

Ladies and gentlemen,

I'd like to introduce to you the man the senate of this university awards with a doctorate honoris causa. His name is Dr. Richard John Mouw. He is of Dutch descent – the Mouw family lived for centuries in the neighborhood of Oldebroek, not far away from this city. He was born in 1940 in an immigrant family in the United States. He has been raised in the Reformed tradition. He studied at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan, and was awarded his PhD from the University of Chicago. Dr. Mouw was Professor of Christian philosophy at Calvin College for seventeen years. In the early 1980s he served as a visiting professor to the Vrije Universiteit of Amsterdam. He was appointed Professor of Christian Philosophy and Ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary in 1985. In 1993 he was elected president of Fuller Theological Seminary, retiring in 2013 after twenty years of service. In 2007, Dr. Mouw was awarded the Abraham Kuyper Prize for Excellence in Reformed Theology and Public Life at Princeton Theological Seminary by the Abraham Kuyper Center for Public Theology. In 2015 he delivered the first Herman Bavinck Lecture at this university and the Abraham Kuyper Lecture at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. At Fuller, he now holds the chair of Christian Philosophy.

The doctorate honoris causa is granted to Dr. Mouw for several reasons. He is a prolific writer and published at least fifteen books as single author. As a result of his time at the Vrije Universiteit he published in 1993 *Pluralisms and Horizons: An Essay in Christian Public Philosophy*, together with Dr. Sander Griffioen, professor of Philosophy at the Vrije Universiteit. Well-known are his books *He Shines in all that's Fair: Culture and Common Grace* (2001), *Abraham Kuyper: A Short and Personal Introduction* (2011), and more recently, *Adventures in Evangelical Civility: A lifelong Quest for Common Ground* (2016). Some characteristics of his work are already revealed in these titles: Calvinism, Culture, and Common Ground. His writings are witty, have a very personal tone, and with his books and speeches he reaches large audiences in the broad Evangelical world on the various continents. If one thing stands out on his performance, then it is the fact that Dr. Mouw is an excellent communicator. He brings in his own tradition in the public debate on religion, worldviews and culture, and has the gift to reach out to and have conversations with other tradition within and outside Christianity.

His contribution to the neo-Calvinist tradition is twofold. In the first place he reflected and expanded insights on the themes of sphere sovereignty and common grace. His philosophical reflection on pluralism in the first phase of his academic career was state of the art, and relevant in American society in its

transfer from a Christian towards a plural society in the second half of the twentieth century. In the second part of his career he especially paid attention to the commonness of mankind. More and more he got impressed by the work God is doing in this world and in all of mankind, and asked attention for the 'uncommon decency' followers of Christ are asked to assume in contact with other faiths and cultures. He practices this decency by challenging his fellow conservative Christians to civility in public discourse.

Secondly, he belongs to what is called sometimes The Big Four: historian George Marsden philosophers Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff, and Mouw. They represent the best of the neo-Calvinist tradition in North America, and their feat is having made the Christian faith respectable in academia. Each contributed to this result in his own way, Mouw by his academic leadership and his public role.

Dr. Mouw had a lifelong career in academia, but he was also very much involved in public life. He is an inspiring teacher, and also a lecturer sought-after. In the United States he is a public figure in the domain of religion, especially promoting the dialogue between different religious traditions, of which his conversation with the Mormons or the Jews is a good example. But he has also played an important role in bridging gaps within the Reformed family, for example by asking attention for Dr. Klaas Schilder, on whom he

lectured her in Kampen in 2002. In 2009 he co-authored a declaration of Evangelical leaders which promoted Christians 'to read, wrestle with, and respond to *Caritas in Veritate*', the social encyclical of pope Benedict XVI. Dr. Mouw also showed leadership in debates on religious issues in the broader evangelical world and in American society. He often has a mediating role, and in this capacity he also won influence within political circles in Washington and the White House. Dr. Mouw practices ecumenicity in a desirable way: by appreciating the strong points in other traditions, and acknowledging the weaknesses in his own tradition.

Dr. Mouw was president of Fuller Theological Seminary, which he developed into a school with 4.300 students from a hundred different denominations and seventy different countries. Fuller has been qualified as 'arguably the most influential seminary in America, by number of pastors and educators trained'. He succeeded in making room for the neo-Calvinist tradition on this religious plural campus, and build up a close relationship with the neo-Calvinist tradition in the Netherlands and its academic institutions. In the last decades he has functioned as a mentor to a new generation of neo-Calvinist scholars, encouraging them in their studies and helping to find their way in academia.

For his mediating role in academia and the public arena, for his lifelong reflections on key themes in the neo-Calvinist tradition, his promotion of neo-Calvinism in North-America, and his mentorship and care for creating a neo-Calvinist community worldwide, Dr. Mouw will be granted a doctorate honoris causa from Theological University Kampen.