

Grace Reformed Baptist Church

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School of Theology

4th to 9th July 2009

In answer to the many prayers that had been offered up concerning it, the fourth annual School of Theology proved to be a tremendous blessing for those of us privileged to attend. Organized and hosted again by Grace Reformed Baptist Church in Palmerston North, New Zealand, this year's course was by far the best-attended yet. From 5th to 9th July 2010, twenty-four men met together for a total of thirty-two hours of instruction and discussion. Thirteen of these men were from churches within FRBCNZ: five from Grace Baptist Church in Christchurch, three from Grace Reformed Baptist Church in Palmerston North, three from Gracenet Community Church in Wellington, and one each from Trinity Reformed Baptist Church in Hamilton and Marchiel Reformed Baptist Church in Timaru. Also represented from New Zealand were New Plymouth Evangelical Baptist Church, Cornerstone International Bible Church in Dunedin, St. John's Anglican Church in Christchurch, Wanganui East Baptist Church (sending two men), Reformed Church in Hamilton, and Christchurch Chinese Church. In addition to these, four of the attendees belong to churches overseas: two from Southern Districts Reformed Baptist Church in Sydney, Australia; one from Sovereign Grace Church in Ba, Fiji; and one from Escondido Reformed Baptist Church in California, USA. Despite such geographical diversity, by God's grace, there was great spiritual unity; and the joy of fellowship was rivaled only by the joy of concentrated study of the Word of God.

We were led in this study once again by Dr. Jim Renihan, dean of the Institute of Reformed Baptist Studies at Westminster Seminary California. The title of this year's course was "A Theology of Ministry," the stated goal being to "inculcate a theological self-consciousness" of the true, biblical nature of the minister's identity and work within the church. After establishing a redemptive-historical framework for our consideration of the ministry, highlighting the ongoing work of the victorious Christ in bestowing gifted men upon His church (Eph. 4:1-16), we moved into the first unit on "The Minister as a Man before God." Here, the nature of the call to the ministry was examined, as well as the graces and gifts required of the

qualified minister and very practical instruction as to how those graces and gifts ought to be actively cultivated. The second unit focused on "The Minister as Preacher." The minister is a herald (Rom. 10:14-15) and an ambassador (2 Cor. 5:20), but also a man of God (II Tim. 3:16-17) and a servant of Christ (2 Cor. 4:5, etc.). This unit ended with a look at the three solemn charges that Paul gave to Timothy, admonishing us to maintain the integrity both of the ministry and of our own personal lives as well as to fulfill the ministry that God has given us.

Unit 3 compared and contrasted two different theories of the task of preaching itself: redemptive-historical preaching and what Dr. Renihan labeled "Puritan" preaching. In the end we were encouraged to avoid exclusive adherence to either method but to incorporate them both in our striving to preach "the whole counsel of God." Following this, brief consideration was given to the preparation and delivery of a consecutive expository series and of a theological series of sermons, the strengths and weaknesses of both approaches being carefully weighed. The final unit broadened out to the topic of worship in general, including worship's theological basis, the issue of cultural relativity, and a defense of the Regulative Principle. In all of these discussions, Dr. Renihan led us in detailed examination of relevant Scriptures as well as in frequent consideration of the teachings and practices of godly men throughout the history of the church. We who participated were reminded afresh of the height of the privilege and honor that belongs to the ministry and also of the depth of humility and dependence on God that ought to characterize the true minister.

Many thanks are due to Dafydd Hughes and Ian Fuller for their tireless labors to make the School of Theology possible, as well as to their wives and others at Grace Reformed Baptist Church for their gracious hospitality and provision for such a large group of (ever-hungry) men. May God use what was taught and learned to produce an abundant harvest of lasting fruit for the good of His church and for the glory of His name.

A report by Jason Walter

IRBS intern at Grace Baptist Church, Christchurch

The members of Grace Reformed Baptist Church wish to acknowledge and thank Jim Renihan, Escondido Reformed Baptist Church, the trustees of IRBS and the churches of ARBCA for the various ways – by practical assistance and prayer – they helped to make our hosting of these studies possible.

