

Foundation for Reformed Theology

History

Dr. and Mrs. John H. Leith established the **Fund for the Explication and Application of Reformed Theology** in 1982 to renew the theology, ethos, social vision, and hope of the Reformed and Presbyterian community. After sixteen years of service and growth, the Fund in turn incorporated what became its successor organization, the **Foundation for Reformed Theology**, in 1998. The Foundation manages the funds that are available and directs the program.

This Reformed theology, ethos, vision, and hope once informed American culture in general as well as that of particular communities. Colonial America cannot be understood apart from the Reformed documents and the Reformed communities that are celebrated by this Foundation. The recovery of this theology and its communities must occur first in worshipping, believing congregations. This, for all of its difficulties, is a more easily realizable goal than the reformation of society at large. Once again, local congregations must be taught the history, the ethos, and the theology of this particular tradition of the one, holy, apostolic, catholic church. One does not have to be Reformed or Presbyterian to be a Christian, but the one, holy, apostolic and catholic church, as well as our public life, would be greatly impoverished without this tradition.

The recovery of the tradition in the local congregation depends upon education, teaching the faith, Christian nurture, and the incorporation of diverse people into a particular pattern and way of life. This is a realizable goal as difficult as this may seem. The successful recovery of this tradition in local congregations depends more upon the minister than upon any other one factor.

Two problems immediately arise. Many ministers have not been educated in this tradition, even in the seminaries. The second problem is the increasing secularity of the lay leadership in churches, a leadership that did not receive indoctrination and education in the faith or even nurturing in the Christian way of life, much less the Presbyterian way.

The purpose of this Foundation is the recovery of this tradition in the idiom of contemporary life. The Foundation has attempted to do this in many ways. It has sponsored graduate training for committed Reformed theologians; it has supported research in Reformed theology by distinguished scholars; it has helped to enlarge the library at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia; it has contributed funds for the translation and publication of Reformed works such as the Peter Martyr Library. The Foundation has sponsored lectures in Reformed theology at Union Seminary and at the Calvin Colloquium.

The focus of the Foundation in recent years has been the bringing of ministers together for the study and reading of classical Reformed theology. This has become its dominant work. Initially, all of the seminars met at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia. Subsequently, others have met at Princeton Theological Seminary, Davidson College, Presbyterian College, Montreat Conference Center, Union Theological Seminary in Charlotte, Austin Theological Seminary,

Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, McCormick Theological Seminary, University of Dubuque Theological Seminary, Fuller Theological Seminary, and Vanderbilt University, among others.

Guiding Principles

1. Reformed theology in this program is defined by that stream of theology that moves from Zwingli to Geneva and Calvin, English Puritans, the Westminster Assembly, the theologians of the 19th Century such as Charles Hodge and Heppe, and the Reformed theologians of the 20th Century, Emil Brunner and Karl Barth.

2. The geographical focus of the Foundation is ministering to Presbyterians in the southeastern portion of the United States, though some expenditures elsewhere are not excluded.

3. The Foundation from the very beginning has insisted on integrity and trustworthiness. The Board is committed to spending the money for the purposes for which the donors gave it, namely, the enhancement of the mainstream of Reformed theology for the building up of local congregations.

4. The Board is committed to economical management of the money. That is to say, the barest minimum will be used for administrative expenses. The funds will be spent for the purpose for which they were originally given.

Program

The Foundation is committed to pursuing its work in the following six areas:

1. Graduate Scholarships for committed Reformed theologians;
2. Lectureships;
3. Research;
4. Translations;
5. The purchase of Reformed books; and
6. Seminars for the study of Reformed theology

The Foundation is exempt from Federal income tax under Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3) and is not a private foundation as defined by Section 509(a) of the Internal Revenue Code.

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