



MARTIN
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SEMINAR

Word of greeting – commencement Olivet University 2009

Dear President, dear faculty, dear alumni, dear students,

I bring you greetings from the World Evangelical Alliance and its director Geoff Tunnicliffe, as well as from the International Institute for Religious Freedom of the World Evangelical Alliance, which I am honored to serve. Olivet University means a lot to us, not only because of the significant practical help, but also because your spirit and our spirit are in harmony: Winning the whole world through disciples of Jesus, who claim every area of life and society to be His, whether in education, business or art, and to live everywhere for our Triune God, the Creator and Father, his Son Jesus Christ, and his Holy Spirit.

Some days ago, one of the great giants of Christian faith went to see his Lord. I met Ralph Winter for the first time as a student at the first international missions conference for unreached peoples in Edinburgh 1979 – at that time we still called them ‘Hidden People.’ Winter became my tutor in discipling, world mission, and especially in alternative theological education. I remember many valuable discussions with him in Pasadena. He combined in an admirable way the faith of a small child with the most brilliant ideas. He disciplined new converts as much as well as great thinkers and leaders. Research and innovation were well known to him as much as sticking to what was once for all revealed. He seemed to become more flexible, the older he got!

Because he saw Olivet University as something coming close to his dreams, from the time of its inception, I am glad that his heritage can also be found in our Martin Bucer Seminary. We hope we carry Winter’s dream as well as Olivet University does. I hope that you will not only find books in the Ralph Winter Library, but also Ralph Winter’s vision in our midst: to reach the world through making people disciples of Jesus, and then training them to become thinking men and women who change the world.

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I bring you greetings as well from the faculty of Martin Bucer Seminary with its small campuses in several countries of Europe and in Turkey. Education, from the moment of the newborn baby in Christ up to the highest level of spiritual and intellectual influence, is the demand of the day; we pray that the Lord will give us the same wisdom and achievement as he has given you in your international ministry.

Our faculty would like to impress Romans 12:1–2 on the life and ministry of today's alumni. „ Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your intelligent worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your thinking. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will. “

Here Paul says two things:

1. If our service for God is really intelligent and rational (and not irrational as described in Romans 1), it only can mean that we serve him as a living sacrifice with all we have and are, at all times and in all areas of life and society. It is irrational to believe that there is a God and then live as if he is not there.

2. If we do not want to live like the world around us, we have to overcome the world, where it really is, in our own minds and thinking processes! It is here (in our own heads), that we accept the false values and judgments of this world. By constantly renewing our thinking as long as we live, by being open to learn from God, his word and our fellow Christians, we can overcome the world and think and act in a Christ like manner. May the Lord bless you in your future life and assure, that you will further his glory everywhere.

Thomas Schirmacher



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