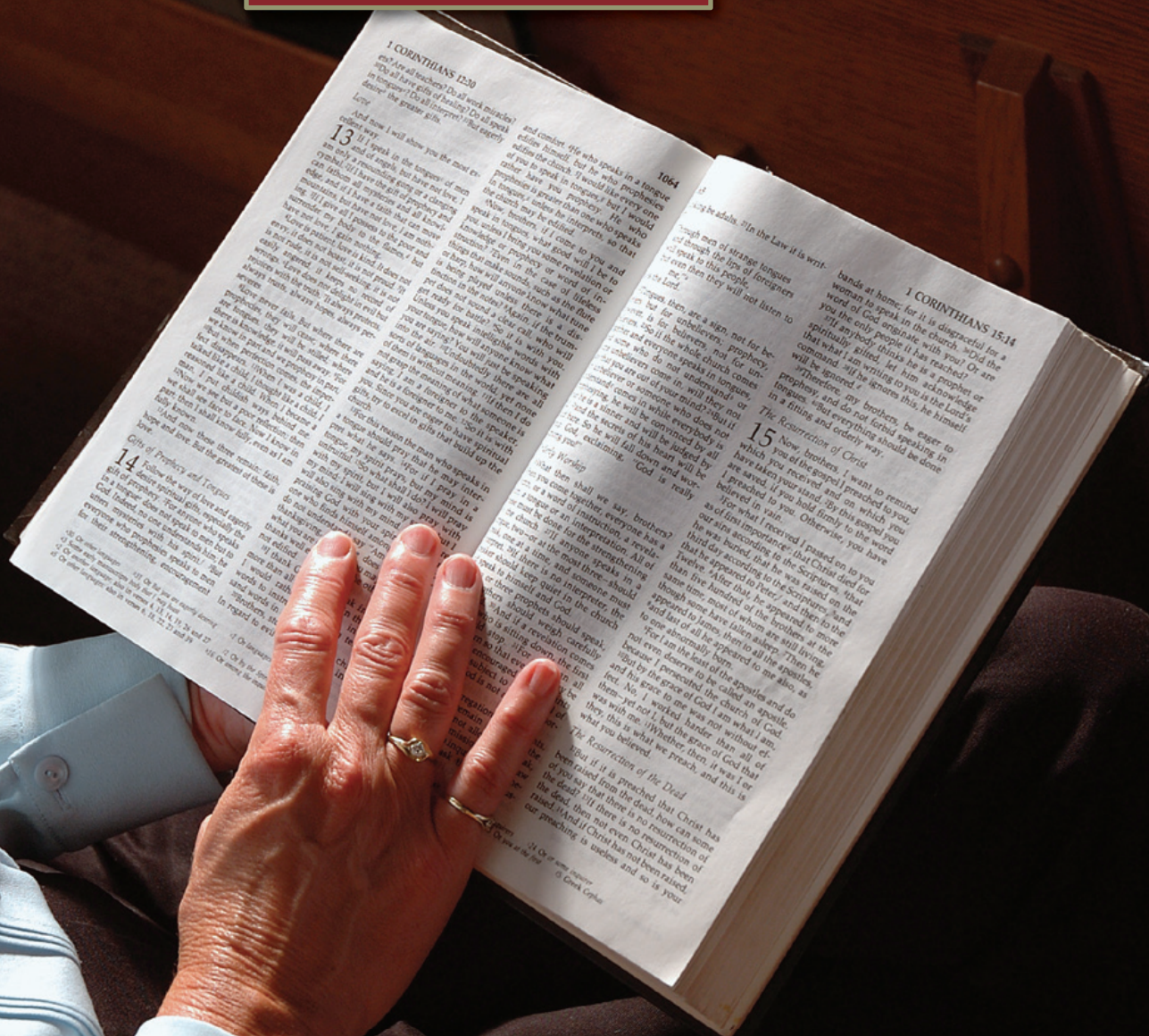


CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

# FORUM

FALL 2004



## Handling the Bible with Care



# FORUM

Providing Theological Leadership  
for the Church

Volume 11, Number 3  
Fall 2004

## REFLECTIONS ON HANDLING THE BIBLE WITH CARE

3

"Correctly Handling  
the Word of Truth"

by Jeffrey A. D. Weima

6

Inviting the Prophets  
Back to Church

by Michael J. Williams

8

*Faculty Interview:*

Becoming People of the Book

11

An Unforgettable Chapel

by Bob Rudesill

12

Reading the Bible with the Experts

by Lugene Schemper

## DEPARTMENTS

Preaching and Worship . . . . .13

Continuing Education . . . . .14

News . . . . .15

*Scripture references are from the  
New International Version.*

*Cover photo location:  
Fuller Avenue Christian Reformed Church  
Photo by Paul Stoub*

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](http://www.calvinseminary.edu)  
Editorial Committee: Lugene Schemper, Editor;  
Mariano Avila, John Bolt, Duane Kelderman,  
Kathy Smith  
Designer: Paul Stoub, Stoub Graphics  
© 2004 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](mailto:forum@calvinseminary.edu)



## from the president

Cornelius Plantinga, Jr.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Bible is by all accounts the most important book in Western civilization. Even people who think it's a jumble of myths must still acknowledge that the Bible towers over the cultural landscape, casting bright shadows over Western art, music, civil law, politics, education, even the movies. Much of Western literature is a mystery to readers ignorant of the Bible. I recall that during my junior year in college at Yale University (my "junior year abroad" from Calvin College) I was in a literature class with twenty-five or thirty Yale students. The discussion turned to a line in the poetry of George Herbert, that godly singer of the English language. The professor pointed to a place where Herbert mentions "faith, hope, and love, these three" and asked if anybody in class knew the reference. No hands went up. Nobody knew. And when, adjusting my halo, I offered author, chapter, and verse, the other members of the class looked at me as if I had just stated the average gestation period of the three-toed sloth.

During the height of American church membership and church attendance (the 1950s), one Gallup poll showed that over 80 percent of adult Americans believed the Bible to be "the revealed Word of God" instead of just "a great piece of literature." "Yet," as Will Herberg reports, "when these same Americans were asked to give the 'names of the first four gospels,' 53 percent could not name even one."

I know that readers of the *Forum* can do better. We all understand that the Bible is the Word of God and will have no authority in the church unless we read it, sing it, pray it, even perform it. Believing that the word of God has power "to kill and to make alive," believing that it can make us not just wise, but "wise for salvation," we send our preachers to The Book every week to dig up its treasure and bring it back to us.

In this issue, wise colleagues help us see into the Bible part of the way down to its depths.

Grace and peace.

*Neal*

Neal Plantinga

# REFLECTIONS

REFLECTIONS ON HANDLING THE BIBLE WITH CARE

## "Correctly Handling the Word of Truth" (2 Tim. 2:15)

### The Importance of Careful Interpretation of the Bible

**W**hy do ministers have to spend so many years learning how to interpret the Bible? Especially when there are so many churches looking for a pastor, aren't we hindering people from a calling to ministry by requiring them to study the Scriptures for three or more years at seminary? Someone might well protest, "A person doesn't need to go to seminary to understand the Bible. All you have to do is simply read it and do what it says!"

#### *The Perspicuity of Scripture*

There is, of course, some truth to this objection. As Reformed Christians, we believe in the *perspicuity* of Scripture, that is, the "clearness" of the Bible. In contrast to the medieval Roman Catholic Church which entrusted the interpretation of the Bible only to educated priests, the Reformers emphasized the clearness of Scripture's teachings such that all believers, not just those trained for the ministry, could read and understand God's Word.

These same Reformers, however, did not claim that *everything* in the Bible was clear and easy to understand. They knew well what Peter said about Paul's letters: "There are some things in them that are hard to understand" (2 Pet. 3:16). They also remem-

bered the story of the Ethiopian eunuch who was reading from the Old Testament and, when asked by Philip if he understood what he was reading, replied: "How can I unless someone explains it to me?" (Acts 8:31).

Therefore, when the Reformers talked about the perspicuity of Scripture, they used this term in a limited sense of referring to those teachings in the Bible that are essential for salvation. In other words, not everything in the Bible is clear and easy to understand—only those things that are "needed in this life for God's glory and the salvation of his own" (Belgic Confession, Article 2). Or as another Reformed confession puts it: "All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all"; the perspicuity of

by Jeffrey  
A. D. Weima  
Professor of New  
Testament



the Bible is limited to "those things which are necessary to be known, believed and observed for salvation" (Westminster Confession, Ch. 1, Art. 7).

On the one hand, this means that one doesn't have to go to seminary to be a Christian and to understand those teachings of the Bible that are indispensable for salvation. On the other hand, however, this means that the Bible does contain many

things that are not easy to understand and consequently require some serious study. This is hardly surprising, given the fact that Scripture was originally written in a different language (Hebrew and Greek), different time period (ancient), and different culture (middle-eastern) than our own. This is why John Calvin, who argued vehemently for the perspicuity of Scripture, nevertheless also claimed: "We must not have the foolish arrogance of thinking we shall easily understand everything we hear or read [in the Bible]" (sermon on 1 Tim. 3:8-10). It is crucial, therefore, that pastors—those who have a strategic role in the proclamation and interpretation of God's Word—be trained in such a way that they "correctly handle the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

*The Bible does contain many things that are not easy to understand and consequently require some serious study.*



**'Correctly Handling...'****The Rapture: A Biblical teaching?**

This command of Paul to Timothy implies that pastors can “handle the word of truth” in an *incorrect* way. There are, sadly, many examples of Christian leaders who have misinterpreted God’s Word and made the Bible say things that its original authors never intended. Such misreadings of Scripture are often well intentioned but typically occur because of a failure to understand and follow some basic principles of interpretation.

Take, for example, the subject of Christ’s second coming as discussed in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Paul’s words that “we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (4:17) are interpreted by some to refer to the “rapture.” This is the idea that Jesus will have a two-stage return: first, a secret coming in which all Christians will suddenly disappear when they are raptured up to heaven; then, after a seven-year period of tribulation on earth for those who are left behind, a public coming in which all these raptured Christians will return with Jesus to earth for his 1,000-year millennial reign. This belief is formally known as “Premillennial Dispensationalism” and has been popularized most recently by the twelve-volume *Left Behind* series that has sold a staggering 62 million copies so far.

While this belief in the rapture is certainly popular, it does not correctly reflect the teaching of Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. This becomes clear when we follow a Reformed approach to Scripture and look at this passage from four different perspectives: historical, literary, grammatical, and theological.

**Four Approaches to Scripture**

**Historical** — First, we approach this passage from a *historical* perspective. The Bible, of course, did not fall down from heaven in the King James Version, maps and concordances included. Instead, God chose to reveal himself and his work of redemption in specific historical events. For understanding 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, this means looking at the Thessalonian Christians and

the particular problem that Paul is trying to address in his letter to them. The Thessalonians were grieving over the fate of their fellow Christians who had died before Jesus’ second coming (4:13). More specifically, Paul’s emphatic claims that living believers “will *certainly not precede* those who have fallen asleep” (4:15b) and that “the dead in Christ will rise *first*” (4:16b) suggest that the Thessalonian church feared that deceased believers would not participate fully in the glory of Christ’s return and would be at some kind of disadvantage compared to those who are still alive on that day.

This understanding of the historical context of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 reveals that Paul’s primary purpose here is to *comfort* rather than to *predict*. In other words, it is dangerous to approach this text merely as a

*While this belief in the rapture is certainly popular, it does not correctly reflect the teaching of Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.*

blueprint to foretell the future without recognizing its greater goal of providing pastoral care to a grieving congregation. The relevance of this passage for us today has less to do with predicting what will yet happen than with comforting those who are grieving the death of loved ones. The contemporary application of Paul’s words belongs, not in the bookstore as part of an imaginative twelve-volume series about what will happen in the end times, but in the funeral home or at the graveyard where it provides rich words of comfort about the hope that believers have for their deceased loved ones.

**Literary** — Next we approach the passage from a *literary* perspective. This involves, among other things, having an appreciation for the overall structure of the passage. After introducing the problem of the Thessalonians’ grief in 4:13, Paul presents two arguments in response (both arguments are

introduced with the little word “for” that the NIV has unfortunately omitted): first, he appeals to Christ’s resurrection as a guarantee of believers’ resurrection such that they will be present at Christ’s return (4:14); second, he appeals to the authoritative “word of the Lord,” which emphatically states that deceased believers will share equally with living believers the glory and events connected with Christ’s return (4:15-17). The apostle ends his discussion with a concluding exhortation that the Thessalonians comfort one another with his words (4:18).

The significance of knowing this structure is that it confirms the point made when looking at the historical context: Paul’s emphasis in this passage is not presenting the Thessalonians with a detailed explanation of what will happen in the end times. In fact, the teaching of the rapture in 4:17 is merely a minor point in the apostle’s second argument—an elaboration on the “word of the Lord” that guarantees that deceased believers will share equally with living believers the glory of Christ’s second coming. Paul’s main concern is reflected in the concluding exhortation, namely, the comfort that the Thessalonians have even in the face of their fellow believers’ death.

**Grammatical** — We next approach 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 with a *grammatical* eye, and it is here that we discover most decisively the error of the Dispensational or “Left Behind” version of the rapture. Although attention in 4:17 is usually given to the word “snatched” (the Greek verb *harpazo* is rendered in the Latin Vulgate as *rapere*, and this is where the word “rapture” comes from), more notice should be given to the word “to meet” used to describe the gathering that takes place between believers—both deceased (resurrected) and living (transformed)—and the returning Christ. The Greek word used is *apantesis*, a technical term that always refers to the “reception” given to a visiting government official. It was customary in Paul’s day to send a delegation of leading citizens outside the city to welcome a visiting dignitary and escort that person on the final leg of the journey to their community.

The term *apantesis* occurs only twice elsewhere in the New Testament, where it has this same meaning. When the Roman Christians learn that Paul the prisoner is approaching their city, they send a delegation “for a reception” of the apostle to meet him and then escort him on the last part of his trip to Rome (Acts 28:15). In the parable of the ten virgins, the women go out “for a reception” of the bridegroom in which they meet and then escort him to the wedding banquet (Matt. 25:6). The meaning of this word here in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 is now clear: when Paul speaks about believers being “caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air,” he is claiming that they will be the reception party that not only meets the returning Christ but also escorts him on the last leg of his journey to earth. In other words, believers do not escape to heaven for the seven years of the tribulation but remain on earth where the final judgment and restoration of creation take place. The meaning of the word *apantesis*, therefore, delivers a virtual deathblow to the popular Dispensational view of the rapture.

**Theological** — This interpretation is confirmed by our fourth approach to the pas-

*It is dangerous to approach this text merely as a blueprint to foretell the future without recognizing its greater goal of providing pastoral care to a grieving congregation.*

sage. A *theological* approach to Scripture involves, among other things, interpreting Scripture with Scripture—comparing what one passage says on a specific subject with what the rest of Scripture says on this same matter. Dispensationalists typically cite Jesus’ words in Matthew 24:40-41 as further proof for their understanding of the rapture: “Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.”

The context of this passage, however, shows that these two verses actually say the opposite of what Dispensationalists claim. The preceding verses reveal that Jesus is making a parallel between the coming of

the Son of Man and the days of Noah (Matt. 24:37). These verses make it clear that the wicked were taken away for judgment (“...until the flood came and took them all away”) and that righteous Noah and his family were the only ones left. In Jesus’ comparison, therefore, one wants to be “left behind,” since those who are “raptured” are taken away for judgment!

### **Handle with Care**

This is just one example of the importance of carefully interpreting God’s Word. At Calvin Theological Seminary we are committed both to handling the Word with care and to teaching our students the Reformed approach to interpretation by these four perspectives. Today’s church faces a myriad of challenges to the Christian faith — many of them far more complicated and threatening than one’s view of the rapture. This is no time to cut corners in the biblical training of our pastors or to weaken standards for those entering ministry. Now more than ever we need spiritual leaders who have a thorough training in Scripture that will enable them to “correctly handle the word of truth.”

## ***Paul’s Missionary Journey to Greece***

MARCH 31 — APRIL 12, 2005

Walk in the footsteps of Paul during the day and learn more about him at night. Travel by motor coach and cruise ships to sites connected with Paul’s second and third missionary journeys (Neapolis, Philippi, Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonika, Berea, Athens, and Corinth), as well as other major sites of biblical, archeological, and cultural interest (Patmos, Delphi, Mycena, and Vergina). Each evening features a study session on “Paul: His Life and His Letters.”

Join host Jeff Weima, professor of New Testament and leading Pauline scholar, for this truly inspirational tour endorsed by Calvin Theological Seminary. For more information, contact Dr. Weima at 616-957-6019, [weimje@calvinseminary.edu](mailto:weimje@calvinseminary.edu), or 3323 Burton St. SE, Grand Rapids MI 49546.



**CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**

*Classical theological education for contemporary ministry in a global context*



# Inviting the Prophets Back to Church

**C**an you imagine what would happen today if one of the Old Testament prophets came to one of our churches as the preacher, or even as a visitor? They seem to have a tendency to do things that make people more than a little uncomfortable. How would we react, for example, if Jeremiah showed up for morning worship wearing an ox yoke on his neck (Jer. 27:2)? Or if we found Ezekiel in the parking lot doing strange things with the hair he had just shaved off of his head (Ezek. 1 5:1–4)? And it's not only their behavior that is odd. Their words are perhaps even harder to square with our current ideas of what is acceptable language in church. Would not someone who said to us, "I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies" (Amos 5:21), receive some form of church discipline (or at least a good measure of righteous indignation)? The prophetic writings also present us with all sorts of interpretive difficulties. They are full of bizarre visions, wonderful miracles, fiery discourses, seemingly irrelevant biographical details, and both clear and vague pronouncements concerning the future. Let's face it: we, like their contemporaries in the Old Testament, are uncomfortable with the prophets. We want to "be like Mike," not like Micah.

So what do we do with these discomfoting people? I'm afraid we do what we usually do with people or things that make us uncomfortable—we avoid them. One rarely hears a sermon based on the prophetic books. We just don't invite the prophets to church anymore.

Let me suggest that this is, as we no doubt suspect, the wrong approach to take. In Amos 3:7 we find the utterly remarkable statement, "Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets." This has profound implications. It suggests that

spending some time studying "his servants the prophets" holds the promise of yielding insight into everything that God does! Surely no better motivation exists for anyone interested in understanding God's special revelation and redemptive activity. Moreover, because Christ fulfills the prophetic office, a deeper understanding of that office has direct implications for contemporary Christians. Romans 8:29 informs us that "those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son." If one dimension of the Son is his fulfillment of the prophetic office, it is logically inescapable that those being conformed to his likeness must also have a prophetic task. Looking back at the Old Testament prophets, therefore, gives us some idea of the prophetic tasks that our Lord fulfilled and the prophetic tasks that we, as the people of God being conformed to the likeness of Christ, should be fulfilling today. Admittedly, we have to be careful here. Tapping into the benefits of a good understanding of the prophets is a little like petting a porcupine—it's possible, but you'd better go slowly or you're going to get stuck.

by *Michael J. Williams*  
Professor of Old Testament



One common sticking point is a failure to appreciate the fact that *everything* in the prophetic books contributes to the prophetic message. This misunderstanding can (and does!) easily result in quick dismissals of non-speech-related materials, such as biographical details, as irrelevant or simply "filler" for the "real" message found in the oracles (prophetic speeches). Recent biblical scholarship has done precisely this for

many of the prophetic writings. Instead of appreciating the complexity of these remarkable texts, some scholars routinely characterize them as crudely compiled combinations of various sources by agenda-driven editors. The truth is far more wonderful and complicated. Being a prophet was a 24/7 job that engaged every aspect of the prophet's being. We need to slow down our reading of the prophetic texts in order to receive their messages in the many ways they are trying to reach us.

Probably the first thing we notice is that the prophets verbally communicate the truth about God to others. In New Testament passages, we see Christ doing this same prophetic task so precisely that it is no longer sufficient to say he "communicates" the word of God. No, Christ (being God) communicates God so clearly that he *is* "the Word" (see, for example, John 1). Therefore, if we, as individual Christians and as fellowships of believers, desire to be like Christ, we too must accurately speak the word of God to others.

But communication, as we know, does not only happen with words. Actions communicate too, and perhaps even more loudly. Much of the prophets' messages are bound up with their actions. Jeremiah smashes a clay pot (Jer. 19) to visually communicate to the people the coming of the judgment his words proclaim. Ezekiel

*Can you imagine what would happen today if one of the Old Testament prophets came to one of our churches as the preacher, or even as a visitor?*

shaves off his hair (Ezek. 5) to indicate what the Lord will do to his people by means of Assyria, “a razor hired from beyond the River” (Isa. 7:20). Even the prophets’ emotions communicate God’s own emotions, ranging from his fiery anger against sin (exhibited, for example, by Amos) to his heartbreak over the judgment he must bring against his people (demonstrated, for example, by Jeremiah, the “weeping prophet”). Jesus, the perfect prophet, tells the disciples of John (who were questioning Jesus’ messiahship) to report not only what they hear him say, but also what they *see him do* (Matt. 11:2–6; Luke 7:18–23), because both his words and his actions communicate the same message. Does *our* behavior communicate the same message of good news as our words? Or do unbelievers instead *see* a message that contradicts and garbles the message they *hear* from us?

Perhaps least recognized among the prophetic tasks is the way they represent the community to which they belong. The prophets intercede for the people in prayer and visually portray the future of their community—both symbolically and in actual personal experiences. Jeremiah puts on a yoke of crossbars (Jer. 27) to show his countrymen that they will soon be wearing the yoke of the Babylonians. Ezekiel, representing his community’s coming experience, rations out food for himself in order to show that “the people will eat rationed food in anxiety and drink rationed water in despair, for food and water will be scarce” (Ezek. 4:16–17). Jeremiah is imprisoned and placed in danger of losing his life (Jer. 37–38) to show by his own personal experience that the nation he represents will itself soon be imprisoned in exile and in danger of losing its national identity. This prophetic role of representing the community is so vital that it made the Incarnation necessary. In order for our Lord to fulfill this prophetic task he had to become like those he would represent. Thus, he not only is the Son of God (indicating his representation of God), but is also the Son of Man (indicating his representation of the human community of which he has become the head).

We, the *community* of God’s people, can (and should) together carry out the prophetic tasks, including this task of representing the larger community to which we belong. Old Testament Israel prophetically pointed to the new covenant community by dramatically acting out on the world stage, by means of her experiences recorded in Scripture, what God would be doing through Jesus Christ for “every tribe and language and people and nation” (Rev. 5:9). Her calling, her deliverance from bondage, her gathering into a community of God’s people in fellowship with and governed

*Let’s invite the prophets back to church and strive to become more like them as we communicate the good news of Jesus Christ to those with eyes to see as well as ears to hear.*

by him, her separation from the world, her battles, her victories, her failures, her purification, and her restoration—all have significance for the new covenant community. We represent the larger community of which we are a part—broken humanity—by demonstrating to unbelievers the humanity God intends and is redemptively working to restore. Fulfilling our prophetic responsibility to represent a healed humanity in our behavior is absolutely critical for the effectiveness of the verbal message of good news. It makes no sense to call people to enjoy a new humanity when there is no evidence of that new humanity for them to see.

Everything we do as individual Christians and local congregations has prophetic implications. Once we truly grasp this, our programs, activities, committee meetings, events, and all other initiatives of the church will be carried out with a new health

and vigor, and with an eye toward how they are perceived by unbelieving onlookers. This is not some alien assignment imposed upon the church, but is rather contained in the church’s spiritual DNA, which traces back to the prophets of the Old Testament and comes to fullest expression in our Lord, Jesus Christ.

As we engage in this effort, we must be careful not to overemphasize one dimension of our prophetic witness to the detriment of the others. To do so would result in a faulty picture of God or of the restored humanity we are responsible to represent. It is very likely that every one of us has experienced local congregations in which one of these aspects of the church’s prophetic witness was stressed at the expense of the others. Such overemphasis results in churches with wonderful doctrine but no comparably wonderful practice, churches with fantastic social engagement that appears to come at the expense of truth, or churches with such an emphasis on emotion that doctrine and practice seem to melt away into irrelevance. It is our task to ensure that the church prophetically represents God and a restored, healed humanity verbally, behaviorally, and affectively, and to make certain that our words, actions, and emotions are integrated and in balance.

The church’s prophetic task is obviously enormous and extremely difficult. It is no wonder that so many of the Old Testament prophets objected to their prophetic calls. Yet the divine reassurance they received has also been given to us: “Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28:20). The Spirit of the perfect prophet, the Holy Spirit, indwells every believer and provides us with the understanding, the resources, and the power to fulfill our prophetic calling. Let’s invite the prophets back to church and strive to become more like them as we communicate the good news of Jesus Christ to those with *eyes to see* as well as *ears to hear*.

Michael Williams’ most recent book is *The Prophet and His Message: Reading Old Testament Prophecy Today* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2003).

# Becoming People of the Book

*How “biblically literate” are church members today? What can the church do to remain grounded in God’s Word? Forum editor Lugene Schemper interviewed Robert DeVries, Professor of Church Education; Dean Deppe, Professor of New Testament; and Howard Vanderwell, a “pastor in residence” at Calvin Theological Seminary and a consultant with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. The three of them have a collective total of 65 years of pastoral experience in congregations.*

**LS:** We’ve often heard that knowledge of the Bible is no longer as widespread in our culture as it was in the past. You’ve heard of Jay Leno’s comedy routines: No one in his studio audience can name one of the Ten Commandments or the four gospels, but nearly everyone can name all four of the Beatles. What about the level of biblical literacy among members of the Christian Reformed Church? Has that changed over the past thirty years?

**RDV:** I don’t know if the CRC ever put as much emphasis on Bible knowledge as the broader evangelical world did. We thought it important, but emphasized Bible knowledge primarily as an underpinning for theological knowledge. Systematic theology took the lead and biblical knowledge was its servant. There were many good Christian Reformed folks who still needed to use the Bible’s table of contents to find the book of Ezekiel, and yet they could quote passages from the Old Testament that supported the doctrine of election or key Scripture texts from Romans 8 or Ephesians 1. They might have known doctrinally important Old Testament texts such as Jeremiah 31, but did not know exactly what Jeremiah was about as a book. That has been typical of education in the church and in the Christian schools.

**HV:** As I think about biblical literacy I think of three different aspects. There’s biblical knowledge—the data of the Bible and its various types of literature. There’s also theological literacy—being able to draw theological themes out of Scripture and apply them. Related to that there’s also confessional literacy—knowing the confessions

of the church and how Scripture is the basis for those confessions. These three kinds of literacy build on each other. It’s difficult to generalize across the whole spectrum of the Christian Reformed denomination. The people I have served as pastor are more educated than ever. But I’m not convinced that their biblical, theological, or confessional literacy levels are where they ought to be.

**LS:** Religion professors at Christian colleges have told me that they can no longer assume as much biblical knowledge from their students, regardless of whether they have attended a Christian or a public school. In fact, they tell me that the students who have the highest level of biblical knowledge are those who have been home-schooled.

**DD:** I think with many students there’s especially a lack of knowledge of the stories from the Old Testament, perhaps because we’ve lost some of our tradition of reading

the Bible regularly around the table for family devotions. We live in such a hurried society, often with both parents working, and children frantically bouncing from one activity to another. It’s become difficult to have that time around the family table with the Word, which used to be a mainstay of family life.

**HV:** I got my biblical literacy from my family, from a church education system that immersed me in the Scriptures, and from my Christian day school education. I think that in many communities with Christian schools, families and churches are relying too much on the school to accomplish religious education. This also creates a division between Christian school students and the growing number of non-Christian school students within a congregation.

**RDV:** I firmly believe that it is a primary responsibility of the church, not the Christian school, to teach biblical knowledge and the language of faith. It’s the church’s job. But the church often hasn’t been doing it. For some families church school has become more of an option than a requirement. It’s not uncommon to find that, in a typical congregation, only 50 to 60 percent of the children go to church school. Even if they do go, we don’t invest nearly the number of hours that church education deserves. Several years ago I took what I thought was the average CRC and calculated that children spent a total of only thirteen hours each year receiving instruction in church. That’s not nearly enough for something so important.

**LS:** What about adult education?



**Dean Deppe:**

*Pastors should spend more time training their elders, small group Bible study leaders, and adult education leaders in how to read and interpret and teach the Bible.*



**DD:** For a time many CRC people thought that when they made profession of faith their formal church education had ended. Thankfully, that has changed. Adults recognize that they need ongoing education and are interested in small group ministry. Pastors should spend more time training their elders, small group Bible study leaders, and adult education leaders in how to read and interpret and teach the Bible.

**RDV:** There is a growing segment in the church that is much more interested in Bible knowledge. People are much more open to Scripture memorization and learning the contents of the books of the Bible through programs such as Bible Study Fellowship or the Bethel Bible Series. In adult education now, you are more likely to get a better turnout if you say, “We’re going to do a Bible study on the book of Ephesians,” than if you say, “We’re going to look at a particular theological issue or social issue.”

**LS:** Is there some level of biblical knowledge that church members ought to have?

**RDV:** I don’t address it that way. I can’t tell you what a basic level’s going to be, but if you want people to have a basic level of Scripture knowledge, they do have to read it. They don’t have to read about it, they have to read it. So instead of reading a devotional for their quiet time, they should read the Bible. And read it in sequence, not bits and pieces here and there.

I also think that if members are going to hold any educational or leadership office—elder, deacon, church school teacher—they should have gone through some kind of basic biblical studies course. In order for them to exercise the spiritual gift of teaching, they have to demonstrate that they understand the material they want to teach.

**DD:** We certainly should link biblical knowledge to the process of becoming a member of the church. Perhaps the membership process should take a lot longer and ground people in a basic knowledge of Scripture and the Christian faith.



**Howard Vanderwell:**

*We need to communicate to people that this is the word of*

*God, and it contains important information. The quality of the reading greatly influences how much of the Scripture we absorb.*

**LS:** How important is memorization of Scripture for believers?

**RDV:** Good learning theory tells us that we will retain in our long-term memory only those things that wind up being of value or significance to us. So just asking the third-grade student to memorize a passage isn’t going to stick very well until that passage means something to that person. I’m not against having fifth-grade students memorize things, but as we get into teenage years it’s more important to say, in certain experiences, does this passage mean something to you? And if so, let’s commit it to memory, and repeat it over and over in different ways and situations. The Scripture texts that I’ve memorized have been those that have meant something to me in difficult or joyful situations, or, because I’m a preacher, in sermons that I felt were particularly good.

**HV:** Over the last generation, the memorization of Scripture has gotten bad press. Some of the memorization work that was required was not useful at all. Memory work with an eye to ministry is far more meaningful. I think we’re finding ministry to others more difficult today because we haven’t memorized as much Scripture as we should.

**DD:** Memorizing Scripture is not only important for your own spiritual life, but also for ministry purposes. I believe it’s important to train elders to have memorized verses available when they visit in the hospital, deal with marriage, or divorce, or cancer, or despair.

**LS:** We’ve talked about biblical knowledge in church education. But how does this relate to the preaching and worship of the church? What can pastors and church leaders do to ensure that our preaching and worship improve our biblical literacy?

**HV:** This widespread lack of biblical knowledge has one important impact on preaching. We cannot just assume that if you mention an Old Testament text, people will be able to draw up the story in their minds. As we preach we have to stop and explain many biblical historical facts and references, which slows the pace down a bit, but it’s a worthwhile and necessary part of preaching today.

**DD:** When I lead in worship I try to emphasize that every part of the worship comes from the Scriptures, so that the authority of the Bible is highlighted. So, for example, when I use the Aaronic Benediction, I might let people know that it’s right from the book of Numbers. And when we sing psalms, sometimes I read from the psalm beforehand to show that we’re singing right from the Bible!

**RDV:** Using Scripture in worship is important. Use it to fashion the pastoral prayer. Or encourage the congregation to recite verbally the primary text of the message.

**HV:** I think the style of sermon writing and Scripture reading is important. Topical preaching does not do any favors for biblical literacy. Preaching where the sermon is anchored in the exposition of Scripture, and the people are taught that the Bible ought to be on their lap as we analyze a passage of Scripture, is much more helpful. The authority of preaching is based on the Scripture’s authority.

**People of the Book**

**DD:** I emphasize to seminary students in my New Testament classes that they should use their knowledge of the Greek New Testament in their preaching to shed light on the background of the text and the meaning of the Greek words in the culture of that day. When they can do that and show how it makes a difference for our understanding and application of the text today, they speak with authority.

**HV:** Looking back, I wish I'd done more Scripture reading in worship. I wish I'd practiced the lectionary pattern where you have multiple Scripture readings in the service.

**DD:** I didn't preach extensively from the lectionary either, but I did emphasize promise and fulfillment by including both an Old Testament and New Testament text in our worship services. Repeatedly, interested and curious church members approached me afterwards, excited about what they had learned about the interconnection of the two Testaments.



**Robert DeVries:**

*Councils should regularly ask themselves as they make*

*decisions: "What principles rise out of Scripture to give us guidance in this situation?"*

**HV:** I'm also convinced that when there are Scripture readings in the liturgy, we should put more emphasis on reading well. It's obvious in a lot of worship services that little effort is put into preparing for reading the Scripture passages. We need to communicate to people that this is the word of God, and it contains important information. The quality of the reading greatly influences how much of the Scripture we absorb.

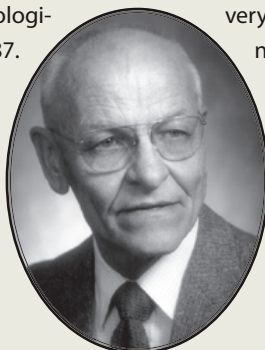
**LS:** What can church councils do to help their congregations become a people of the Book?

**HV:** They should pay close attention to supervising the educational and worship programs of the church. Is biblical knowledge and its use being taught? Is the congregation learning how to practice discernment using theological truths? Supervising church education is a critical part of council's maintaining the health of the congregation. Council members ought to be models themselves in their own personal practices. Also, they should realize that when the council makes a decision — particularly on some thorny issue — the congregation senses whether those decisions are made on the basis of (a) popular opinion, (b) "I happen to think . . .," or (c) "Here are some biblical and theological reasons that ground our decision."

**RDV:** Councils should regularly ask themselves as they make decisions: "What principles rise out of Scripture to give us guidance in this situation?" That's good solid Reformed tradition.

## Memorization in Church Education

**P**rofessor De Vries still refers students to two articles in the *Calvin Theological Journal* by J. Marion Snapper, Professor of Church Education at Calvin Theological Seminary from 1974 to 1987. The articles advocate renewal in programs of Scripture memorization in the church. "The Dethronement of Memory in Church Education" (April 1978) and "Memorization in Church Education" (April 1981) are important discussions of the role of memorization in the teaching ministry of the church. The second article in particular lays down some important guidelines for church memorization programs, as seen in the following excerpts:



**Dr. Marion Snapper**

"The argument for memorization must

rest largely on one major assertion: The Word of God will more effectively accomplish its purpose when committed to memory. The very act of memorization carries significance for the learner. To memorize something is to make a rather impressive statement about it because it is such a deliberate and thoughtful investment of time and energy."

"It would seem that the authority of Scripture is better served with exact quotations.... The nature of dialogue is affected by the direct quotation of Scripture. When counseling with other people or when witnessing to others, I feel much more effective when I can let the Bible speak for itself—directly. It seems to me that then the other person senses that he or she

is not confronted with my ideas or my interpretation of the Bible, but with the very Word of God.... I believe that the Holy Spirit works more effectively when I am able to quote Scripture with accuracy. The more certainly something is fixed in mind and memory the more likely it is that it will be used."

"What should be memorized? (1) That which is memorized should have stood the test of time. (2) That which is memorized should be for the learner meaningful learning of meaningful material. (3) The material which is to be memorized should be functional material. It should have value for living the life of faith."

Professor Snapper continues by offering suggested curriculum guidelines for formulating a program of church memorization. To view the full text of these articles, visit [www.calvin.edu/library/mrc/snapper](http://www.calvin.edu/library/mrc/snapper).



# An Unforgettable Chapel

*Most of us have experienced those worship services where everything comes together in a unique, powerful, Spirit-created moment that leaves the worshiper full of gratitude and joy. We had one of those moments in a recent seminary chapel service led by Bob Rudesill.*

*Bob is our oldest student at 76 years of age. Bob is hard to miss. A severe spinal abnormality made him walk very humped over, though a surgery this summer has straightened up “the leaning tower of Pisa,” as Bob describes himself. A soft-spoken, humble man, Bob has been taking courses at CTS for*



Bob Rudesill

*years. He’s not in a degree program. He’s not seeking ordination. But Bob had a powerful conversion experience (which he talked about in his chapel message). And ever since Bob became a Christian, all he has wanted to do is know more about this gracious God and his Word. So he takes seminary courses — especially in Bible and theology — quarter after quarter. He even took the Hebrew comprehensive — and passed with flying colors!*

*Bob’s meditation fits so well in this Forum issue dedicated to the Bible that we include it here so that you may also be blessed by his words.*

Calvin Theological Seminary Chapel, May 7, 2004

## God Is Good: The Robe of Salvation ... Isaiah 61:10a

There is for me a precious verse in Isaiah 61:

<sup>10</sup>I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God.

For he has clothed me with garments of salvation, and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness.

One of the attributes of God is that he is good. But how do we know he is good? How do we really know? When I was twenty, my hero was General George S. Patton, as he victoriously led the 3rd Army across southern Europe. At thirty, my hero was Arnold Palmer: king of the fairways. At forty, it was my boss; he could drink three martinis at lunch and not bat an eye. At fifty, it was Jesus Christ, whom I continue to joyfully worship as Lord and Savior. What in the world happened?

The intensity and shrill of my mother’s screams, as dad beat her, still haunt me. As a young boy I tried to protect her but, of course, unsuccessfully. When I got older, I vividly remember knocking dad down once, but it was a hollow victory because he was so drunk. In the 1930s, women in painful marriages had few options. As a young man, I fervently vowed never to be like my alcoholic father. Thirty years later, I realized I was a carbon copy of him.

Reflecting on a period of depression, Lewis Smedes wrote, “If someone told me life was a gift, I would have given it back!” I can embrace those words. I knew I was doing wrong, yet my mind rationalized away any acknowledgment of sin or of a need for repentance.

There comes a time, though, when you are exhausted with the game playing, the hiding, the sham, the rationalizing, and you admit defeat. It was Lent. Perhaps I could go a couple of days without. Maybe. I would try. A miracle: the two days turned into a week, the week into six. Lent was over. To “celebrate,” I went to a bar and ordered a drink. The first sip was so vile, so rancid, so bitter that I slid off the stool and left, my last drink. It had to be God. Jesus can change water to wine, but he also can change alcohol to acid. Common grace can be as powerful as special grace.

Almost a year later, my dear wife arranged for us to go on a spiritual retreat. I was saturated with fear and so hated going, but out of love for her, I went. My heart was like a stone, impregnable. On Saturday afternoon, we were in the chapel in a small group and someone was reading a psalm when the Word of God exploded in me. I started to cry — no, sob. I could not stop nor did I want to stop. I will always be grateful to those in the small group. They let me cry. Somehow they knew God was at work. I was being purged, cleansed and made white as snow: a magnificent moment, the most glorious moment of my life. I was being marked and sealed as God’s own. God was autographing my heart, and if you look, you will see a cross there. I am his.

Gregory of Nazianzus wrote, “We celebrate not our sickness, but our cure.” I have a hunger for Scripture that God gave me, and that is why I am in this place. I so desperately want to know more about my Lord and Savior, the Holy One who

personally weaves and freely gives robes of salvation, even to those who are disobedient and in a far country.

I find the sanctification journey a challenge. I am on the lifelong journey of obedience to a loving Lord. The journey is not without fear and trembling, but that — as Paul tells us — is as it should be. God has forgiven my sins, but there still remains the struggle of dealing with the consequences of those sins. I must still face myself as I really am: my short temper, my vanity, my sharp tongue, but now I have hope and the power of the Holy Spirit. I am still filled with inordinate fears and anxieties. I need to more fully embrace all of God’s love. Though the journey is bumpy, God has given me the gift of gratitude. Every time I breathe, every time my heart beats, I realize this is a gift from God and I am grateful that I am *not* my own.

I know that I know Christ has forgiven me.

I know that I know I am loved.

I know that I know Christ is in me.

I know that I know the Holy Spirit is healing my brokenness.

I know that I know.

I am also grateful that you have accepted me. It is a grace-filled gift, especially when you look like the Leaning Tower of Pisa going down the hall.

God is good. This is a profound truth; it is an absolute truth.

Regardless of the pain you feel and see, regardless of the brokenness of the world, regardless of the evil that persists, *the gospel is true. Amen.*

# Reading the Bible with the Experts

Of the many rare Bibles owned by our library one of my favorites is a copy of the Geneva Bible, printed in London in 1609. This Bible version, originally published in 1560 by Reformed Christians living in Geneva, was the most popular English-language Bible for decades, even after the King James Version of 1611 was published. It was the Bible of William Shakespeare's day, and was also the favored version of the early Plymouth and Virginia settlers in the United States.

In our library's copy, the first two chapters of Genesis are missing, the final pages are in tatters, the original leather binding has given out on the spine, and there's a crude leather strip glued across its back—a repair which looks like it was done two or three hundred years ago. The Bible is inscribed with the names Samuel and Mary Harley. It's obviously seen a lot of use by the Harley family, and as I show it to others I imagine with them how the Harleys might have used it hundreds of years ago. One of the most important features of this Bible for its readers 400 years ago was its numerous study notes. The editors of the Geneva Bible included them to help readers understand more clearly what they were reading. In their introduction addressed to fellow believers ("our beloved in the Lord") they write:

And considering how hard a thing it is to understand the holy Scriptures . . . we have also endeavored both by the diligent reading of the best commentaries, and also by the conference with the godly and learned brethren, to gather brief annotations upon all the hard places . . .

Their desire was to put the Bible in the hands of common men and women, who would be instructed and encouraged and become "wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 3:15) as they read the clear teaching of Scripture. But they also knew that the Bible contained many "hard places," and those who read it would benefit from the advice of godly readers who had been well-trained in reading the Scriptures. So they added instructive notes to many verses, suggested alternative readings when the text was unclear, listed cross-references

to other passages, and included some helpful maps and drawings.

This tradition of the "study Bible" continues, and with good reason. We know the thrill of reading the Bible and discovering new things about God and ourselves. But we also

know the feeling of being puzzled as we read the Bible for ourselves or study it with others. Alongside the clear words of Scripture there are "hard places." Jonathan, a young friend of mine who is a new believer, recently mentioned to me that he enjoyed his small group Bible study. "But what do you do," he asked, "when you get to one of those passages where it seems like everyone is just sharing their ignorance and confusion?" I gave him a copy of the *Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, and suggested that he take it along to his weekly Bible study. Like Samuel and Mary Harley years ago, he can benefit from the knowledge of expert godly reading of the Scripture found on the pages of a good study Bible.

by *Lugene Schemper*  
Theological Librarian

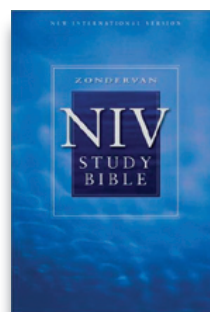


At your local bookstore you will find a retail feast of study Bibles in print and digital formats, many of them very commendable, and I do not intend to review or compare their merits here. But I do want to recommend the most recent version of the *Zondervan NIV Study Bible* (Zondervan, 2002) as a worthwhile acquisition for anyone who intends to study the

Bible seriously. This study Bible was originally published in 1985, with a 1995 update. The 2002 edition has significant revisions, with 20,000 study notes, a cross-reference



system with 100,000 entries, 61 maps, and 40 charts and diagrams. The study notes and introductions to each book of the Bible, originally written by an outstanding team of evangelical scholars, have also been significantly augmented and revised. Calvin Theological Seminary's emeritus Professor of Old Testament, John Stek, contributed significantly to the revision of the notes on the Psalms and a number of the Old Testament wisdom and prophetic books. Emeritus Professor of New Testament Andrew Bandstra contributed to the newly revised notes on Revelation. With its ease of use and even-handed, well-written explication of the Scriptures, the *NIV Study Bible* provides a good one-volume portable library at the bargain price of \$39.99(US).





## Master of Arts in Worship

A Master of Arts in Worship degree program began this fall, combining courses in worship and other areas of ministry with biblical and theological studies. This program is designed for those who are currently serving or hope to serve local congregations in staff positions related to worship ministry. Normally the M.A. in Worship is a two-year program, but it may also be taken on a part-time basis. Though the degree does not offer courses in musical skills, it provides an invaluable theological education for musicians hoping to work in congregational positions. Graduates will also be well qualified for staff positions in other areas of ministry, or teaching assignments in Christian non-profit organizations, retreat centers, or schools.

New student Rachel Klomp maker, who studied music at Calvin College and was involved in worship planning for the chapel program there, says, "I anticipate a mix of theology, music, and worship in my life—but I don't know in what balance. Getting my M.A. in worship lets me keep the doors open." Dordt College graduate Becky Boender also enrolled in the program and explains, "I want to learn more about how to teach and inspire other people about worship. Getting my master's in worship will give me a big-picture perspective—more relationships, experiences, knowledge, and understanding."

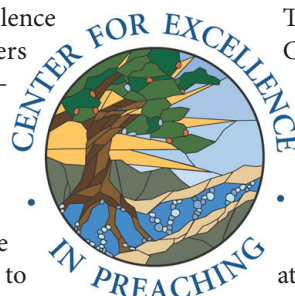


Rachel Klomp maker

## Center for Excellence in Preaching

The Center for Excellence in Preaching offers training and resources for biblically faithful, theologically grounded, culturally relevant, and communicationally effective proclamation of the Word of God. According to President Plantinga, "Everybody wants great preaching; only some people think they are getting it; and the Center's mission, under God, is to grow the second group." This will be accomplished through research, educational events and web resources.

This past summer the Center for Excellence in Preaching sponsored two preaching enhancement seminars in Denver and Chicago. The Denver seminar was led by Howard Vanderwell on the topic of "Preaching and Intergenerational Pastoral Care," and the fourteen pastors attending represented diverse cultural backgrounds — Anglo, Cambodian, Hispanic, Khmer, Korean, Laotian, Filipino, and Vietnamese. They discovered that "intergenerational" could refer to age, length of residency in a new country, or length of membership in a local congregation, and they openly discussed the challenges they face in these areas. Vanderwell reported that "the most significant awareness that developed during this session centered on the similarity of the Dutch-English transition of the immigrant CRC in the 1930s and the first generation/second generation these pastors are facing." He described the seminar as "a fascinating experience." Vanderwell led other workshops on preaching this year in Iowa, Ontario, and New York.



The Chicago seminar on "Effective Communication in Preaching" was held at Trinity Christian College with three leaders collaborating together: Sam Hamstra, pastor of Palos Heights Christian Reformed Church, Annalee Ward, Professor of Communication Arts at Trinity, and Duane Kelderman, Vice President for Administration and



Annalee Ward

Associate Professor of Preaching at CTS. The seminar examined fundamentals in the art of preaching, emphasizing sermon design and delivery. Participants submitted videotapes of their own sermons, arranged short presentations, and prepared sermons for critical review. Kelderman remarked that "this kind of conference is highly needed. These pastors have given a week of their time to get expert feedback and have been very open to the analysis they've received." The group will gather again in October to follow up on what they learned this summer.



Chicago seminar

## Faculty Appointments

CTS's efforts in preaching and worship will be bolstered by two faculty appointments. **John Rottman**, former pastor of Grace Christian Reformed Church in Scarborough, Ontario, has joined the faculty as Associate Professor of Preaching, a subject he taught



John Rottman



John Witvliet

at several Ontario seminaries.

**John Witvliet** has been appointed to a half-time position as Associate Professor of Worship. He will continue in his roles as Associate Professor of Music at Calvin College and director of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship.

## Sustaining Pastoral Excellence at CTS

As an institution dedicated to forming men and women for ministry, CTS has been excited to be involved in new efforts toward this end in our denomination. In 2002, the Christian Reformed Church in North America received a grant from the Lilly Endowment's Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) program to encourage and sustain excellent pastoral ministry through mentoring programs, peer learning groups, and continuing education events, all of which have made connections with CTS.



CTS staff are working closely with the SPE mentoring program, which sponsors informational dinners for candidates to ministry. The seminary also hosted attendees at the first mentoring conference held in May 2004. For many, the reception was a "homecoming" to their alma mater; for others, an introduction to the seminary of their denomination.

Several SPE peer learning groups have been supported by the seminary's Center for Excellence in Preaching, including pastors in Alberta, Michigan, New York, and Washington. These groups especially focused on improving their preaching.

CTS has received four grants from SPE for continuing education events, including

- a CRC Leadership Conference in Los Angeles, California.
- a series of workshops on the "Messiness of Marriage and the Knottiness of Divorce," in Washington, Florida, and Minnesota.
- a conference on "Leadership in Anxious Times," at the Prince Conference Center on campus.
- an "Intergenerational Ministry Conference" in Los Angeles, with Anglo, Hispanic and Korean presenters, coming up on October 22-23, 2004.

CTS also provides leaders for SPE events organized by other churches and groups, such as the May 2004 conference in Sioux Center, Iowa, led by Professors Weima and Nydam that helped 25 pastors to develop sermons from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, and to address the theological and pastoral issues surrounding marriage and divorce. The event "gave us all an opportunity to 'return to seminary' for two days and learn from experts," reported Duane Tinklenberg. The pastors plan to gather in



small groups in September to evaluate the sermons they've written on 1 Corinthians over the summer.

Finally, CTS now offers a course in "The Theology and Practice of Pastoral Ministry" that has enriched pastors in all stages of their ministries. SPE funds make it pos-

sible to offer this one-week course twice a year—once at CTS, and once in another location. This year the course was held near Ottawa, Ontario, and next year is planned for Orlando, Florida (Feb. 28-Mar. 4, 2005).

Through these programs, CTS has connected with hundreds of pastors and alumni.

## Faculty Learn About Staff Ministry Challenges

*"Most, if not all, seminary graduates will serve in some kind of team ministry. Does our education teach them how to function in teams, rather than independently?"*

This was just one of the questions asked at a consultation on multiple staff ministry hosted by CTS faculty this summer. This is the second year that CTS has brought together a group of people in ministry to talk about their experiences and help the seminary understand how best to prepare students for such ministries. Last year the focus was on rural ministry.

In August 2004 a group of staff ministers came from across the continent to learn together about the unique rewards and challenges of staff ministry. They celebrated the creative synergy, complementary gifts, and burden-sharing that come from ministering in a church staff, while recognizing that there also are serious issues of roles, authority, and communication that need to be addressed. The group also suggested that the kind of language and titles used to refer to people in staff ministry can be both vague and painful. What does it mean to be a "second staff"? A "senior" pastor? How do these terms fit with our Reformed theology?

Faculty members were challenged to think about the content and the methods

of theological education. Should CTS have a course in "Staff Ministry Dynamics"? Should more assignments be designed to develop teamwork rather than independence? Should we emphasize skills for facilitating ministry more than for actually doing ministry?

Participants encouraged the seminary to provide more training for staff ministers and for church councils, and to encourage mechanisms of support for staff ministers.

In his concluding devotions, Professor Nydam summarized the day: "It takes more grace than tongue can tell to play the second fiddle well."





## 2004-2005 Books of the Quarter Link to Educational Events

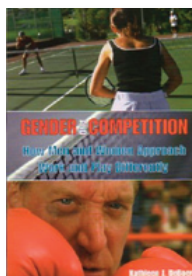
President Plantinga has chosen three books this year that tie into educational events at CTS.

During the fall quarter the focus will be on M. Craig Barnes' *Searching for Home: Spirituality for Restless Souls*, in which he weaves together personal stories, illustrations from Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, and examples from the Bible to contend that the true home we are all seeking is in heaven. Barnes, professor at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and pastor of Shadyside Presbyterian Church, will be at CTS on September 30, 2004, for our Fall Preaching Conference. He will address the



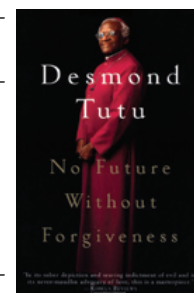
topic of this book as well as his forthcoming Eerdmans volume on "The Preacher as a Minor Poet."

In the winter we will read Kathleen De Boer's *Gender and Competition: How Men and Women Approach Work and Play Differently*. De Boer is one of the lecturers for the January Series of Calvin College and will spend a day at CTS for Book of the Quarter events on January 6, 2005. She will bring to the seminary an interesting discussion of gender issues from the perspective of athletics.



In the spring we will read Desmond Tutu's classic *No Future Without*

*Forgiveness*, a book often used in our theology classes to explore issues of forgiveness and reconciliation. These issues will be the focus of a conference on "Preaching Forgiveness" at CTS on April 27, 2005, with other authors of books on this important topic and a variety of panelists.



The Book of the Quarter program has involved members of the seminary community in discussion of a wide array of books and topics over the past three years, and has also sponsored a number of reading groups for pastors and other church leaders. Interested in joining a group? Email [continuing.education@calvin.edu](mailto:continuing.education@calvin.edu).

## Prayer for the Students

*Offered by Don Byker, Director of Field Education, at Convocation, September 9, 2004*

Father of Jesus, Love divine, great King upon your throne,  
we long to see you as you are and worship you alone.

Thank you for the grace you have given to us all in your Son, our  
Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit, who assures us of our  
salvation, helps us in our prayers, and unites us in faith, hope,  
and love.

We give you special thanks for the students of Calvin Seminary.  
Thank you for bringing them here to study, prepare, and be  
formed for the ministry in your church and kingdom.

We give you thanks for the ways in which you have called, nur-  
tured, and provided for these students.

Thank you for gifts given them by the Holy Spirit for the work of  
ministry for which you are preparing them.

Be glorified and edify these students by their prayers and worship.  
Enrich them in their knowing through listening to your Word and  
Spirit speaking through their teachers and peers.

Help them to humbly hone the gifts that you have given them and  
consecrate these gifts for service to you and your people.

Be in close company with and provide companions for the lonely.  
Let not their hearts be drawn to what is evil.

Instead, mold and move their hearts to think on whatever is true,  
noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, or praiseworthy.

Strengthen these students when they grow discouraged or weary.  
Comfort and instruct them in struggles with loss, disability, and  
grief.

Keep them strong to the end.

Enrich these students in their doing and speaking.  
Keep watch over the door of their lips.

May their conversations with family, faculty, and friends be sea-  
soned with grace.

Teach and empower them to speak the truth in love.

Prepare them to preach and teach with a boldness born of your  
Spirit.

Invigorate these students through Christ in them, the hope of  
glory.

May they be encouraged and encourage each other through the  
community of the Body of Christ that they experience here.

Keep them free from competitiveness and contention.

Care for their families, especially when families are far away.

Inspire each student to make the most of this opportunity that  
you have given to be formed for ministry.

Use the faculty and staff of Calvin Seminary to encourage and  
equip them according to your will and way for their lives.

We lift up these thanks, prayers, and yearnings of our hearts in  
the strong name of Jesus. Amen.



## ALUMNI AWARDS

Each year Calvin Theological Seminary is pleased to honor two alumni who have made significant ministry contributions in the Kingdom of God and have reflected positively upon the values and mission of CTS.

You are invited to submit nominations (with brief statement of rationale) by November 30, 2004 to:

Dr. Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., President, Calvin Theological Seminary  
3233 Burton Street SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546  
or via email: [sempres@calvinseminary.edu](mailto:sempres@calvinseminary.edu)

The recipients will be honored during the week of the Seminary's Commencement (May 2005).



## CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

*Classical theological education for contemporary ministry in a global context*

---

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
---