

Professor Dr. Edward A. Dowey, Jr. (1918–2003)

Dr. Edward A. Dowey, specialist in the theology of John Calvin and Heinrich Bullinger and for many years Professor at Princeton Theological Seminary, died at the age of eighty-five on May 5, 2003, after a long and full life of service to the intellectual world and Christian fellowship.

Born on Feb. 18, 1918, in Philadelphia, PA, USA, Edward Dowey was the first son of Edward A. and Margaret Turner Dowey. The children of a Presbyterian minister, Edward and his brother William grew up in a strongly religious household. During his years at university, first at Keystone College and the Lafayette College, exploring Biblical criticism, philosophy, and other exciting challenges, young Edward began to question his belief in God. Dowey was nevertheless drawn to study for the pastoral ministry by John Mackay, President of Princeton Seminary, the premier theological faculty of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. President Mackay himself, and especially Professor Joseph Hromadka, made a deep impression on the young Dowey. In 1943, when he graduated from Princeton Seminary, he was ordained as a pastor and served as chaplain in the United States Navy in the Pacific theatre and then in a Navy hospital, until the end of World War II.

In 1946 Edward Dowey took up again his theological studies, first in the United States, then in Switzerland. In New York his teachers included Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich, and culminated in a M. A. from Columbia University, with a thesis on the neotic effects of sin according to John Calvin. In Zurich he studied with Emil Brunner and received his Doctor of Theology degree in 1949; his doctoral thesis, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology*, was first published in 1952 by Columbia University Press. The influence of this remarkable book, often considered the best introduction to Calvin's theology in the English language, has been great, as witness the new editions in 1965 and again in 1994 (Wm. B. Eerdmans).

Dr. Dowey returned to the United States in 1949 and began his career in theological education. He was Instructor at Lafayette College 1949–51, Lecturer and then Assistant Professor at Columbia University 1951–54, Associate Professor of Church History at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago 1954–57, and then Professor at Princeton Theological Seminary 1957–88. In 1982 he was honored as the Archibald Alexander Professor of Christian Doctrine, receiving a named chair in memory of the first Professor of the Seminary. Over the course of years of teaching, Professor Dowey shared his gifts with many different institutions, as visiting professor at universities and theological faculties both in the United States and around the world. In 1971 a speaking tour took him to Lebanon, Egypt, Korea, Hong

Kong, and Thailand. The Dowey family (Professor and Mrs. Lois Dowey and children Edward and Elizabeth) spent many happy sabbaticals in Zurich, and his relationship with the Institut fuer Schweizerische Reformationsgeschichte and the colleagues there was always a joy for Dr. Dowey. Later, as Mrs. Dowey's interest in Africa grew, they also traveled there with great delight.

The Professor remained deeply involved in his church commitments, also. He served for a time on the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches. The most notable contribution to the larger Presbyterian Church was his years-long work as chairman of the committee which drafted a new Brief Contemporary Statement of Faith, which has come to be known as the Confession of 1967. After the arduous process of guiding the confession through writing and revisions and confirmation, Professor Dowey also published *A Commentary on the Confession of 1967 and an Introduction to The Book of Confessions*.

Professor Dowey had a life-long love for John Calvin and Heinrich Bullinger and the Reformed tradition. Besides his seminal work on Calvin's understanding of the knowledge of God, another of Dowey's important contributions to Calvin studies was his service for many years on the Praesidium of the International Congress for Calvin Research, for which he was honored at the Eighth Congress in August 2002, in Princeton. Though suffering from Parkinson's Disease and physically frail, Dowey's mind remained clear and sharp, and his sense of humor and delight in repartee were as bright as ever – so that in response to the Congress' award, he topped off his words of thanks with a bit of his favorite poetry.

The Professor's fascination with Calvin was rivaled only by his great interest in Bullinger. The extent of his learning never became fully evident in print, since he was constantly revising his ideas, re-reading Bullinger, considering further angles, and starting over again to set out the full picture in a new way. In the death of Professor Dowey the scholarly world has lost one of the most gifted modern interpreters of Bullinger. Nevertheless, some glimpses of that erudition will become public with the inclusion of several of his important recent articles on Bullinger as «Prism of the Reformation» and «Bullinger as Theologian» in a volume edited by Professors Emidio Campi and Bruce Gordon, which will appear in celebration of Bullinger's 500th birthday next year, 2004.

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