

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

SEPTEMBER 2012

THE COUNTER-INTUITIVE CALVIN

BY TIM KELLER

So what did I do on my summer vacation? I continued to do something that I started January 1 of this year. Late last fall I came upon a plan for reading through all of John Calvin's *Institutes*—his four volume, 1500 page or so systematic exposition of the teachings of the Christian faith—in one year. Calvin and Martin Luther together were the two leading lights of the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, Calvin being the founder of the “Reformed” branch of the church of which Presbyterianism is a major part. Today, however, Calvin has a dismal reputation as a pinched, narrow-minded, cold and cerebral dogmatician.

I knew much of this image was caricature, and while over the years I had read a good deal of the *Institutes*, I treated the books like an encyclopedia or dictionary that one dipped into to learn about specific topics. I had never read it straight through, consecutively, until this year when I began the program, which allots an average of six pages a night, five nights a week, for an entire year. Almost immediately I was amazed by several things.

First, it is not just a textbook, but also a true work of literature. It was written in Latin and French and is a landmark in the history of the French language. Calvin was a lawyer and seems at time to relish debate

too much (a flaw he confesses in his letters). But despite such passages, even in English translation it is obvious that this is no mere textbook, but a masterpiece of literary art, sometimes astonishing in its power and eloquence.

Second, it is nothing if not biblical. Even if you don't agree with what Calvin is saying, you will always have to deal with one or two dozen texts of Scripture, carefully interpreted and organized as he presents his case to you. To describe these volumes as ‘theology’ or ‘doctrine’ is almost misleading—it is mainly a Bible Digest, a distilled readers' guide to the main teachings of the Scripture and

(Continued on page 4)

CITY CAMPUS MINISTRY FALL 2012 LAUNCH

Weekly Wednesday Large Group begins Wednesday, September 5 at 7:30PM

at 1359 Broadway, 4th Fl. Conference Room. All undergraduate students are invited!

Weekly Sunday Meetings begin Sunday, September 9 at two locations:

Sunday Mornings following the 10:30AM East Side service in Hunter College, West Building, Rm. 415. 12:00PM – Lunch provided!

Sunday Evenings following the 5:00PM West Side service at the W83 Ministry Center, 150 W. 83rd St., Rm. 412. 6:30PM – Dinner provided!

Visit www.citycampusministry.com for further information.



HOPE FOR NEW YORK MENTORS: MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF CHILDREN

This school year, committed Hope for New York volunteers will make a difference in the lives of children all over our city as mentors.

Leslie Larson, a journalist who lives in the Financial District, is a volunteer team leader with Kids with a Promise, a program that serves NYC's at-risk children and youth by lovingly providing a caring, nurturing environment where they can learn and grow. Leslie answered some questions for us recently about her volunteer experience as a mentor and what she's learned through service.

Leslie, tell us a little bit about KWAP.

They are very up front and clear that it is intentional about the kids' spiritual development. There are a lot of programs that help with homework, college and career advice. But at KWAP we always begin with a devotional prayer to show them what it means to have a personal relationship with Christ. Just to present to them that God has a perspective and an opinion about what's happening in their life, or this decision they might be faced with is really important. Though we don't force that on them, we do want them to know that it is the path to life.

You mentor two pre-teen girls. How do you connect with them?

Since most of the girls struggle with self-worth, I make sure to remind that that they are wonderfully made by God and that he hears their prayers. But it's a relationship, and not just coming to Him demanding things. We recently had our closing ceremony and gave an exhortation of encouragement the girls. We chose Proverbs 31:30: "Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised." Living in a city bombarded with ads, it's great to pull back and see that God values our worship of him.

Interested in mentoring at-risk youth through Hope For New York? Check out Kids with a Promise or some of our other affiliates that serve the youth like Chinese Christian Herald Crusades, Morris Academy Mentoring Program, and Operation Exodus.

Have you had any challenges in the past year?

It's so hard with kids, and the emotional energy takes a toll. When you get a bunch of kids together, you have issues like bullying, and many times I find myself coming to the Lord admitting that I lack wisdom and ask him to give me wisdom. These kids have their own stories and since there's not a lot available to them in the city, they face a lot of opposition. But being at KWAP has given me a heightened awareness of that. The way I see it, seeds are being planted in their hearts. Just as Paul says, we can plant a seed but God has to make it grow. I pray that God will open their minds and hearts at the right time.

What do you appreciate about KWAP?

It's a lot of fun being with the kids and I enjoy hanging out with them as friends. They have strong opinions and say a lot about pop culture or Facebook. It's really interesting. I would also say I appreciate the spiritual impact and fellowship among us mentors. Just to be around other believers who are striving to honor God over their schedule or time is encouraging to see. Iron sharpens iron.

REDEEMER REPORT

Kathy Keller
Heather Klein

HUNTER COLLEGE AUDITORIUM
East 69TH (Between Park & Lexington)
services at 10:30AM & 6:00PM

W83RD MINISTRY CENTER
150 W. 83rd Street (between Columbus & Amsterdam)
services at 9:15AM, 11:15AM, and 5:00PM & 7:00PM

The Redeemer Report is a publication of the Redeemer Presbyterian Church.

OFFICE • 1359 BROADWAY (BETWEEN W. 36/37TH STREETS) • FOURTH FLOOR • NY, NY 10018-7102
(212) 808-4460 (PHONE) (212) 808-4465 (FAX) www.redeemer.com

ANNUAL EI BUSINESS PLAN COMPETITION

BY CALVIN CHIN

The Redeemer Entrepreneurship Initiative (“Ei”) will host its annual Business Plan Competition Kickoff on Thursday evening, September 26. It is our eighth competition and couldn’t be timelier as New York City continues to be a beacon for start-up activity. Our 20 winners and other entrants from prior competitions are currently toiling throughout the city, in Silicon Alley (Flatiron), Wall Street, L.I.C., Dumbo, Mott Haven, and Williamsburg. Ventures such as Hoppit!, Tegu, Restore NYC, 100Cameras, Arts & Minds, and A House on Beekman, to name a few, push ahead their mostly early-stage entrepreneurial ventures in cafes, shared work spaces and incubators. This entrepreneurial spirit is core to Redeemer—from our humble beginnings in 1989 to bring the gospel to New York City and our recent move to a collegiate model on the way to truly becoming a church for the city.

When Tim and Kathy Keller started Redeemer, they attested to how lonely, incredibly risky,

and painstaking the journey was. For those of us who are believers we need to cling to and rely more on God’s spirit than our own devices during such a journey. In the world, we see that the message of entrepreneurship often focuses mainly on the individual, process, or outcome rather than on the calling that undergirds the activity. Not everyone is called to create new ventures and certainly, given the challenges of entrepreneurship, a person needs proper grounding and support to even have a chance of survival. The Ei, in part through its annual business plan competition, is creating a community that shares the risks and the rewards among those who respond to the call of working towards a vision of gospel-centered cultural engagement!

Since the Ei began in 2007, our staff and dozens of lay leaders have met with, evaluated, and coached over 251 entrants in the arts, for profit, and not-for-profit sectors. We have also provided seed financing totaling \$236,000 to our 20 win-

ners and 2 runners-up. These funds are from foundations and individuals specifically for the competition and not from the general operating budget. Being in a highly strategic place like New York City, we need to be relevant in every sector to push forward gospel-centered entrepreneurship.

Therefore, the Ei is calling all new and experienced entrepreneurs as well as investors in the congregation who want to provide their prayers, time, and/or resources to attend our September 26 kickoff. Come catch the gospel-centered vision, energy, and excitement of this vibrant entrepreneurial community. You will have an opportunity to meet with previous winners, finalists, and participants, including judges and coaches. We plan to give you a glimpse of how the gospel can drive your organization or venture idea in order to address unmet needs in all sectors of culture. RSVP at www.faithandwork.org/2013bpckickoff and join us!

HOPE FOR NEW YORK CHARITY BIKE RIDE

Join Team Hope for New York to cycle and fundraise to support the poor and marginalized of our city! Cyclists of all levels are invited to join us for the Escape New York bike ride on Saturday, September 22. We’re on a mission to raise \$50,000 for HFNY! Riders raising \$500+ will receive an HFNY jersey, and riders raising \$100+ will receive an HFNY water bottle.

No experience? No problem. Get in shape with the HFNY cycling team through a series of training rides leading up to the actual event. Riders may choose from one of four scenic routes (25, 50, 65, or 100 miles) through Bergen and Rockland Counties.

Find more information on our website at <http://hfny.org/2012BikeRide/>

how they fit together.

Third, the *Institutes* are, I think, the greatest, deepest, and most extensive treatment of the grace of God I have ever read. I was struck by how many times Calvin tells us that the foundation of real Christian faith is both grasping with the mind and sensing on the heart the gracious, unconditional love of God for us in Jesus Christ. Over and over again he teaches that you are not truly converted by merely understanding doctrine, but by grasping God's love so that the inner structure and motivation of the heart is changed.

So in *Institutes* I.3.1 he argues that, while you may know a lot *about* God you don't truly know God until 'reverence [is] joined with love of God which the knowledge of his benefits induces.... Unless they establish their complete happiness in him, they will never give themselves truly and sincerely to him.' In other words, you don't have true saving knowledge of God until you *long* to obey him, out of a desire to please and delight him because you are pleased and delighted with him for his grace. Calvin adds that in a Christian soul "this restrains itself from sinning, not out of dread of punishment alone; but because it loves and reveres God as Father.... *Even if there were no hell, it would still shudder at offending him.*" (I.3.2)

When Calvin comes to his three chapters on what it means to live a Christian life (III.6-7), again grace is at the forefront.

He taught that the briefest statement of the Christian life is this—"You are not your own; you were bought with a price." (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). There it is in a nutshell. Because you were saved by sheer grace ("you were bought with a price") now your new principle of life is "you are not your own." You no longer live for yourself, but for God and for your neighbor. All of the Christian life is the working out of that verse, that grace, and that new principle of joyful self-donation.

When Calvin applies this principle of gracious self-donation to our relationships with other people, he argues that we should treat even those who in themselves deserve nothing but disdain as if they were the Lord himself. "Say [about the stranger before you] that you owe nothing for any service of his; but God, as it were, has put him in his own place in order that you may recognize toward him the many and great benefits which God has bound you to himself.... You will say, 'He has deserved something far different from me'. Yet what has the Lord deserved?... *Remember not to consider men's evil intention but to look upon the image of God in them, which cancels and effaces their transgressions, and with its beauty and dignity allures us to love and embrace them.*" (III.7.6)

When Calvin comes to his well-known doctrine of predestination it is important to see where he places it. He does not deal with the doctrine under Book 1 where he treats

God, or even Book 2 where he addresses sin and Christ. He waits until Book 3, which is about "How We Receive the Grace of Christ" through the Holy Spirit. Calvin insists that the opposite of the doctrine of predestination is not the idea of free will but the teaching that we are saved by our good works. He argues forcefully that, unless you see your saving faith is a gift from God to you, not from you to him—you have not yet grasped how free his grace is. You will ever so slightly believe that you are a Christian because you were more humble, open, and repentant than those who have not believed. But, Calvin reasoned, if you see your salvation is 100% by grace you will embrace and be both humbled and comforted by the truth of predestination.

Last of all (and here our modern evangelical terminology fails us) Calvin's writings are astonishingly "doxological." We might be tempted to say "inspirational" or "devotional" or "spiritual" but to use such Hallmark-Greeting-Card phrases doesn't do it justice. Calvin's writings don't read at all like a theological treatise, but like a man meditating on the Scripture before God. The language is filled with reverence and awe, and often tenderness. That means that, despite the close reasoning of so many parts of the material, Calvin was all about the heart.

Indeed, he taught that our biggest problem was there. *(Continued on page 6)*

REFLECTIONS ON THE GOTHAM EXPERIENCE

By K. A., CLASS OF 2012

Head. Heart. Hands. This is the theme running through the Gotham Fellowship. And it was completely unexpected. I applied to Gotham mainly because, well, I was curious. “Amazing,” “Life-changing,” “Can’t describe it,” said friends who had completed the program, which basically told me nothing. I was aware that it was an intense program that required a considerable time commitment for reading theology and engaging in fellowship activities. I also knew that it was a training program that aimed to bring forth cultural renewal...whatever that meant.

Entering Gotham, I was a seasoned Redeemer member, yet not exactly in the Redeemer mold. I was not a transient

New Yorker, but emigrated to New York at the age of 4 and grew up in Queens. I was not raised in a Protestant household, but came from an Armenian Orthodox background. I was not a strong adherent to Reformed theology, but remained open to the theology of different Christian traditions. I also did not work in Finance or the Arts, but was a Computer Scientist.

So how did I fare with the Gotham experience? It was a wrestling match. My mind was challenged through the theological texts; my heart was pierced through the devotionals; and my hands were put to use through intentional community building. The theology we studied reawakened ques-

tions that I’ve always struggled with but had left dormant.

Gotham gave me a space to contemplate, argue and examine these complex theological and cultural issues with others. Although I cannot say all my questions were answered, I can say that the things I processed sparked my imagination to think creatively about Gospel renewal...and that was thrilling.

Then there were the devotionals. These were not merely superficial readings, but were carefully constructed passages that compelled me to spend time in prayer, meditate on Scripture and internalize the deeper truths of the Gospel. Finally, there was community. Gotham was a place where

(Continued on page 6)

HOPE FOR NEW YORK VOLUNTEER FAIR

Don’t miss the Hope for New York Volunteer Fair on Sunday, September 16 after the East Side 10:30AM and West Side 11:15AM services. Meet staff and volunteers of organizations who are serving the poor and marginalized in New York City and learn how you can get involved!

Hope for New York partners with nearly 40 high-impact non-profit organizations that are making a difference in our neighborhoods. There are many ways for you to help bring renewal to our city as a volunteer.

- *Mentor high school students with Morris Academy Mentors, Young Life, and Kids with a Promise and help them grow as leaders*
- *Serve adults in recovery with the Bowery Mission Transitional Center, the Bowery Mission Women’s Center, St. Paul’s House and Exodus Transitional Community Inc.*
- *Provide homework help to at-risk children with Father’s Heart KidZone or New Song, or tutor immigrant students with Chinese Christian Herald*
- *Serve immigrant communities and teach English as a Second Language at Brooklyn Arab American Friendship Center, Living Waters, The Father’s Heart, or New Song.*
- *Reach out to teen moms with YoungLives or help lead social activities and art projects for teen moms at Inwood House or Gifted Hands*

... and so many more! Can’t wait ‘til September 16? Email volunteer@hfn.org for information about our opportunities, or find out more at www.hfn.org/volunteer



1359 BROADWAY
4TH FLOOR
NEW YORK, NY 10018

FIRST CLASS MAIL
US POSTAGE
PAID
NEW YORK NY
PERMIT # 349

CALVIN... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 4)

“For the Word of God is not received by faith if it flits about in the top of the brain, but when it takes root in the depth of the heart...the heart’s distrust is greater than the mind’s

blindness. It is harder for the heart to be furnished with assurance [of God’s love] than for the mind to be endowed with thought.” (III.2.36)

To furnish our hearts with

more of that assurance is the ultimate purpose of the *Institutes*, and I can say, personally, that it is fulfilling its purpose in me this year.

GOTHAM EXPERIENCE... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 5)

people from varying backgrounds were brought together to connect through discussions, prayer, social activities and group projects. I was blown away by the genuine love that grew within the fellowship and the intimate friendships formed over the course of the year.

Looking back, I realize Gotham gave me a more nuanced view of the Gospel. It taught me that cultural renewal occurs when we allow the Gospel to transform us intellectually, emotionally and functionally. It is the process of becoming “the salt of the world”—salt that needs to be sprinkled and absorbed in order to give taste.

This Fall Gotham will commence our 5th class with an increased number of 40 Fellows. The Gotham Class of 2013 includes the following people:

<i>Abby Montgomery</i>	<i>Deborah Ma</i>	<i>Linda Dolan</i>
<i>Andrew Nemr</i>	<i>Faith McCormick</i>	<i>Lisa Sweeney Taylor</i>
<i>Aya Hayashi</i>	<i>Jenny McMahan</i>	<i>Malik Ashiru</i>
<i>Becky Perry</i>	<i>Jensen Ko</i>	<i>Melissa Waheibi</i>
<i>Benjamin Setiawan</i>	<i>Jessica Edelman</i>	<i>Miriam Glaser</i>
<i>Bethany Jenkins</i>	<i>Jon Newman</i>	<i>Rodman Ricketts</i>
<i>Bonnie Pau</i>	<i>Jonathan Lee</i>	<i>Sarah Clauser</i>
<i>Brett Gaudin</i>	<i>Joseph Selvidio</i>	<i>Scott Calgario</i>
<i>Brian Chung</i>	<i>Julia Choi</i>	<i>Shannen Norman</i>
<i>Chris Copeland</i>	<i>Julia Wattacheril</i>	<i>Sherry El-Gawly</i>
<i>Crystal Suh</i>	<i>Julie Sylvestre</i>	<i>Ted Jeon</i>
<i>Daniel Chun</i>	<i>Kasey Watkins</i>	<i>Tina Chang.</i>
<i>David Won</i>	<i>Kathryn Yarlett</i>	
<i>Deborah Francisco</i>	<i>Kyle Werner</i>	