

CALVIN SYMPOSIUM

Principal's Welcome

Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all here this morning.

It is only fitting that on the 500th anniversary year of John Calvin's birth that we Calvinists gather together to celebrate the impact of this man's life and labours on our ministries in New Zealand.

In doing so we unashamedly profess that Reformed Theology, the Doctrines of Grace, is and are the most biblically consistent expression of the truths of Scripture currently available to us.

It is appropriate that Grace Theological College host this symposium.

GTC is the only theological and bible training institution in NZ that self consciously holds to the reform faith, as expressed in the orthodox confessions of the church.

A reformed systematic theology is alive and well at GTC !

Hence, we are delighted today to provide a collegiate platform that brings together different reformed groupings in NZ, in order to celebrate what we have in common on this auspicious anniversary.

Since its inception 14 years ago, GTC, as a non-denominational college, has sought a representative faculty and board of governance from the Calvinistic branches of the Presbyterian, Baptist and Reformed churches in New Zealand.

By God's grace, we have been able to maintain this tripartite representation, and consequently offer our services, training and graduates to these three expressions of the reformed faith in our country.

As we labour, preach, train and teach may the reformed witness continue to grow and spread in our country for the glory of our great God and the salvation of many.

John Calvin's first book of his *Institutes* emphasized that man's knowledge of God must come from God himself. Such knowledge is not found in, or sourced in man.

As our world turns away from the knowledge of God proclaimed in revelation, both general and special, and ultimately in God's eternal Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, men seek their knowledge of God within their own man-centered, infallible and fallen creaturliness.

This false belief about God shows itself under at least two main headings.

All around us we see that men and women have either turned God into a *myth* which enables them to ignore God and treat him with arrogant disregard, while all the time maintaining a commitment to spirituality as they have imagined it. God as a myth is so far removed from our world and experience that he can be forgotten about.

Or they have turned God into an *idol* that they can control, manipulate, appease, and fashion after their own image. As Calvin reminded us, the heart of fallen man is an idol factory. God as an idol has been bought down to the level of the creature, and turned into our own whimsical gods of gold, power and pleasure.

God is neither a myth out there, nor an idol down here. Rather he is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Calvin's theology would urge us to not back away from the message of Jesus, no matter how divisive it appears, or divisive we appear, among our tolerant and all accepting culture.

The Gospel message will create its own divide, its own anthesis between belief and unbelief. The enemy we fight in our day is not post-modernism, or any other 'ism, but the same enemy in any day, namely unbelief in all its cultural forms whether ancient or modern.

May Jesus Christ, as he is revealed in the Gospel of saving grace, continue to be the focus, the telos, of all we teach, preach, counsel and live out in all our relationships.

Then truly we will be the heirs of Calvin's evangelical reformation.