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NEWS

Welcoming Back Kerux

You hold in your hand the first copy of *Kerux* for the 2010-2011 school year. Some of you are probably wondering what, exactly, this thing is.

That's a great question.

Kerux is a monthly publication of Calvin Seminary's student body. In the past, it's content has gone in different directions, featuring essays, sermons, community news, creative writing, angry letters, recipes, and everything in between. This year, the paper has been on hiatus - last year's editor, Kory Plockmeyer, took a job this fall that kept him from returning, and it's taken us awhile to get things in order.

We are proud to say that *Kerux* is now back. With a mission. Our goal is to provide an opportunity for students and faculty to be heard. We want to know what you think about what goes on in this seminary, in our churches, and in the wider world we live in. We want to give you the chance to speak your mind and wrestle with Scripture and culture, calling and relationships. Each of us in this community that needs teaching and encouragement and rebuke, and we want you to use *Kerux* to give us that.

We need you to.

Those of us who pursue seminary know just how powerful words can be. They shape and mold our thinking, guiding our attitudes and actions. That's why we are so thrilled, and so humbled to have the opportunity to make this publication happen. Please join us.

We owe a debt of gratitude to Kory, and all of the previous *Kerux* editors. Their time and hard work has helped make this seminary better. It is our prayer that we will work with you to do the same.

Look for regular monthly issues starting at the end of January.

In Christ,
AJ Gretz and Brandon Haan
Co-Editors

NEWS

Accountability in Anonymity

Student Senate recommends changes to end of semester evaluations

by AJ Gretz

On Friday, December 3rd, the CTS Student Senate recommended to the Faculty Status Committee and the Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPAA) that “student names on evaluations be always visible to the VPAA and optionally visible to professors, unless the VPAA is the professor of said course, in which case the students will be given the option of full anonymity.” This marks a change from current CTS policy, by making every student's name visible to the VPAA, while still giving students the choice about whether or not their name is visible to their professor.

The move comes as part of an effort to provide more accountability to students, who, in rare circumstances, use their anonymity to make hurtful comments on student evaluations. According to CTS Senate Vice-President Kyle Brooks, the measure is “provided for us students who often feel tempted either to write unnecessary and hurtful remarks or to not provide well thought out, constructive critique. This helps us to see even this activity as part of our formation for a ministry where we will be regularly called to “speak the *truth* in *love*.” If a student's evaluation is deemed unnecessarily cruel, hurtful, or un-constructive, the VPAA will have the ability to approach that student in a way he/she feels appropriate.

During discussion of the motion, one of the main concerns was that a loss of total anonymity would lead to an abuse of power by professors if they didn't like the feedback they received from a student. Senate's recommendation that student names be visible to the VPAA is an attempt to prevent this from happening. According to Brooks, “while this motion encourages students to write more helpful feedback (which eventually is for the good of students, and, therefore, the church), it also protects their anonymity should they choose not to disclose their names to their professors.”

Senate's recommendation will now be considered by the Faculty Status Committee before any changes go into effect.

What do you think about these changes? Drop us a letter to the editor at ajg84@calvinseminary.edu.

RECIPE

Pumpkin Cream Cheese Muffins

by Brandon Haan

A great breakfast muffin. After all, the food pantry has a seemingly unlimited supply of pumpkin puree...

Ingredients (For 24 muffins)

8 oz. cream or Neufchatel cheese

3 eggs

2 cups sugar

2 ½ cups flour

½ teaspoon salt

2 teaspoons baking powder

¼ teaspoon baking soda

1 ¼ cups solid-packed pumpkin or pumpkin puree

1/3 cup vegetable oil

½ teaspoon vanilla extract (optional)

Directions

1 – Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Lightly coat muffin tin(s) with non-stick cooking spray.

2 –Let cheese warm to room temperature or until soft. Beat cheese, 1 egg, and 3 tablespoons sugar together in a small bowl and set aside. Combine the remaining sugar, flour, salt, baking powder, baking soda, and a bit of cinnamon (if desired) in a large mixing bowl. Lightly beat in remaining eggs, pumpkin, oil, and vanilla. Evenly divide half of the batter among the muffin cups. Place a spoonful or two of the cream (or Neufchatel) cheese filling in the center of each cup and then cover with remaining batter. Sprinkle dried oatmeal on top if desired. Bake 20 to 25 minutes or until tester comes out clean.

Tips:

—Substitute honey for sugar for a more earthy flavor that accents the pumpkin taste a bit more, though doing so will significantly lessen the amount of batter.

—Don't worry if the top layer of batter doesn't fully cover the cream cheese middle, it'll all bake together just fine.

REFLECTIONS

The Descent into Leadership

by Andrew Zylstra

Four months ago I walked through the doors of Calvin Theological Seminary to begin what I thought was a new chapter in my life story. Well aware of my gifts and confident in my abilities, I entered into this new adventure fully expecting to be changed. But I am beginning to realize that the nature of this change is not at all what I expected. I came to this institution to be trained for fruitful ministry—to increase my knowledge of God and his Word; to improve my skills of communication and presentation; and to be exposed to ministry needs and opportunities around the world. Don't get me wrong, these are important and vital things. But what surprises me about my formation here so far is that it has just as much to do with tearing me down as it does with building me up.

This is a difficult and uncomfortable situation for me. I have lived my life to this point always trying to build more on what I already have. Now I sense God calling me to give things up and leave them behind. I'm not talking here about material possessions of little worth, but of the very ideas and perceptions that have guided me through life and, to some extent, made me successful. These are changes that take a great deal of trust. To give them up is to voluntarily knock myself off the ladder, and isn't that what God calls us to do in many cases? Certainly it is. But a conceptual awareness of this falls far short of actually putting it into practice.

My prayer for myself and for all of you is the grace and strength to allow God to break us down into faithful Christian leaders. We voluntarily put ourselves beneath all others and engage in the hard work of leading others in the same direction. This puts us in a paradoxical situation in life. God's work of tearing us down and building us up is a simultaneous and continuous process. As our strength and wisdom increases, it enables us to descend lower and lower into effective, God-honoring leadership.

POETRY

Hints of Greater Glory

Night sky afire:

Pinpricks of light glimmer, fall,
expire.

Waves upon the shore

Pound, pound, pound, crash

And roar.

Crested crags arise –
Rugged peaks, wreathed in
cloudy guise.

Celestial stars shout “Higher!”
The waves repeat His praise;
Mounts in all their loftiness
Hint of His greater ways.

FEATURES

Book Review

The Day Metallica Came to Church by John Van Sloten

by **Brandon Haan**

There are few things I love more than getting new books. What’s even better, though, is getting new books for free, which was what happened when the other first years and I visited HQ (aka 2850) during Gateway. While there, after running into Iron Man, the Hulk, and the other Avengers, each of us received a plastic bag full of brand new CRC publications, which included a copy of John Van Sloten’s recent release, *The Day Metallica Came to Church: Searching for the Everywhere God in Everything*.

Now, out of the books in the bag, I immediately found myself most interested in reading Van Sloten’s, and not just because it’s garnered a decent bit of controversy since its release, or because it’s the first to be put out by Faith Alive’s new imprint, *Square Inch*. In all honestly, my initial interest in it probably had to do with little more than its aesthetically pleasing (and SHINY) cover, despite what any old adages may contest. Or maybe it was the ridged pages, which happen to be my favorite.

The reason, however, that I actually decided to sit down and read through it has much more to do with its content. The book, in short, is about the connections between human culture and achievements and God’s revelation. Basically, Van Sloten argues that general revelation in creation is not just limited to animals and plants, birds and Venus fly-traps, rocks and natural wonders. Instead, Van Sloten contends that, because we are made in God’s image, God’s general revelation and truth is found in the “text” of human imagination and the resulting accomplishments and culture that we create. This all leads Van Sloten to his main point: that it is through engaging with the human achievements, art, and ideas all around us that we see and understand God and his vision for us a bit more clearly.

I’m pretty sold on those ideas following my last four years at Calvin College and frequent interaction with Ken Heffner, the college’s Director of Student Activities. He and the college as a whole make the same basic points on the subject of Christians interacting with secular culture that Van Sloten does, and, also like Van Sloten, Ken has drawn his ideas from Reformed theology.

But, despite my appreciation for what Van Sloten is trying to do in the book, I wasn’t completely sold on *The Day Metallica Came to Church* after my read-through. The book quickly emerged as one of those books that I both like and dislike. There were certainly moments where I found myself nodding along, underlining vigorously, and scribbling notes of affirmation in the margins (especially in the later chapters: “A Childlike Imagination,” “Parable Ears and Icon Eyes,” and “Heaven on Earth”). But I think on the whole there were far more points during my reading where I was a little peeved as I violently scratched in a note to the author, asking him a question or pointing out a flaw in what he was doing.

The main problem that I had with the book wasn’t so much its basic concept or ideas; it’s that there was way too much of Van Sloten himself in the book. He uses a number of stories from his personal life and ministry to

set up what he's going to say, and he often couches his observations and main points in each chapter with first person rhetoric, making his reflections seem more like personal epiphanies than something his readers can share with him.

Of course, you may ask, how else can he set these ideas up other than to share how he himself first engaged in them? A fair point, and I'm not necessarily against doing things that way, but when it seems as if the author, almost the whole time, is standing up and shouting, "Look, LOOK! I figured something else out! I found God somewhere else! I recognized truth here!" it comes off as a little obnoxious, which is how I felt about Van Sloten's narrative voice for most of the book. Really, for all his talk on recognizing *God's* truth in the world, in culture, in art (including literature) done well, I didn't think that *The Day Metallica Came to Church* itself really gave off much of that sense in the way that it was written. Instead, it more often seemed to set Van Sloten up on the pedestal, and relegate God to the position of approving observer.

In short, though the second half of the book does pick up a bit, and though the basic ideas *The Day Metallica Came to Church* deals with are ones I can easily come alongside of, I couldn't overcome the feeling that Van Sloten had failed in a major way at transferring the delight and God-recognition that he found in the artistic, cultural, scientific, and creational texts he'd presented to his readers. Rather than capitalizing on his basic principals by writing his book in such a way that it reinforced them with the kind of wonder and power it seems like Van Sloten truly takes in them, the book came off much more as a personal project for Van Sloten - a long, long essay meant to encourage him and reinforce him in his cultural experiments rather than open up a new world to new readers. In the end, the book seemed much more like it focused on Van Sloten's personal relationship with God and general revelation than it did on anyone else's ability to share in the same kinds of interaction.

POETRY

Buffet Boot Camp

No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs...

-2 Timothy 2:4

Full bellies—"Bread and circus"—while the battle rages
and souls are dying.

An all-you-can-eat, buffet boot camp:

"Eat 'til you're full"—and then some.

Where are those beating, buffeting their bodies
to make them serve the King...?

Outright war breeds

either fear and flight, or

awakening to action, training to fight

Scattered congregant yawns

lazily

wind

their

way

around a dormant parish.

Fidget.

"Quarter 'til."

Tick...tock...

The preacher's words, and a circling bottlefly—
Hardly a contest for a child's—and parents'—attention.
“Will it land? Where?—place your bets.”
“Amen.”
“Oh—he's done.
Time for lunch.”

OPINION

A Critique of Pure Capitalism

by Micah Schuurman

Capitalism is notoriously difficult to define. However, for the sake of this essay, I will define it as an ideology that sets forth a economic system that emphasizes the principles of private ownership, the free market and personal responsibility. These phrases are buzz-words today. Politicians regularly use them in speeches. These ideals conjure up warm feelings in the heart of many and for good reason. But, when implemented, they often yield unintended results.

Private ownership makes sense for anyone who takes a candid look at human nature. People tend to take better care of things that they themselves own. Anyone who has ever had a roommate knows that people often fail to treat their roommate's belongings with care. From the viewpoint of stewardship, it seems as though an individual is more capable than a group of individuals when it comes to caring for certain things, particularly personal belongings. But, it seems that personal stewardship is not ideal when considering stewardship of other aspects of life. An obvious example is stewardship of the environment.

Suppose you and I own two adjacent farms. You take good care of your land, but I don't take good care of mine. I dump chemicals and pollute the groundwater. You water your animals from your well and they get sick and die because of my irresponsible behavior.

The technical economic term for this is an externality, an unintended economic consequence of a particular action. Positive externalities include the way in which a beekeeper's bees will pollinate surrounding crops or the way in which a new business provides jobs to a community. An example of a negative externality is the way in which neighboring houses lose property value when I paint my house a hideous color or the way in which factory farming has endangered public health by creating antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

Negative externalities are a problem because it is an easy way for a company to cut costs. It makes economic sense for a factory to force others to pay the real cost of pollution through poorer health, damage due to acid rain and the negative consequences of global climate change. The more effectively a company can externalize costs, the better its profits will be.

The fundamental problem is that no one actually owns the air or the water table. Unless capitalism can effectively privatize absolutely everything including the rain-water itself (attempted briefly in Cochabamba, Bolivia in 2000), negative externalities will continue to be a problem. The only other viable solution is for the government to take responsibility for protecting those things that cannot be privatized and used for profit.

Capitalists often insist that the free market can iron out the negative externalities. People will stop buying from a company that pollutes or uses other unethical business practices. Unfortunately, this assumes that a significant percentage of people are very well informed consumers and able to weigh the full consequences of each purchase. The quantity of data involved in making even one thoroughly informed decision is astronomical. People seek cheap, quality products. The negative externalities that factor into the true cost of a product rarely factor into the decision at all.

It is impractical to expect the free market to solve negative externalities. But, there are more drawbacks to the free market than simply being unable to handle negative externalities. For example, the free market has no

meaningful way of speaking of economic injustice. In capitalism greed is not a sin. Indeed, a business is expected to maximize profit. This involves cutting costs. The ideal businessman is one who can get the most productivity out of workers for the least amount of money. Working within the ideology of capitalism, it is literally impossible for employers to pay workers a just wage provided the employers are working for their own self-interests by maximizing profits. In this system, the needs of the employee do not play any role in determining a fair wage. The employer has no ethical obligation to look out for the welfare of the employees.

The problem here is that the framework of this debate hinges on a false dichotomy. Those supportive of a pure free market insist that we as a society must choose between low wages and no wages, between low-paying jobs and no jobs at all. They forget that there is a third option, jobs that pay a living wage (Consider what Nehemiah 5 tells us about economic injustice). One possible way to engineer a living wage would be to increase the minimum wage, increase taxes and use the increased revenue to give substantially larger tax breaks to people with dependents and to small businesses struggling to pay the higher wages. This would provide more money to those who need it and less to those who don't, namely high-schoolers working summer jobs.

But, the problems with the free market extend beyond being unable to handle negative externalities and the matter of just wages. A pure free market destroys itself from within by means of economies of scale. Economies of scale refer to the fact that it is more efficient to produce products in high quantity. Suppose I own a widget factory. If you need to buy one widget, it will cost me one dollar to make that widget for you. But, if you need one thousand widgets, it may cost as little as 50 cents per widget. Most costs go down as scale increases. A few costs go up as quantities increase. For example, McDonald's devotes a larger share of its profits to legal fees than a mom and pop hamburger joint normally does. But, generally, efficiency increases as quantities increase. That is why Walmart has such low prices.

Efficiency is a necessary part of any healthy economic model. But, efficiency becomes a problem when it enables larger, more efficient companies to wipe out competitors. As this happens, larger companies become more and more like monopolies. Thus, a pure free market inevitably leads to a market with little freedom at all. Government involvement via anti-trust laws seems to be the only thing capable of protecting the free market from itself.

Personal responsibility is the third and final emphasis of Capitalism that I will discuss. Personal responsibility makes sense, particularly in our individualistic culture. In 2 Thessalonians 3:10, Paul reminds the people that "anyone who is unwilling to work shall not eat." But for every passage that seems to put moral responsibility on individuals, many more seem to put responsibility squarely on society as a whole. But, operating within a capitalistic worldview, it is nearly impossible to talk about corporate responsibility in a way that does not reductionistically define it solely in terms of personal responsibility. The two are distinct and yet the two must coexist peaceably in a society that seeks to reflect the will of God for society as found in the Bible.

As you may have noticed, no country has an economic system that reflects the pure Capitalism articulated above. Capitalistic economic systems in the real world tend to supplement the principles of private property, free market and personal responsibility with some corporate ownership, government intervention and communal responsibility. Nevertheless, America's political climate today is such that a person cannot suggest a deviation from pure capitalism without being labeled a socialist or a communist. A day doesn't go by without someone on Fox News denouncing President Obama as one of the two. Obama isn't a socialist. He and the Democrats are capitalists who deviate from the "script" a bit more than Republicans. The debate ought not be about who is better at living up to pure capitalistic ideals. The debate ought to focus on who can combine socialistic principles with capitalistic ones to produce the best "cocktail" for the particular challenges facing our country.

What do you think about this? Drop us a letter to the editor at ajg84@calvinseminary.edu.

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