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Remember the Warnings

"This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior: knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."

II Peter 3:1-4

Peter began the second chapter warning that "there shall be false teachers among you" even as "there were false prophets" (1). Now he begins this third chapter by admonishing the young Christians to remember the warning that there

will be scoffers. It is extremely important to Peter that they be forewarned about the false teachers.

Peter addresses the young Christians as "beloved." This is the first of four times in this chapter that he uses this expression of endearment. Because of inspiration we know that every time he used it, he meant it. It is because of his love for them, and because he sees them as loved by God and by Jesus, that Peter is urgent to alert them. At the same time, their being beloved stands in sharp contrast to the divine hatred for the deliberately deceitful false teachers.



It is urgent that the young Christians remember to be alert for false teachers. Peter deliberately tells them that he is writing them to "stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance." They (and we) need to be stirred up to remember because we are apt to forget. In the first chapter Peter saw the importance of their remembering what they had been

taught before (1:13-15). Now he wants them to remember the warnings the prophets and apostles had given them about the presence of mockers and scoffers. Note that Jude does the same (Jude:17, 18). It was obviously important to the apostles and the Spirit that we be alert and not surprised by false teachers and those who scoff at the Christian religion and the promises of God.

It is interesting to note that Peter speaks of their "pure" minds. A pure mind is sincere; it is a mind that receives the truth as found in God's word, and then reflects on that truth in light of the rest of God's word. A pure mind does not put its own thoughts on Scripture, but lets Scripture interpret Scripture.

Specifically, what are the young Christians to remember? "The words which were spoken before." The tense Peter uses here indicates that these words of the prophets of old were still 'speaking.' The saints had been told and were being told things "by the holy prophets." These

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prophets are the "holy men of God" who "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (1:21), that is, the Old Testament prophets. These prophets foretold the coming of Jesus Christ to judge the world of the ungodly, to destroy the present world, and to create a new heavens and earth. Enoch, "the seventh from Adam, prophesied..., 'Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints'" (Jude:14). Isaiah told of One who would judge with righteousness, reprove with equity, smite the earth, slay the wicked (Is. 11:1-4), and create a new heavens and a new earth (Is. 65:17). Daniel and Malachi did the same (Dan. 7:9-14; Mal. 4:1).

These young Christians were also told these things by "the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour." The Lord Jesus is the author of the commandments of the apostles. He sends them with His commandment. The command was given in the Great Commission: "whatsoever I command you" (Matt. 28:20). The apostles taught in such a way that the hearers were conscious that they were hearing the Lord and Savior. We are told that this was the case with the Ephesians (Eph. 4:21) and with the Thessalonians (I Thess. 2:13); and it was for all the others as well. Accept as fact that when you receive a commandment of the apostles, you are receiving it from the Lord Himself.

That which the apostles taught the people by commandment was that there would be an end of this age. This end comes with a judgment of all. And prior to the end there will be a persecution by those who scoff at such an idea that the world will end, even as they live as if the world will continue forever.

Christians, young and old, are to live watching and praying. They are to live in the consciousness that the end is coming and they must prepare for that coming. It is urgent that they remember to watch for the coming of the end.



The promise of Jesus' coming is most precious to believers. It is the hope of spiritual pilgrims: as we travel through this life we are looking for the city whose builder and maker is God. It is God's promise that He will lead His beloved elect to eternal glory. He promises that He will judge their ungodly persecutors. This is the time when our justification will be made plain to all and we will dwell in perfection in glory.

The return of Jesus Christ is the hope of the Christian. We are pilgrims traveling through this world. All the tribulations and spiritual warfare of this life increase the desire for Christ's return and for the heavenly city. We look for the time when every tear shall be wiped away

and sin, pain, and death shall be no more. The hope of God's promise sustains us in our pilgrimage. And that is why the scoffers mock it.

The "scoffers" are mockers. They deny God's word of promise concern-

ing Christ's return. This is the way the devil used scoffers of old. In Isaiah 5:19 and in Jeremiah 17:15 you find that they used similar language. They like to ask, "Where is the word of the Lord?" And remember that Jesus foretold that in the end the scoffers would live as if the end was not coming, just as they did in the days of Noah (cf. Matt. 24:38 and

Luke 17:26-30). They ridicule the prospect of Christ's return and coming judgment. They mock any notion that they will ever be judged for their sins.

That is why there is such a close connection between the teachings of the scoffers and the way they live. They live and teach a life-style of selfishness, "walking after their own lusts." They live as they please. They are very bold in their self-satisfying sins, wanting no authority to prevent them (cf. 2:10b). They blasphemously and irrationally attack glories that they do not understand (cf. 2:12). They proudly seek only their pleasures, unashamedly doing them in the light of day (cf. 2:13, 18). They are full of themselves, wanting to satisfy only their own covetous selves at the expense of others (cf. 2:14). Like Balaam they so love the wages of unrighteousness that they press on even when a dumb ass talks to them (cf. 2:15ff.). The end of these entangled false teachers and their disciples is as horrible as a dog turning to his own vomit (cf. 2:20-22; Matt. 12:45; Luke 12:47, 48; Rom. 2:12).

The longer that the world exists, the more sure the scoffers are that they are correct. Their argument is that nothing has changed: "all things continue as they were from the beginning of the world." We might think that if this mockery was raised in Peter's day, then it is even stronger now, as another 2,000 years have come and gone. But it is the very presence of these mockers that is a sign of the end of the age. Is not that ironic?

The last (ending) days began after Pentecost, and this whole new dispensation is called the last days because nothing more is to happen in God's plan except the return of the Christ. There are no more wonders of grace that have to be accomplished before the end (cf. Heb. 1:1 and I Cor. 10:11).

These are like the days of

Accept as fact that when you receive a commandment of the apostles, you are receiving it from the Lord Himself.

Noah before the flood, when men also denied the coming of the end in judgment. Then, too, men mocked Noah as he built the ark and preached judgment; and they did so increasingly as the day approached.




There is such mockery today. There is the open scoffing of the atheists, holding to an evolutionary life of this world. There is the mockery arising out of the

church, when men speak of an anticipated Christian kingdom in Jerusalem. There are increasing and more blatant efforts to fulfill one's own desires, with sin increasingly more open, as if there will be no judgment. And the hope of a new heavens and earth is ridiculed.

But we must "know" this and be ever "mindful" as the people of God today. If it was true for the church in Peter's time (and

it was), then it must be much more true for us today. This is the Scripture's evaluation of our world. We must not modify or mollify this description and evaluation.

Know this! Know this to avoid the dangers and temptations, so we will not be deceived by the scoffers. Know this so we will be confirmed in the hope of God's faithful promise of Christ's return. He is coming! And He is coming quickly! 

Editorial

Prof. Barry Gritters

The Making of a Minister (2)

When I left this subject in September, I had written that Christ's church needs ministers. Our churches have the pressure of vacancies, and we feel that pressure here at the seminary. Who will present himself to be prepared for the ministry? The ministry is hard work—the toil of a slave, with the hardships of a soldier in battle, and the threats of wild beasts. No exaggerations, even if they are figures of speech—Scripture's own figures. Then, when the ministry often also is accompanied by sorrows, who would dare train? Sometimes it ends in troubles, without a grand, happy farewell. Who would take up such an occupation?

If one of the churches' sons pursues this grand and necessary

work with right motivation, God has worked that work, for God makes ministers. God calls. God makes a man willing who may have been unwilling. God shapes a man by his upbringing, gives some gifts, withholds others, even ordains embarrassing weaknesses. God makes ministers. No man simply decides to become a pastor. And though we realize that some men do make themselves ministers, that's a dark and wicked business that eventually must be brought to light, and will, sooner or later.

True ministers are God-made, not self-made. If we professors did not believe that God makes ministers (even though we acknowledge that He *uses* us), we would quit teaching very quickly. The longer I teach in seminary, and the more I feel the weight of the responsibility, the more I remind myself: God makes ministers.

How does God make ministers?

Step #1: Almighty Power

That's what it takes to make a minister. Almighty power. Nothing less than that.

Early in his seminary years each seminary student, even the most naturally gifted, will express in his own words what the apostle Paul testifies about himself in Ephesians 3:7. "It will take *the effectual working of his power* to make me a useful servant in his kingdom. There is so much I must become that I am not now, so much I must do that I cannot do, that it will take a wonder of God."

The seminarian who does not come to believe that, and to sense that with a profound realization, must not continue. If he supposes that he has the natural powers to be a useful servant in God's church, he is foolish, and must be told that. Blunt and even offensive, but this is the truth that must protect the office.

God's mighty power alone carries a man through seminary and beyond synod's examina-

Previous article in this series: September 15, 2009, p. 484.

tion. Only miraculous energy strengthens him for the ministry. To do the work faithfully from Monday through Saturday till he's exhausted, and then continue till he feels like a rung-out dishrag takes divine might. And what else will make him bold to speak when the consequences of speaking will be suffering? What less than wonder-working power enables him to die to self that he might live for the gospel?

The discipline and strength of constitution that a businessman exhibits when he sacrifices his own pleasure for the sake of his business are impressive. But the power that makes ministers—to make the unwilling willing, and not only willing but delighted—is divine!

It is the power of God in the Spirit of His ascended Son. It is the power of Christ Himself in a man.

This truth includes both warning and encouragement. The warning: No man can do the work of the ministry without depending on God. The encouragement: Regardless that the work may appear impossible—intimidating and terrifying—God will enable the minister to carry it out.

Paul's teaching in the latter part of Ephesians 3 makes this clear. He offers a prayer for the church that makes the most sensible person respond: Paul, you cannot be serious in making such petitions! They are unreasonable! You cannot really believe that I could be filled with all the fullness of God! To which Paul answers: "We have a God who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." This applies to ministers, too.

God makes ministers by almighty power.

Step #2: Power to Humble

The man whom God makes a minister is a humbled man. The humility includes a real sense of his own sin, and a realization that he is less than the people under his care. In his own mind, he is the chief of sinners (I Tim. 1:15) and less than the least of all the saints (Eph. 3:8). He esteems others better than himself (Phil. 2:3).

We ministers may not suppose that unless, like Paul, we were "before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious," we need not apply that appellation

"chief of sinners" to ourselves. Not to apply it to ourselves is the worst practical denial of total depravity—the present depravity of my own nature.

This humility must be learned. It is

not natural. But it is learned by God's grace. Grace worked it in Paul. Powerful grace will work it in our ministers today, even if gradually. More and more, starting today: "God chose me? He calls me? He qualifies me? I do not even deserve to be a doorkeeper in God's house, and God is pleased to make me a preacher, a teacher; to stand before the people of God to teach, comfort, warn, even rebuke? Me?"

The members of our churches want that in their ministers, and pray for that. Not to have such a minister is to have a minister who esteems himself higher and better than you and your children. Not to have such a minister is to have a minister who looks down on you...and your children. Not to have such a minister is to have a minister who is surprised at your sins. He supposes that he and his children could not commit such sins.

Not to have such a minister is to have a "big bad minister." Big in his own mind, he is a bad minister. When God truly makes a minister, he is very little in his own eyes. Little in relation to God, but little in relation to others, too.

Step #3: Sainthood

God also makes ministers saints. Paul was "less than the least of the saints," but he was a saint. He believed that about himself.

Roman Catholic sainthood that designates as saints only a very few whose works stand out in the world, and leaves the rest of us as non-saints, is not the sainthood of the Scripture. Paul surveyed the congregation of believers, called them all saints, and said: "I am one of you. I am the least of all of you. But I am one of you, a saint."

Ministers are saints, that is, believers whom God has sanctified: God has separated them from sin and devoted them to Himself.

They are separated from sin. Ministers know themselves as those whom God has washed from the guilt of sin by the blood of Christ and freed from slavery to sin by the Spirit of Christ. Faithful ministers pray not to live under the sway of Satan, or allow any sins to take over in their lives. If they do, they quickly admit it and get help, lest they destroy God's church.

Saints also confess their sins. Part of sainthood is the ability to admit fault, be sorry, express that sorrow, and live humbly. The church wants ministers who are saints in that sense.

And if it takes nothing less than the power of God to make a man willing to become a minister, it certainly takes divine power to make a man confess his faults and ask for forgiveness. But God's grace is amazing grace, and does mighty works.

Grace also consecrates men to

...the power that makes ministers—to make the unwilling willing, and not only willing but delighted—is divine!

God. Separated from sin, consecrated to God.

Step #4: Highest Esteem for the Gospel

Therefore, this man—strong, humbled, holy—has the highest esteem for the gospel of Christ. To him the gospel is “unsearchable riches” (Eph. 3:8). Its wealth, in his mind, is unfathomable: “God loves us! His own Son gave Himself for us! He will not judge us for our sins, for He spared not His own Son! In His covenant love He will be faithful to us! For all eternity He will be our friend! Unfathomable!” If all Fort Knox’s gold were piled in his front yard as a gift, he would not be in awe as much as he is as he stands before this gospel—great good news!—of God. He esteems Christ’s riches so highly that he would have his limbs cut off and his eyes plucked out if that’s what it took to retain them. For him, God’s gospel is the pearl of greatest price.

This esteem is not first of all for the *preaching* of the gospel, but for the *gospel* that is preached.

A minister will have a very unhealthy esteem for the *act* of preaching if he does not properly esteem the gospel he preaches. It would be like an artist having more esteem for his brush and palette than for the portrait of his wife that he has painted, or like a carpenter esteeming his hammer and nails more highly than the house he builds with them.

But God has one final work to perform in the God-made-minister. With His own hand, as it were, God places in the heart of the minister some of His own heart. God loves His people; the minister loves them. God is jealous over His people; the minister has some of that jealousy for them (II Cor. 11:1). That’s why the minister can say that he “travails in birth (he’s in the pains of childbirth) until Christ is formed (takes shape) in them” (Gal. 4:19). A wonder of grace has taken place in the God-made minister. He truly wants the people under his care to *know* God as he knows God, to esteem God’s gospel as highly as he esteems it, to treat

sure it as he does nothing else. His heart yearns as a mother’s for her precious children. He asks, with sincere desires, that God:

would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God (Eph. 3:16-19).

God makes ministers.
Only God can.



Please join with us here at seminary in praying that God will make such ministers. Join us in praying for the formation of the current students into such ministers. And join us in supplications for all our ministers that, more and more, Christ will be “formed in us,” as we pray He is formed in you.



Special Article

Prof. Russell Dykstra

John Calvin as Church Reformer (2)

In the first article, we maintained that John Calvin was God’s instrument to build upon the foundation of Martin Luther, thus furthering the reformation of the church. The basic details of Calvin’s life indicate

the work God called Calvin to do. In this second article, we take note of the man as God created and molded him to be the powerful reformer that he was.

God’s Prepared Instrument – Training

Focusing briefly on John Calvin as church reformer, we face the question: What about his early training equipped him to be a reformer?

First, John Calvin was thoroughly Roman Catholic. He wrote in his treatise against relics that he had kissed a body part purported to be of Saint Anne, the mother of Mary. He had watched the mass countless times. He had endured the confessional, had worshiped the bread and then partaken of it, firmly believing that it was the very body and blood of Jesus. Calvin had prayed to Mary and other saints,

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Previous article in this series: November 1, 2009, p. 56.

kneeling before their statues and pictures. And he was convinced that his salvation depended in part on his good works.

God caused John Calvin to know the idolatry, the perversions in doctrine, worship, and life, for this purpose: That he would know the evils inside and out and be able to reject them accurately.

Secondly, God prepared Calvin by means of the thorough instruction he received. One can see God's providential direction, for example, giving Calvin a complete knowledge of the Greek and Roman philosophers so that he could demonstrate where the medieval theologians followed the philosophers rather than the Bible. God likewise saw to it that Calvin gained a thorough knowledge of the biblical languages. Calvin learned Greek because it was necessary to read Plato and Aristotle, and Hebrew because it was part of the Renaissance study in vogue in that day. But God intended that Calvin become a master exegete, who could work from the original languages of Scripture. Even his law degree developed in Calvin a disciplined, logical mind, well able to prove his points, as well as to organize not only theology, but also the church itself.

God's Prepared Instrument—The Man.

God also created Calvin to be a reformer. What about John Calvin the man—his personality and character—equipped him to be a reformer?

One of the most notable things about John Calvin is that God created him with a brilliant mind. Calvin loved to learn, and his mind absorbed knowledge like a sponge. He was astoundingly disciplined and diligent. As a student, Calvin studied late into the night. In the morning, he awoke long before others, and

reviewed the lectures of the day before, trying to commit them to memory. As a result, later in life, he quoted the philosophers and church fathers from memory. To produce the amount and quality of the work that he did, Calvin had to be intellectually gifted.

We find also that John Calvin was a man of iron will. He could not be budged from his positions. The negative side of that was that he had a terrible temper and could erupt when he was opposed. Yet Calvin knew this weakness, would apologize for and confess his weakness. One recent biographer made the point that because Calvin knew of this, he was particularly guarded in his writing. Generally this was true. He was more careful in his writing than many theologians of his day—and infinitely more than his enemies.

An example of his iron will in his own personal life is that—largely due to health concerns—Calvin determined to eat but one meal a day. And he stuck to it.

A third notable trait of John Calvin was that he had the gift of humility. This humility was a direct result of his knowledge of the greatness and sovereignty of God. It also arose from the knowledge of himself, that he was a sinner. Evidence of his humility is that Calvin did not consider himself qualified to be a pastor. He was, he insisted, by nature, timid. We do know that he was physically not a hardy man, but was weak and sickly. Yet when God called Calvin to be a preacher, he humbly obeyed.

In addition, Calvin was never too proud to learn from others. Unashamedly he leaned on Luther. He wrote to Bullinger about Luther: "This...I would beseech you to consider first of all...that you have to do with a most dis-

tinguished servant of Christ, to whom we are, all of us, largely indebted" (*Selected works*, vol. 4, pp. 433-434).

After Farel and Calvin were ejected from Geneva, and the pastors who remained were maligning their characters, Calvin wrote to Farel: "But if we know that they cannot calumniate us, excepting in so far as God permits, we know also the end God has in view in granting such permission. Let us humble ourselves, therefore, unless we wish to strive with God when he would humble us" (*Selected Works*, vol. 4, p. 75).

He conferred with hundreds of believers and fellow pastors. He was not a maverick who went his own way. He stayed in touch with believers in many countries, writing over 1,200 letters.

More evidence of his humility is that he promoted unity, not himself. One notable example is the work he did together with Bullinger on the document on the Lord's Supper. That document went by the name of Zurich (the Zurich Consensus), even though Calvin had done most of the work.

Calvin also established regular meetings of pastors in Geneva so that they could confer with each other.

A fourth significant characteristic of John Calvin the reformer was his detachment from this world. He had almost a disdain for earthly things. Calvin preached and lived the life of a pilgrim and stranger on the earth. He understood that "we are

inclined by nature to a slavish love of this world" (*Inst.* 3.9.1). Such a love, affirmed Calvin, leads to a bondage to this world such that a man cannot even seek God.

While recognizing that all good gifts are from God, to help

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and lived
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and stranger
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us contemplate the goodness of God, Calvin himself shunned the riches of this world. He exhorted the flock: "We are to be ready without regret to leave all that belongs to this world." God makes Christians, he wrote, as "birds upon the branch."

Why is this significant for John Calvin as reformer? A man who loves the things of this world cannot be an effective church reformer. Such a man will not dare to take a stand for the truth, for fear that he will lose his position, his home, and his possessions. Calvin would stand for the truth boldly. He would refuse to compromise on the significant points of the reformation. He was not concerned about his earthly position or possessions. Calvin, as reformer, sat loose with regard to the things of this world.

A fifth personal characteristic of the man is his astounding ability and determination to work. Calvin refused to be idle. He refused to allow his many bodily ailments and afflictions to deter him from work. In the last year of his life, after he was no longer able to preach, he was encouraged to rest and cease his working in his bed. Calvin's answer indicates his thinking on work: "What! Would you have the Lord find me idle?" (Beza, "The Life of John Calvin," *Selected Works*, vol. 1, p. lxxxiv).

All that, God determined for and created in John Calvin, in order that he might be a powerful tool for reformation. But there is one thing more, which overshadows all the rest. Calvin, by the grace of God, was such a powerful reformer because he was a preacher.

God's Prepared Instrument – The Preacher

Calvin became a preacher after but a short time into his first stay in Geneva. He had received a solid theological training in the

universities. Initially in Geneva he lectured on Scripture. But it was not long before the church recognized his God-given abilities and ordained him, and he began preaching regularly.

In Strasburg Calvin blossomed as a preacher and pastor. Ordinarily he preached there four times a week. He also conducted faithful pastoral labors in his congregation of four hundred members.

In his second stay in Geneva, Calvin eventually preached twice on Sunday, and early in the morning Monday through Friday on alternate weeks. On Fridays all the ministers (and any interested members) gathered to hear and discuss a sermon preached by one of the ministers in rotation, including Calvin. Thus Calvin regularly preached eight or nine times in two weeks.

Calvin's preaching was expository. He preached through whole books of the Bible, explaining all the verses. About 1,500 of these sermons have been published.

John Calvin was also a faithful pastor who visited his flock.

Why is this, namely, his being a preacher and pastor, important for Calvin the reformer? Partly the answer is that he was not an ivory tower theologian, unattached to the realities of life and the church. Calvin had *wanted* that solitary life of a scholar; but God called him to the ministry in Geneva, using Farel.

Calvin preached to real people. He knew the needs and struggles of God's sheep. He understood, for example, that the theology and worship of Rome was a spiritual disaster for the people. It took their eyes off the cross of Christ. It brought them into dread terror of God. It robbed them of the assurance of salvation.


As a pastor, Calvin saw too that both the theology of Rome

and the gross immorality of the clergy had led to immoral living among the people. Consequently the people needed to be instructed and admonished. And Calvin admonished them pointedly – from the Scriptures. He called them to godliness, arising out of thankfulness.

Secondly, God intended that Calvin be a preacher because it meant that Calvin was immersed in the Scriptures. He drew his theology from the Scriptures. Scripture governed his thinking. His *Institutes* were drawn from and proved by the Bible. Every new edition of the *Institutes* gave evidence that Calvin was immersed in Scripture, for the *Institutes* would include new references from the particular books of the Bible that Calvin had preached or on which he had written commentaries.

Most of all, God determined that Calvin be a preacher because God's word, especially His word preached, is God's means for reforming His church. That stands to reason, since reformation is forming the church back to the Bible in doctrine, worship, and walk of life.

It is worth noting that Calvin had the highest regard for the Bible. The Bible is God's word, he insisted, and believers accept that word as surely as if they heard God speak the words. Thus the Bible is true. It is also sufficient, as well as clear and understandable.

As *preacher*, John Calvin was God's instrument to reform His church. And a powerful preacher and reformer he was. All thanks and praise be to God for raising up such a man, using him mightily, and blessing the church yet today with the benefits of John Calvin's work. 

Heaven (2)

By parable, the two celestial tutors teach us both the terrestrial immanence and spiritual transcendence of the third heaven. They also make clear that heaven is not simply a state of being, but a most glorious place, and the quality of life enjoyed there is the highest—a supreme blessedness enjoyed already on earth by the Spirit of Christ sent from heaven, and a future glory, when Jesus returns, that eye has not seen, ear heard, or has entered into man's heart to imagine (I Cor. 2:9).

Heaven is a real place—eternal and abiding, with foundations, pillars, rooms, windows, and door allowing some in and barring others (II Sam. 22:8; John 14:2). But it is more. For those who enter, heaven is home. It is a glorious home divinely decorated with insects and birds, clouds, sun, moon, and stars radiating the perfections of the creator (Ps. 19). More glorious still is life within the sacred house itself, for there dwells the Almighty Father and His beloved Son (again come home) in the Holy Spirit. Its blessedness is the divine family life shared with God's heavenly household of angelic servants and adopted sons and daughters. Its blessedness is the transcendent communion, comfort, and joy that only life in Father's home can bring (Eph. 2:19; 3:15). And no miserly parent, He shares the bounties of His home generously. What else explains the vastness of heaven and astounding quantity of its hosts? Heavenly creatures vastly outnumber terrestrial—billions of stars, and angels a 100 million strong (Rev. 5:11). Likewise God's extended family, a small remnant on earth, are an innumerable throng in heaven. Poor pilgrims here, in heaven they are given an immense, glorious home with blessings immeasurable, for God is their portion (Is. 61:7).

But heaven is more than home, and its inhabitants more than family. It is a kingdom; its residents royalty. Heaven is the Lord's palace, His throne, capital of a vast empire encompassing the universe (Is. 66:1). Its rule is absolute and now given to Jesus (Matt. 28:18). Showing this openly at the cross when He spoiled powers and principalities, He returned home the conquering King (Col. 2:15). Lucifer, who would exalt himself above heaven, He deported (Rev. 12:8). Sin and

death being defeated, His heavenly kingdom can never be destroyed (Dan. 2:44). And being family of the King in whose hearts He is enthroned, its citizens not only benefit from His everlasting, worldwide dominion, but also share in it as the new Jerusalem wherein He dwells (Heb. 11:16; Rev. 20:6).

Especially glorious is the freedom of heaven. Unbounded by earth, its hosts soar in the open firmament, hurtle effortlessly through space, and fly to uttermost regions. So, life in God's heaven is supremely liberating. Earthly Adam could not have it in Eden. But now the Lord from heaven has come down, we are made free, and when taken to heaven at death, made free perfectly. We are liberated with nothing less than God Himself—freed from earthly care with His strength, from tears with His joy, from darkness with His light, from affliction with His peace, from sin with His righteousness, from death with His life—all of it heavenly. But heaven is not a lawless place. God's children play in its streets (Zech. 8:5), but in heaven only the Lord does whatsoever He pleases. His ordinances are from heaven; His word is settled there (Ps. 119:89). So birds have their commands, stars their courses, angels their mission, and God's children their heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1). But our heavenly liberty is this—perfect, willing, and tireless obedience forever. We shall mount up on eagles wings, run and not be weary, walk and never faint (Is. 40:31).

Although it has pillars and foundation, heaven will pass away (Matt. 24:35). Not completely, for the Lord will re-create it. With a difference—having reconciled all things to Himself, God will bring heaven down to be united with earth (Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:20). No longer needed, our tutors will give way to the reality. The Lord will shake the heaven, roll it up, and dissolve its hosts, so that with great noise it passes away—as a vesture it shall be changed (Heb. 12:26; Matt. 24:29). Then those whose names are now written there will be gathered from one end of heaven to the other, to receive their inheritance, incorruptible, reserved now in heaven (I Pet. 1:4). The supreme blessings of God's heavenly home shall come down for His family to enjoy eternally in the earth and in the body. The earthly shall become heavenly. We shall be His people. He shall be our God. God shall be all in all.



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Previous article in this series: October 1, 2009, p. 16.

The Creation of the Heavens and the Earth (2)

God Created by His Word: A Truth Understood Only by Faith

An unbeliever who has never read the Scriptures or heard them preached can look out at the creation and see that there must be a God. The eternal power and divinity of the Creator are understood by the things that God made (Rom. 1:20). But it takes faith to understand that God created all things simply by uttering the word of His power. A person must have faith to understand this. There is no other way.

This is what God's Spirit tells us in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews: "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Heb. 11:3).

A scientist studying the creation under a microscope cannot detect that it was simply by His word that God brought the creation into existence. We can and do understand this truth only by believing what God Himself has told us in Scripture.

Creation by the Word of God

Although many today speak of people "creating" different things, the word in Scripture translated "create" refers to an activity that only God performs.

That God creates means that He "callethe those things which be not as though they were" (Rom. 4:17). To call something into existence—that is what it means to create. This is the work of the Almighty God alone. He speaks, and that which before was not suddenly comes to be.

This creative work of God is something that He performed by His word. We read that on the first day God spoke the words, "Let there be light," and light came to be. There are other days on which God created something in such a way that one creature was brought forth from another: "And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass" (Gen. 1:11a). "And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature..." (Gen. 1:24a). But one thing that was consistent in every creative act was this—it was *by God's word* that each creature was called into existence.

Only God's creative word could have brought forth living plants out of lifeless soil. The statement "Let the earth bring forth the grass" serves to indicate that the grass is indeed related to the earth, and that its material makeup is derived from the earth. But no human being could have taken a pile of pure soil and brought forth a plant out of it. Only the omnipotent God, by the power of His word, could have performed such an astounding work.

Believing the Unseen

That God created by His word is not something that can be understood by the creation all by itself. It is only from the Scriptures that we know that this is how it happened. God has told us, and that is how we know.

That means this truth can be understood only by means of faith—a faith that holds for truth all that God has revealed to us in His word. Even an unbeliever knows there is a God and that He must be served, but only a believer can and truly does understand that the Creator called all the creatures into existence simply by speaking His word. God expressed His will, and what He willed took place.

This glorious work of creation man did not see. Man was created last, and did not see God call any of His creatures into existence. Even when God built the woman out of the man, the man was in a deep sleep. So to believe creation is to believe something we have never seen.

Yet that is precisely what faith does. A child of God believes and has no doubt about things he has never seen. His Father has told him it is true, and that is enough for him. If his Father in heaven has said it, then the child of God has absolutely no doubt that it must be so. Such is the nature of genuine, God-given faith.



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Previous article in this series: October 1, 2009, p. 10.

■ Time For Discipline... But Will It Happen?

The question concerns the heresy of the Federal Vision. It is no longer a “new” heresy. It has been allowed to fester within Presbyterian and Reformed denominations for a shamefully long time. Scandalous is the failure of Presbyterian and Reformed denominations to remove this pestiferous error by disciplining its proponents in their midst. It is time...past time...for discipline. Will it happen?

All eyes are focused on the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), where there are at least two “live” cases in which charges have been brought against advocates of the Federal Vision heresy. Will discipline happen?

We hope, we pray, it will. But we are apprehensive. We do not wish to look down our noses at other denominations as they deal with this deadly heresy. In fact, in this article and in all of our writings we strive to encourage those who share with us the heritage of the Reformation to stand strong and to take firm action by disciplining and, if necessary, excommunicating those who spread this toxic error. But we take the wait-and-see approach.

Our apprehension is based on the fact that Presbyterian and Reformed denominations, seminaries, and theologians have written documents condemning the error of the Federal Vision, but have yet to exercise discipline to the degree of actually deposing or excommunicating any of its proponents. Perhaps this is true

because some of the heretics felt the heat and left their respective denominations without allowing the disciplinary process to run its course. For example, Steve Wilkins was facing charges in the PCA when he fled to another denomination. Yet, the PCA and other denominations are not without fault in this matter, for they should have implemented discipline long before some of these men made their getaway.

Our apprehension is also due to the repeated occurrence of Federal Vision men being exonerated when charged with their sin. Instead of being condemned, they are declared orthodox! They are given a clean bill of health. So we wait and see.

What we see in the PCA in particular, where the cases are ongoing, is not very encouraging. At least three Presbyteries (similar to our Classes) have handled cases. The Louisiana Presbytery dealt with Steve Wilkins. Despite the fact that Wilkins corrupted the doctrine of election and denied the perseverance of the saints, the Louisiana Presbytery declared that Wilkins’ views were consistent with the Westminster Standards. A committee of the PCA’s broader assembly was dealing with this case, and it is possible that Wilkins would have ended up being convicted of heresy. Nevertheless, this case came to a close when Wilkins left the PCA, and we can only wonder if he would have been convicted. The last official word said about Wilkins in the PCA is that he was orthodox.

Things are much the same in the current cases. The Pacific Northwest Presbytery studied the views of Peter Leithart, another public proponent of the Federal Vision. Leithart is an

ordained minister in the PCA, though he primarily works in the Confederation of Reformed Evangelical Churches, which has become a haven for proponents of the Federal Vision. In October of 2008 the Presbytery adopted a majority report that determined that although Leithart is not always as clear or careful in his teachings as they would wish, his teachings cannot be declared to be heretical. The Presbytery rejected a minority report that recommended first that Leithart’s views be declared “out of accord with the fundamentals of the system of doctrine taught in the Westminster Standards” and, second, that Leithart be directed to reconsider his views “with the understanding that if his views continue to be out of accord with the fundamentals of the system of doctrine taught in the Westminster Standards, Presbytery will proceed to depose him from its ministry without censure.”¹ The decision to uphold Leithart’s orthodoxy was appealed in April of this year. The appeal was rejected.² In effect Leithart has twice been officially exonerated in the PCA. This case is being appealed to the PCA’s general assembly.

The second ongoing case is taking place in the Siouxlands Presbytery. The Siouxlands Presbytery appointed a committee to study the views of Pastor Greg Lawrence. On September 28 of this year the committee “reported to Presbytery with a recommendation passed by a 4-2 margin

¹ Links to the majority and minority reports can be found at <http://deregnisduobus.blogspot.com/2008/10/more-on-pnw-presbyterys-leithart-debate.html>.

² The rejection of the appeal can be found at <http://deregnisduobus.blogspot.com/2009/04/report-to-presbytery-of-judicial.html>.

that [Presbytery Siouxlands] find a strong presumption of guilt that TE Lawrence was teaching contrary to the Standards.”³ The committee’s recommendation was rejected. Instead the Presbytery adopted the motion of Pastor Joshua Moon to declare his teachings to be in accord with the Westminster Standards. Although Lawrence’s views are not as public as those of Wilkins and Leithart, it is clear from Moon’s presentation of his views (which Moon defends) that Lawrence is a proponent of the Federal Vision and worthy of censure. The pertinent statement by Moon is as follows:

In attributing to all the baptized some form of union, adoption, new life, and forgiveness, [Teaching Elder] Lawrence is speaking the language of our tradition and of our Scriptures. By refusing to attribute absolute and final union, adoption, new life, and forgiveness, TE Lawrence is directly in line with our standards.

This is a clear assertion of both universal and resistible grace, both of which are clearly rejected by all the Reformed Standards. Despite these heretical views, Lawrence (and Moon by implication) was officially exonerated by the Presbytery by a vote of 24-13. The status of this case is unclear, because it was reported on October 20 that the Presbytery met again and “repented of its hasty actions.” Apparently the case is being reconsidered and will be dealt with again in January.⁴ Rev.

Wesley White, pastor of a PCA congregation in Spearfish, South Dakota, has valiantly pursued this case, and if necessary, it is very likely that he and others will see to it that it is brought to the General Assembly of the PCA.

So the PCA’s General Assembly (its broadest assembly) will likely consider two cases of men who are clearly transmitters of the Federal Vision contagion. All eyes are on the PCA. If necessary, will these two men be deposed and excommunicated? We are apprehensive, but we hope and pray that discipline will be exercised. It is way past time this step is taken. In fact things have developed to a point that this will only be a beginning step. It is clear that the PCA in particular, but also other Presbyterian and Reformed denominations, are going to have to do more than simply discipline the most public proponents of the Federal Vision heresy. There is more work, harder work, to do. The disease has spread. There are many who are tolerant of it and unwilling to administer the strong medicine [discipline] that is necessary to kill it. Much instruction must be given, and yes, more discipline will likely have to be exercised. Will it happen? May God give the strength.

■ The *Banner* asks, “Was the Reformation Necessary?”

The cover of the October 2009 edition of the *Banner* actually asks this question. This is the question that Dr. Ronald J. Feenstra explored as he interviewed “members of the Reformed-Roman Catholic Dialogue to talk together about the Protestant Reformation.” Evidently Dr. Feenstra is not satisfied with John Calvin’s clear answers to this question. Most clearly did Calvin answer this question affir-

matively in his treatise entitled, “The Necessity of Reforming the Church.” Dr. Feenstra turned to a contemporary panel consisting of Dr. Richard J. Mouw, as the sole representative of the Reformation tradition, and of Sr. (sister?) Joyce Ann Zimmerman, Dr. Ralph Del Colle, and Fr. (Friar) Dennis Tamburello as three representatives of the Roman Catholic tradition.

The answers of the panelists seem to indicate that they agree that in the sixteenth century it was necessary for reforms to take place within the Roman Catholic Church (with regard to both doctrine and life), and the Reformation may have been necessary to institute those reforms. Yet, the panelists agree that the Reformation was an unfortunate and unnecessary breach that ought to be healed as quickly as possible.

The Roman Catholic panelists reveal that, despite the Roman Catholic Church’s seeming willingness to make compromises as it engages in ecumenical talks with Protestant churches, it is actually interested in reconciliation only on its terms. Protestants must compromise on essential positions of the Reformation. **Scripture alone?** Ralph Del Colle says Protestants are guilty of separating Scripture and tradition and “driving too much of a wedge between things that belonged together.” **Justification by faith without works?** Del Colle says, “I don’t think the New Testament really distinguishes faith and works to the extent that Luther was claiming.” **Total depravity?** Dennis Tamburello says, “I see Catholicism as having a more optimistic anthropology—human nature was damaged but not totally destroyed by sin. Protestantism, as I understand it, holds that human nature was virtually devastated by sin.” **Christ as the only Head of the Church?** Del Colle is optimistic that there will be full communion between the Roman Catholic Church and Prot-

³ Brian Carpenter. *Presbytery of the Siouxlands Exonerates Member Suspected of Federal Vision Teaching, Complaint to the SJC Considered*. http://theaquilareport.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=481


⁴ Brian Carpenter. *Siouxlands Presbytery Sustains Complaint, Answers Overture*. http://theaquilareport.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=660

estant churches under the “Holy See,” that is, the pope. He goes on to say, “I still see the Petrine office (the pope) as the site of unity.” Thus, these RC panelists make clear that, to reconcile with Rome, Protestants will have to tolerate false doctrine and submit themselves to the tyranny of the pope.

With the above in mind it is exceedingly shocking and reprehensible that Dr. Mouw (the supposed representative of the Reformation) gleefully expresses a desire for reunification with Rome, while harshly criticizing those in the Reformed tradition who oppose this reunification. Despite the fact that the RC panelists sitting with him for the interview gave very clear evidence that the doctrinal positions of the Roman Catholic Church have not changed one iota, Dr. Mouw states, “Things are very different today.” Vatican II (a council held by the RC in the 1960s), he claims, is “one of the great spiritual

and theological renewal events in the history of the universal church.” Yes, Mouw claims, Rome has made important theological changes. We are so close now we can ignore our differences and work together. Those who deny that Rome has essentially changed on the basis that it continues officially to hold to all of the false doctrines that were condemned by the Reformation in the sixteenth century (Rome has yet to retract any of its doctrines) are denounced by Mouw as “the most fanatical and mean-spirited Protestants.” So Mouw treats Roman Catholics as friends and denounces Protestants. We will give him the Roman Catholics, and we will keep John Calvin.

Was the Reformation necessary? Calvin answered that. Yes, mainly because of Rome’s false doctrine. Is the Reformation still necessary? Yes, the main issue is the same, Rome’s false doctrine. Those who recognize this are not “fanatical” or “mean-spirited”

but instead **faithful** in standing with Calvin. Calvin received pressure from Roman Catholics to repent. Today we receive pressure from within the Protestant Church. Let our answer be the same as Calvin’s. “We will never repent of having begun [the Reformation], and of having proceeded thus far.” Let us be so convinced of what Calvin called the “eternal truth” that we are willing to be called “fanatical” and “mean-spirited.” Let us be willing to say with Calvin that we will go even further in suffering for the truth. He speaks for us when he says, “We will die, but in death even be conquerors, not only because through it we shall have a sure passage to a better life, but because we know that our blood will be as seed to propagate the Divine truth which men now despise.”⁵ 

⁵ For this and the quotes above see John Calvin “The Necessity of Reforming the Church” in *Tracts and Treatises* vol. I, pp. 233-234.

RFPA Annual Secretary Report

Mr. Scott VanUffelen

Asaph contemplates the goodness of God to Israel by retracing the history of the early church and God’s ever-present hand of protection and grace in Psalm 78. In verses 4-7 he rightly begins with the command:

We will not hide them from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works which he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their

children: that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.

85 years ago the Reformed Free Publishing Association was formed for the distinct purpose of publishing the *Standard Bearer*, a literary pile of stones by the riverside used to call to remembrance and contemplation the wonderful works and doctrines of the Lord. In 1966 the RFPA created a book publication division to add to the pile of Reformed literature found on the coffee tables and bookshelves of Reformed

homes. Tonight we give praise to God that He continues to use our organization as a token in the hands of His people, and as frontlets between our collective eyes (Ex. 13:16).

The current RFPA Board consists of 12 members who are assigned to one or another of the three standing committees: Membership and Marketing, Finance and Operations, and Book and *Standard Bearer* Publications. Having no full-time editor for the majority of this year forced some reevaluation of our intended work and a reshuffling of projects to continue to meet the demands of our Book Club members without sacrificing our commitment to quality Reformed literature. Our

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end work was the publication of three new books: *Calvin's Calvinism*; *Always Reforming*; and *The Reformed Faith of John Calvin*.

The Membership and Marketing committee has been busy in implementing the decision of last year's association meeting to utilize fully electronic media. Better to facilitate us in this endeavor, work has begun to update our website, making it easier to use and better suited for the regular use of interested parties who consistently search the *Standard Bearer*, and who order books online. Soon our members will be able to access our sermon library and download various study guides, pamphlets, and shorter works in pdf. format.

This committee has also been proactive in dispensing the Reformed truth through monthly specials and aggressive advertising campaigns. The intent of our "Buy One, Get One Free" campaign of this past summer was to give our Book Club members a financial incentive to purchase Reformed literature as gifts, or to increase their own libraries. The result was an additional 445 books being sold. Knowing the current economic situation that many of our members are in, some have given generous, specific donations to enable the board to offer reduced prices on books for current book club members; to facilitate the dispensing of books to those who can't afford them; and for the Membership and Marketing committee to organize an extensive advertising campaign for *The Reformed Faith of John Calvin* in 10 major publications. Understanding that the heart and soul of our organization rests with Book Club membership, donated funds were used to cover the cost of free books for new subscribers who joined during the Calvin Conference in September. The result was 20 new memberships, and 74 additional books purchased.

Through these lean financial times the Finance and Operations committee has needed willing donors and supportive members to keep our organization afloat. Once again, with thanksgiving to God, we rejoice in our financial stability as the Lord continues to supply all of our needs. Understanding our financial landscape and that of our supporting churches, this committee sent a letter to the churches thanking them for the past support we have received and informing them that they could reduce the number of regular collections for the RFPA. Such a request has been possible because of the generous individual donations and ample church collections we have received to date. With the addition of copyeditors and proofreaders in the near future, the Lord willing, the committee is well aware of the increase in our future financial needs.

Steps have also been taken to track accurately and account for all of our restricted funds. Two such funds worthy of continued note are the fund established to help primarily evangelism societies and mission committees supply RFPA material for those who can't afford them, and the fund currently being used to reduce the cost of RFPA books for the Book Club members an additional 5%.

In response to the 500th anniversary of John Calvin's birth, the Book and *Standard Bearer* Publications committee focused itself on the editing and printing of two books, recently distributed, to coincide with the Protestant Reformed Theological School's John Calvin Conference. With many manuscripts currently being evaluated and ready for editing, this committee is anxious to see new editors and proofreaders hired. In this regard, we are pleased to note that we have paid for six people to take an extensive

correspondence course through the University of Wisconsin to qualify them to be proficient editors and proofreaders. As of date, five members have successfully completed the course and will be interviewed shortly to determine their exact role within the editing and publishing process. Significant work has also been undertaken in consideration of a redesign of the *Standard Bearer* to better utilize our typesetting software, to make the magazine more easily readable, and to maintain its appeal in the homes and on the mission fields in our ever-changing society.

Sadly, this committee has noticed that our *Standard Bearer* subscriptions have fallen slightly, even as the numbers in our churches have steadily grown. Our hope is that this literary pile of stones that calls us to remembrance and contemplation continues to be valued by our members and used from one generation to the next. In this regard we remind our churches and our young people that free subscriptions to this magazine are available for those attending college and for newly married couples. See your clerk, or call the RFPA office, for more information.

The Board covets your prayers as we forge into the changes and uncertainties that next year holds. Our confidence is that the Lord of the harvest will continue to use us, even as weak means in the sight of the world, to declare the wondrous works of the Lord and make them known to our children. He will continue to give us the opportunities, the laborers, and the means to continue our work, heartily unto Him. We remain encouraged by the financial support we receive and by the news and comments we hear about our publishing work. Some recent examples are:

● From an *SB* reader in Canada—You have been faithful in sending me the *SB* and it has been

a blessing...causing me to lift my heart to our heavenly Father in praise to Him for raising up faithful servants such as you are.

● From a Book Club member in Florida—Sincerely, I am at a loss to find words to express my deepest thanks for the VERY MOST SPIRITUAL, DEVOTIONAL and DOCTRINAL training I have received through the study of your materials through the years. I hope to continue my studies as long as the Lord keeps me here. Strangely to say I received my copy of this book (*Calvin's Calvin-*

ism) TODAY...July 10, 2009 (John Calvin's birthday). That is not superstition but a sense of humility!

● From an SB reader in Bowling Green—I just wanted to tell you again how much I appreciate and enjoy the *Standard Bearer*. It is the only periodical I subscribe to, and I look forward to it coming in the mail every two weeks.

● From a minister in Canada—Thank you so much for offering the book *The Covenant of God and the Children of Believers* as a gift. I am thoroughly enjoying its

contents and appreciate the keen insights the author presents.

Reflecting upon Colossians 3:23, and understanding the place the Lord has given us in this world as a publishing association, we end with the words of John Calvin: "Let us not cease to do the utmost that we may incessantly go forward in the way of the Lord; and let us not despair of the smallness of our accomplishments."

Scott Van Uffelen
Secretary 

In His Fear

Rev. Richard J. Smit

The Fruit of the Spirit (7): Longsuffering

Longsuffering is first in the second main group of what is called, in Galatians 5:22, "the fruit of the Spirit." While the first group of three virtues (love, joy, and peace) seems to emphasize inner virtues, the second group of three virtues (longsuffering, gentleness, and goodness) seems to highlight virtues that are evident in our outward dealings and communication, especially with those of our church families and covenant homes.

Longsuffering begins the second set of aspects concerning the fruit of the Spirit because it is basic to gentleness and goodness. If one is not longsuffering, he will

be harsh and unjust, rather than gentle; and he will be motivated by carnal and self-centered evil, rather than goodness. However, in the way of longsuffering, one is characterized by true gentleness and his actions will be governed by a spiritual and salvation-oriented goodness.

Longsuffering is a very honourable virtue. This aspect of the fruit of the Spirit was highly honoured by the church father Chrysostom. He exercised it by the grace of God through unjust treatment and persecution. He spoke of it highly when, it is reported, he said that he regarded longsuffering as the queen of virtues. While love is the king of

virtues among the nine virtues of the fruit of the Spirit, longsuffering certainly must be the queen.

*While love
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According to this church father's example and testimony, we should desire and pray that the Lord by His Spirit and grace give us the royal privilege to honor the queen of virtues by our conduct and speech with the members

of our church families and covenant families.



In Colossians 1:11, we are taught that we need both the gift of patience and the gift of longsuffering. The apostle Paul

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Previous article in this series: November 15, 2009, p. 82

writes, "Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness."

In our common, daily conversation, these words seem to be interchangeable, so that sometimes we talk about the need for patience with another person or our children; and, yet, it is possible that we might mean longsuffering. Although they may seem to be almost identical terms, yet according to Colossians 1:11 patience and longsuffering are shown to be both closely related and yet distinct virtues.

Patience may be described as the virtue of spiritual endurance through life. It is the spiritual strength to endure trials and afflictions in our God-given place and circumstances in life. Although there are many hardships that God bestows on His saints, the patience of the saints is the gift of God to receive those hardships willingly from the hand of God and to remain content in them.

Have you heard of the patience of Job?

Scripture calls us to consider the patience of that Old Testament saint. The patience of Job was his God-given spiritual endurance in the midst of his grievous hardships of the loss of his earthly possessions and his ten children in one day. In patience, Job endured the affliction in faithfulness to God. This was evident when he acknowledged willingly in his grief that his sharp calamity came from the hand of his God (Job 19:21b). While acknowledging that his calamity came from God, he confessed that God was good.

Listen to his patience:

Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly (Job 1:21-22).

What a remarkable virtue to receive in the time, not only of great calamity, but also in the everyday challenges, hardships, troubles, and duty of daily cross-bearing.

Interestingly, the Bible does not use the word "patience" with respect to God. The Bible does not tell us that God is patient. The reason for this is that God does not suffer afflictions and calamities, as Job did or we do. Of course, Jesus did because He came into our flesh and was like us in all things, except for sin. Nevertheless, the Bible does not say that the triune God is patient. Patience is the spiritual virtue that our heavenly Father works in His saints so that they might sojourn faithfully in the pathway through which He is pleased to lead them. In the God-given gift of patience, we endure through the grievous pains and numbing griefs of this life, similar to our fellow saint Job.



In addition to patience for a faithful earthly sojourn, we need the gift of longsuffering. While patience is a virtue of the child of God with respect to his God-determined and providentially-governed circumstances in life, longsuffering is the virtue that applies to the persons whom God providentially places upon his divinely determined pathway and, as a result, with whom he cannot avoid communication and dealings.

Now, the Bible does speak of God's longsuffering, in which He is longsuffering to all of His elect in Christ Jesus, not willing that any of the objects of His electing love should perish (II Pet. 3:9). This is God's virtue whereby

He, in His mercy and goodness, wills our eternal salvation and glory through the wilderness of this life. In His longsuffering, God wills our final perfection with Him in glory; but before we reach that inheritance, we must be prepared for that glory in the best possible way. Tailored to each of us according to His good pleasure, our pathways include the suffering of afflictions, the suffering of temptations, and the suffering of the results of sin, corruption, unbelief, or weaknesses of others. In that way, God is pleased to demonstrate the power of His mercy to preserve us and to sustain us unto our glorious inheritance.

Colossians 1:11 reminds us that this attribute of God is reflected in His regenerated and sanctified people. That God's saints are longsuffering means that they bear with the weaknesses of others. Believing husbands and wives learn to be longsuffering towards each other. Brothers and sisters in the home learn to be longsuffering towards one another in order to prepare them for a life of longsuffering to others later in life. For peace in the home, parents and children learn to be longsuffering towards one another, especially so for children when bearing with the weaknesses of their parents, whom the Lord has set over them in authority. Fellow believers learn the necessity of longsuffering toward one another for the maintenance of the fragile peace and unity of their church family.

Being longsuffering, we will not retaliate in kind to those who sin against us, oppress us, or even inflict some obvious injustice upon us. The longsuffering that the saints demonstrate in their earthly life indeed reflects

The longsuffering that the saints demonstrate in their earthly life indeed reflects God's longsuffering towards us.

God's longsuffering towards us. Just as God does not in His mercy destroy us and deal with us according to our iniquities, but, instead, deals with us according to His mercy and virtue of longsuffering, so we learn to deal with others not according to their sin, in order to reward them double for the pain they have inflicted upon us, but, rather, to deal with them according to the mercy of the Father shown toward us. Being longsuffering, we will be ready to forgive and to express that forgiveness to the sorrowful and repentant.

We may, then, describe the gift of longsuffering as that ability to be slow to anger and wrath. Longsuffering is wise on how to answer an offender. Longsuffering expresses itself as self-restraint, in which one does not break out towards an offender in an unrighteous and rash fit of rage. It keeps in check a flaming temper and controls the tongue from speaking evil. Longsuffering demonstrates its sweetness in forgiving seventy times seven.

To be longsuffering includes believing that God is Judge, who judges righteously the hearts of others, which we cannot do. Longsuffering leaves in the Lord's hands judgment that belongs with Him. We may want to take justice into our own hands, especially regarding the weaknesses and sins of someone over us in authority, and justify our rebellion against that sinful authority figure because of his or her sins and offenses, but such a response is still rebellion. We must be longsuffering even in such cases, and leave in the Lord's hands the righteous judgment that He will dispense to those who walk in sin. We must also be confident that in His righteousness and mercy He will surely bring His people, also when they sin against us, to repentance.

The exercise of the virtue of longsuffering towards others

does not include tolerance of the sin and unbelief of others. Longsuffering does not mean that we allow others to think that we approve of or will tolerate their false teachings or wicked way of life against God. Longsuffering remains holy as God is holy. Longsuffering does not ignore our duty to uphold courageously and outspokenly the honor and glory of God's name when His name is taken in vain. However, when our name and reputation is at stake, longsuffering is willing to let our reputation and name get shredded unjustly by the rumor and gossip shredder and to be reproached or oppressed unjustly.

There are two examples of longsuffering worth our consideration and instruction. First, in Numbers 12:3 we learn that the Lord regarded Moses, one of the holiest of God's saints, as the meekest man in the earth. The convergence of that holiness and meekness came to expression in his longsuffering towards Miriam, his sister. In the event recorded in Numbers 12, she rebelled against Moses and instigated a serious insurrection against him, the God-appointed leader of the children of Israel through the wilderness. In longsuffering, Moses let God judge Miriam's personal attack upon Moses. Then, when God did strike Miriam with leprosy, the righteous chastisement for her rebellion and schism, Moses did not rejoice in her leprosy and her great public shame. Instead, Moses cried unto Jehovah, saying, "Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee!" And Miriam was healed — through the means of the significant longsuffering and earnest supplication of Moses.

In exactly those situations where we would conclude that it would be unfair of God to require us to be longsuffering, then also we must be longsuffering.

Christ is the supreme example of longsuffering. When Christ "was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (I Pet. 2:23). He endured suffering at the hands of sinners, including His own, submitting to our heavenly Father's way. He suffered long with His people, who sinned against Him. Although He was forsaken and denied by His own disciples, He did not retaliate in kind. He did not deny His unfaithful disciples before His heavenly Father. He confessed their names before the throne of His heavenly Father in His longsuffering and prayer, saying, "Father, forgive them,

for they know not what they do." What applied to His disciples applies to His church. Though we are sinners against Him, yet He suffered long with us, even to His atoning and redeeming death of the cross for the purpose of bearing forth this fruit of the Spirit, being ourselves longsuffering one towards

another in the household of faith.



According to Colossians 3:11, longsuffering, in addition to patience, is a spiritual gift intended to be exercised by the believer in "all" things. Of course, it may seem rather easy to be longsuffering in most things with someone whom we like or when his personality fits very well with our own. When the weaknesses of another do not require much self-denial and the swallowing of our own pride and of our self-justification, we may find it very easy to suffer long with the fel-

low church member, spouse, parent, or child.

However, when longsuffering is applied in *all* things, then it applies even in those circumstances in life where we would judge that longsuffering no longer is the appropriate attribute to show the fellow church member, spouse, parent, or child whose weaknesses have found the end of our mercy and our willingness to forgive. In exactly those situations where we would conclude that it would be unfair of God to require us to be longsuffering, then also we must be longsuffering.


Hence, in every circumstance, and to our fellow believers, our parents, our spouses, and our children, we must bear with their weaknesses and sins, even when those sins, from which they may have repented and been delivered by the grace of God, have caused serious and lasting scars.



Who can be longsuffering in *all* things, or truly longsuffering *at all*? Christ certainly is. He is longsuffering as God to will our salvation through this wilderness of sin, death, and troubles. He is also the man who is longsuffering toward us in bearing long with us in His mercy and grace. He does not retaliate when we have sinned against Him. He does not reward us double punishment for all our sin against Him. He forgives our iniquities and has washed us in His blood from our sin. Even though our sins hurt as deeply as the great depths of suffering on the cross, yet He loved us and was longsuffering toward us. Likewise, by His Spirit, we are taught to be longsuffering toward fellow church members, spouses, parents, and children.

Undoubtedly, to be longsuf-

fering requires the miracle work of the Spirit of mercy and truth in us. Only by and according to His glorious power and mercy may we bear long, longer, and longer yet, if necessary, with the weaknesses of others.

May we regard highly this sweet fruit of being longsuffering, and may we resolve in our hearts to be longsuffering in our daily lives, homes, and church life. There is no joy in despising or minimizing this fruit. In the way of evil speaking, harsh retaliation, jealousy, rebellion, hatred, and whatever else may be the enemy of longsuffering, there will be only bitter, rotten, and miserable results. Over against that, may our heavenly King, the Lord Jesus Christ, in His good and sovereign mercy, work in us the will, ability, and life of His queen of virtues. 

Special Article

Rev. Angus Stewart

Rome and Politics (9):

Rome's Goal of World Dominion

Players

Malachi Martin in his entertaining, though somewhat long-winded, *The Keys of This Blood* (1990) claims, "we are all involved in an all-out, no-holds-barred, three-way

global competition."¹ The three contenders to establish the first ever one-world system of government are the communist Soviet Union, led by Mikhail Gorbachev; the democratic capitalists of the West, led by the US president; and the Roman Catholic Church,

led by John Paul II. The "new world government," with its "legislative, executive and judiciary authority and control," Roman priest Martin reckoned, "will be introduced and installed in our midst by the end of this final decade of the second millennium."²

Former Jesuit Martin was wrong: wrong about dates (the end of the 1990s has come and gone) and wrong about the main

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Previous article in this series: September 1, 2009, p. 468.

¹ Malachi Martin, *The Keys of This Blood: The Struggle for World Dominion Between Pope John Paul II, Mikhail Gorbachev, and the Capitalist West* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), p. 15.

² Martin, *The Keys of This Blood*, p. 16.

competitors, especially the Soviet Union. By late 1991, the USSR had broken up and Gorbachev had resigned. The nations of the old Soviet bloc are no longer under totalitarian communism, and even China's communism, since the late 1970s, has engaged in major market reforms and taken some steps towards pluralism. The West, including the European Union (EU) and the United States, has, however, taken several steps towards its former adversary: socialism, big government, and limitation of free speech (through political correctness).

Today, it is widely expected that China and India (with their huge populations and fast economic growth) and the expanding EU will be major players on the world stage in the days ahead.³ The rise in the number (and zeal) of Muslims, the world's dependence on oil from the Middle East, and Iran's efforts to obtain the nuclear bomb give the Islamic nations a more significant role in world affairs.⁴

Globalization continues apace. Increased global travel and improved global communications have led to the idea of the world as a "global village." Many of the world's current problems are seen as global in dimension, needing a global solution by the global community: global warming, global pandemics (e.g., bird-flu, swine-flu), global recession, global Islamic terrorism, etc. More and more, intergovernmental bodies, like the G8, the EU, and the UN, are seen as mankind's best hope, and many want their powers increased.

³ China's rate of growth has been especially high, though India is catching up. One of the great fears of the West is China's rising influence in poor and/or developing countries (especially in sub-Saharan Africa).

⁴ Conspiracy theorists would include the Masons, the Illuminati, the Bilderberg Group, and a Jewish cabal as plotting to take over the world.

Malachi Martin was right, though, in his central contention. The Roman church—the oldest, the largest, and (possibly) the wealthiest institution in the world—cannot be left out of the equation. Its goal is world dominion, and the pope "is by definition the world's first fully fledged geopolitical leader."⁵ John Paul II insisted,

...the hard, intractable problems of the world—hunger, violation of human dignity and human rights, war and violence, economic oppression, political persecution—any and all of these can be solved only by acceptance and implementation of the message of Christ's revelation announced by the papacy and the Roman Catholic Church.⁶

Eschatologies

All the various players seeking to influence or control the world want a world of peace and prosperity. They differ as to the nature of this peace and how to achieve it.

For instance, communism has an eschatology or view of the end times and an accompanying calling. By means of both violent and peaceful revolutions, communism seeks the establishment of an egalitarian, classless society throughout the world based on common ownership of property and control of the means of production.

Islam believes in, and works towards, the day when the "house of war" (all the non-Islamic world) will be brought into the "house of peace" (the Islamic world), under Allah and *sharia* (Islamic law).⁷ The means to

⁵ Martin, *The Keys of This Blood*, p. 143.

⁶ Martin, *The Keys of This Blood*, p. 74.

⁷ Here there is a parallel between Islam's eschatology and postmillennial theonomy, which sees the whole

achieve this end is *jihad* (struggle or striving): "jihad of the tongue" (Islamic mission), "jihad of the womb" (very high Islamic birth rates), and "jihad of the sword [or bomb]" (Islamic terrorism). It has been said that the more radical Muslims differ from the more moderate ones in that the former (unlike the latter) believe that the world will *soon* be Islamic and that this can be hastened by intense activism.

Roman Catholicism confesses itself to be *the* one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church headed by the pope, the "Successor of Peter the Prince of the Apostles," the "Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church," the "Vicar of Christ," and the "Holy Father." As such, it is no wonder that John Paul II, in pursuance of world dominion, as God's vicegerent on earth, pledged "himself; his personal persona; the age-old Petrine office he [embodied]; and his entire Church Universal, both as an institutional organization unparalleled in the world and as a body of believers united by a bond of mystical communion."⁸ John Paul II's "ambition went very

Rome's false gospel serves it well in its false ecumenism....

far," continues Martin, for the pontiff, viewing himself "as *the* servant of God," believes that the papacy will "slowly prepare

all men and women, in their earthly condition, for eternal salvation in the Heaven of God's glory."⁹ The pope is not merely some harmless old man.

The biblical position is that Christ's kingdom is not of this world and does not come with observation (Luke 17:20-21; John 18:36-37; Rom. 14:17); the church

world being Christianized and all of society under Old Testament law.

⁸ Martin, *The Keys of This Blood*, p. 17.

⁹ Martin, *The Keys of This Blood*, p. 25; italics mine.

is a “remnant” (Micah 4:6-7; Luke 12:32; I Cor. 1:27-29); and God’s gracious purposes are completed in this age not with the Christianization of the world but with the conversion of the last member of Christ’s elect body (II Pet. 3:9). Christ’s promise that the meek shall inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5) is fulfilled in the new heavens and the new earth after His bodily return.

Rome’s “Gospel”

In this series, we have already considered the antiquity, size, and geographical spread of the Roman Catholic Church, as well as its political history, positions, and power. Now we need to look at Rome’s “gospel” as a means to furthering its religious and political goal.

The pope claims to be the “father” of every human being, whatever his or her religion, whether he or she be a Roman Catholic or of some other religion or none. In turn, every person on the globe is a son or daughter of the pope—including Joseph Stalin, whom the pope called, “My son, Joseph”¹⁰—for Christ has entrusted the world to the care of the man in the Vatican. Since all are the children of God, all are the children of the pope (from the Latin *papa*, meaning father). Therefore, the pope has everyone’s best interests at heart.

Being the children of God, all men, head for head, are, necessarily, in the image of God, for children bear the image of their father. Thus Rome emphatically denies that man is totally depraved, and it boasts in man’s free will. Salvation is by the will, works, and merit of the sinner. Not surprisingly, in Rome’s theology, God loves everyone (common grace) and wants to save everyone (free offer). In

keeping with all this, Christ died on the cross for all without exception.¹¹

Usefulness of Rome’s Gospel

Rome’s false gospel serves it well in its false ecumenism with the Eastern Orthodox, Anglicans, liberal Protestants, Charismatics, cultists, etc., for all these groups are Arminian, Semi-Pelagian, or Pelagian. They all believe that all men are sons of God in the image of God possessing free will. They all hold to a universal love of God, a universal atonement, and universal grace. The papal church realizes this and uses it to its advantage, for instance, in Vatican II’s *Decree of Ecumenism* (1964), which begins by declaring that God loves everybody and Christ died for everybody.¹²

Rome’s gospel is likewise invaluable in its syncretism with those of pagan religions. God’s love for all head for head (common grace and the free offer), no matter what they believe or how they live, is taught early and repeatedly in the *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions* (1965) (pp. 661, 664, 667). Moreover, God “is the Father of all” and all are in “God’s image” (p. 667). This Vatican II document is based upon Rome’s historic position on natural theology and natural religion, that without

the biblical revelation—merely through creation, providence, and conscience—man can know, serve, and please God.

The Holy See’s false gospel not only promotes its false ecumenism with professing Christians and syncretism with those of pagan religions, but also serves to reach out to the humanists. Rome’s common-grace, free-offer, and Arminian theology is a very inoffensive perversion of the gospel of Christ, for it tells unbelieving man that he is God’s image-bearer and son, the recipient of God’s love and grace, and that his salvation depends on his use of free will to accept Christ’s death for him. In keeping with this man-centered gospel is Rome’s advocacy of humanistic ideas of human rights and dignity (pp. 355, 667), plus its firm belief in evolutionism.

Roman Catholicism is a wonderfully attractive religion for the carnal man (whether liberal Protestant, pagan, or humanist, etc.): its tradition, its buildings, its wealth, its pageantry. It appeals to the senses with its “smells and bells.” It is also

Roman Catholicism is a wonderfully attractive religion.... It has just enough of God’s word to salve consciences but not enough to bother people unduly.

extremely broad and elastic, for Rome has a way of making Christian doctrine and the Ten Commandments almost completely unrestrictive. Roman religion can be as hard as you want (with lots of scope for works and merit) or as easy as you want (with your money, the priests, and the church doing it all for you). It has just enough of God’s word to salve consciences but not enough to bother people unduly. Roman Catholicism, as Jaroslav Pelikan puts it, “seeks to give everyone as much Christianity as his

¹⁰ Martin, *The Keys of This Blood*, p. 132.

¹¹ E.g., Rome’s common-grace, free-offer, and Arminian theology run through the whole of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (USA: Doubleday, 1995).

¹² Walter M. Abbot (gen. ed.), *The Documents of Vatican II* (USA: The America Press, 1966), p. 343. Henceforward, pages in parenthesis refer to this book.

present situation permits him to bear.”¹³

Virgin Mary

On the basis of her tradition but contrary to the Bible, Rome teaches Mary’s immaculate conception (1854) and assumption into heaven (1950). Roman Catholics claim that Mary is the patroness of at least 63 countries, though usually under a specific title or apparition. The Holy See puts a great deal of hope in Mary’s power—as Mother of God, Queen of Heaven, and the one to whom Christ and the pope have entrusted the world—to unite the world under the papacy.

Rome’s idolatrous view of Mary helps her in false ecumenism with the Eastern Orthodox and the Oriental Orthodox, as well as with some Anglicans, Lutherans, and Methodists. It is of service in her syncretism with pagan religions because many of them also engage in goddess worship. It is even of use in Rome’s dialogue with Muslims, for Islam holds that Mary is the virgin mother of Jesus and the most righteous Muslim woman. Mary is the only woman mentioned by name in the Koran, and the nineteenth sura of the Koran is named after her. Mary, as the feminine side of Roman Catholicism, helps Rome with New Agers and women generally.

¹³ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Riddle of Roman Catholicism* (USA: Abingdon Press, 1959), p. 230. On the same page, Pelikan quotes Adolf Harnack with approval: “The *raison d’être* of the [Roman] catholic church is quite incontestable. Anyone who takes men as they are, and as they will remain for many generations to come, cannot doubt the justifiability of this world-wide institution. This church goes right on nourishing saints, and at the same time it teaches the rest of its children ‘to hurl their spears and honor the gods,’ that is, to take religion as the masses have always taken it and as the masses require it. What more do you want?”

What do the many apparitions of Mary around the world proclaim?

All the religions are basically the same and must come together for peace. Offering an ecumenical [and syncretistic] gospel that can be “accepted by Catholic, Protestant, Moslem or Jew,” “Mary” declares: “Everyone worships God in his own way with peace in our hearts.” So says Our Lady of Medjugorje in Southern Bosnia-Herzegovina, where visionaries claim the Virgin has been appearing daily for the past 13 years.¹⁴

American Roman Catholic Bishop and radio and television personality Fulton J. Sheen (1895-1979) reckoned it remarkable that

...“our Lady” had the foresight to appear in the Portuguese village of Fatima (named after Muhammad’s daughter during the Muslim occupation) and thus became known as “Our Lady of Fatima.” It is a fact that when a statue of “Our Lady of Fatima” is carried through Muslim areas of Africa, India, and elsewhere, Muslims turn out by the hundreds of thousands to worship her. In two days an estimated 500,000 came to give their respects to their idol in Bombay, India.¹⁵

Future

So what does the future hold? Before the triumphant return of

¹⁴ Dave Hunt, *A Woman Rides the Beast* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1994), p. 454.

¹⁵ Hunt, *A Woman Rides the Beast*, p. 458. For other material on Mary’s role promoting the one-world religion of Antichrist, see pp. 435, 439, 441, 453ff.

Jesus Christ, the worldwide kingdom of Antichrist will be established (Rev. 13; 17; 18). The final Antichristian kingdom will have traits like those of Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon, the Medo-Persian Empire, Alexander the Great’s Greece, and the Roman Empire (Rev. 13:1-2; cf. Dan. 7). All will be required to worship the beast (Antichrist), including the (apostate) visible church (Rev. 13:11-18; II Thess. 2:3-4).¹⁶

Given the age, size, wealth, and power of the Holy See; its history of political alliances and intrigue; and its policies and success in false ecumenism and syncretism, it is in a unique position

Given the age, size, wealth, and power of the Holy See... it is in a unique position to unite all churches and religions in the worship of the beast.

to unite all churches and religions in the worship of the beast. No serious contender for this role is evident in our day. Also, Rome’s theology and worship is a “good fit,” for it is a peculiar amalgam of “Christianity” (II Thess. 2:3-4; I John 2:18-19; 4:1-6) and humanism

(“the number of the beast is the number of...man” Rev. 13:18).

Certainly, papal Rome has been central in “Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots” (Rev. 17) and the false prophet (Rev. 13:11-18) in the history of the New Testament church age. Yet, when we speak of the days ahead, we must remain open to correction, for we do not know how long it will be before Christ returns (though it is drawing nearer), and it is God’s prerogative alone to know the future. Moreover, the precise interplay between the political and religious aspects of Antichrist may well be complex.

¹⁶ For more, see the exposition of the relevant parts of Revelation in Herman Hoeksema, *Behold He Cometh* (USA: RFP, 1969).

If this analysis is correct, we would expect Rome to become more and more the leader of apostate Christendom and paganism, until eventually it assimilates all religions to itself—apart from the worship of those written in the Lamb's book of life! Rome will doubtless experience ups and downs and will respond to changing world events from time to time and from situation to situation as it deems will best gain its purpose.¹⁷

¹⁷ Cf. Albert Lé vitt, *Vaticanism: The Political Principles of the Roman Catholic Church* (New York: Vantage Press, 1960), p. 23; Thomas J. Reese, *Inside the Vatican* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 272.

This would mean too that Rome's religious and geopolitical goal is also its *destiny*, according to God's eternal decree. But just when the Babylonian harlot and the false prophet are at their most powerful, they will be destroyed according to the just judgment of the Almighty (Rev. 17:16-17; 19:20).

In the typical Antichristian Roman Empire of the past, all roads led to Rome. In the Antichristian Roman Church of the present, all churches and religions lead to Rome. In the Antichristian kingdom of the future, Rome will lead all churches and religions to the beast.

But do not fear! Hold fast to the truth of God's word! Beware

of all false doctrine and worship from whatever source. By God's grace, guard against even the beginning of apostasy. The Lord Jesus will soon return with His mighty angels to take vengeance on Antichrist and the false church and all who obey not the gospel. Christ shall forever be admired in all who believe, and all our tears will be wiped away (II Thess. 1:7-10; Rev. 21:4)!¹⁸



¹⁸ All nine parts of this series, in somewhat expanded and improved form, can be found together on-line (www.cprf.co.uk/articles/romeand-politics.htm).

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Evangelism Activities

This past October many of our churches celebrated the Reformation begun by Martin Luther, October 31, 1517, and the commemoration of the 500th anniversary of John Calvin's birth with their annual Reformation Day Lecture.

Rev. A. Stewart, pastor of our sister church in Northern Ireland, the Covenant PRC in Ballymena, gave two lectures. The first, entitled "Calvin on Justification: Considering the Judgment Day with Singular Delight," on October 15 in Porthcawl, South Wales, and the second under the same title, on October 30 at the Portadown Town Hall in Portadown, Northern Ireland.

On Friday, October 30, Rev. C. Haak, pastor of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI, was the

guest speaker at the Reformation Day Lecture sponsored by the Lynden, WA PRC. Rev. Haak spoke on the subject, "Calvin and Predestination: Entrusted to the Arms of Christ."

The Wingham, Ontario PRC invited their community to join them on October 30 for their annual Reformation Lecture. Prof. B. Gritters spoke on the topic, "Music's Indispensable Place in the Reformation."

The Reformed Witness Committee, representing our churches in Iowa and Minnesota, sponsored a Reformation Lecture on Friday evening, October 30, at the Hull, IA PRC. Prof. R. Cammenga spoke on the topic, "John Calvin's Reformation of Public Worship." Prof. Cammenga provided an opportunity for those attending to learn more about what John Calvin said about public worship of his day and what are the fundamental principles of public worship.

The Evangelism Society of the First PRC in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada thanked those in their congregation involved in wiring and installing the Internet connection to their church. As a result of this connection, their church services are now broadcast live over the Internet. So if you are unable to attend your own worship service because of illness or other reasons, you have the option to go to Edmonton's website at www.edmontonprc.org, click on the designated link, and listen to their worship service in progress.

Congregation Activities

A special word of thanks goes out to the Senior Retreat Committee of the Loveland, CO PRC for all their efforts in organizing what we hope will be the first annual Senior Retreat, held October 1 through October 6 at the YMCA at Estes Park in

Mr. Wigger is a member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

the beautiful Rocky Mountains of Colorado. The theme of the retreat was, "The Seasons of Our Life." There were 183 people registered from our Protestant Reformed Churches across the US and Canada. Due to the size of the group, there were separate church services held at the YMCA on Sunday. The speakers for the retreat were Rev. S. Key, Rev. R. VanOverloop, Prof. H. Hanko, and Rev. R. Miersma, and they broke the retreat down into four areas of one's life, Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter. By all accounts, this long weekend in the Rockies was a wonderful time of fellowship and spiritual enrichment, and provided opportunity for the senior members of our churches to enjoy the rich fellowship we have in the unity of our faith.

As a note of interest connected to the senior retreat, we also have to add that the Senior Retreat Committee paid the Fundraisers of the Loveland PR Christian School to bake up to 100 dozen cookies or bars to serve at the various activities during the retreat.

We give thanks to God for His faithfulness in providing the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada with another faithful undershepherd. Installation of Rev. T. Miersma as their fifth pastor took place October 28, with Rev. J. Marcus, from the neighboring First PRC in Edmonton, officiating. Rev. Marcus preached from the word of God found in Acts 20:28 under the theme, "Taking Heed to the Flock." A number of families from Edmonton also joined their pastor in making the trip to Lacombe and shared with Immanuel in an evening of heartfelt thanks for the safe arrival of the Miersma family. Rev. Miersma preached his first sermon as pastor at Immanuel from Ephesians 3:16-19 under the theme, "A Prayer to be Strengthened in Christ's Love." At that same ser-

vice he also had the opportunity to administer his first baptism as pastor of Immanuel.

Pastor-elect Cory Griess was ordained into the gospel ministry of Jesus Christ and installed as the first pastor of Calvary PRC in Hull, IA on October 22. Rev. S. Key led that service, preaching from Joshua 1:1-9, under the theme, "Joshua's Commission." Rev. Griess preached his first sermon as pastor in Calvary the following Lord's Day from I Corinthians 1:18, under the theme, "The Message of the Cross." However, Rev. Griess writes that he is preaching somewhat of an inaugural series on the first four chapters of I Corinthians, so that first sermon, while technically the inaugural sermon, was the first in an inaugural series.

Mission Activities

Rev. Daniel and Sharon Kleyn left for the Philippines in mid-October as part of a delegation from the Doon, IA PRC and our churches' Foreign Mission Committee, accompanied by Elder Warren Boon and his wife, Marshonn. The purpose of the trip was to visit with the Smit family and the mission field, as well as to make preparations for

the Kleyns' move scheduled for December 15 D.V. On Sunday, November 1, they also had opportunity to join the Berean PRC in acknowledging the Lord's goodness and faithfulness as they remembered their third anniversary as an organized congregation. The delegation returned home on November 2.

Rev. K. Koole, pastor of the Grandville, MI PRC, left for Singapore in October, where he planned to labor in the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church on behalf of our Contact Committee for six weeks. This trip was to help the saints in Singapore continue to develop in their understanding of the Reformed faith and to work towards re-establishing a relationship with our churches per their request to synod. Rev. J. Laning and Mr. Sid Miedema will be joining Rev. Koole in Singapore toward the end of November, D.V.

Minister Activities

Rev. D. Kuiper declined the call he received from the Bethel PRC in Roselle, IL.

The Byron Center, MI PRC extended a call to Rev. C. Haak to serve as their next pastor.



Announcements

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

On behalf of the council and congregation of Southeast PRC, we express our Christian sympathy to Mr. Rich Kamminga, and Mr. and Mrs. Bernie Kamminga, in the death of their brother,

FRED KAMMINGA.

"In my Father's house are many mansions:...I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2).

Rev. William Langerak, President
Jim Holstege, Assistant Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Byron Center PRC express their Christian sympathy to Stuart Looyenga and his family in the death of his wife,

MARILYN LOOYENGA.

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (II Corinthians 5:1).

Ken Elzinga, Vice-President
Dale Bartelds, Clerk

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WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On November 22, our parents, grandparents, and great grandparents,

HENRY and CORYNNA BOER, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. We give thanks to our heavenly Father for sparing them one for another and are grateful for the covenantal instruction they have given unto us. "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (I Corinthians 13:13).

- * Scott and Deb Boer
- * Todd and JoAnn Boer
- * Shawne Boer
- 3 grandchildren
- 2 great grandchildren

Hudsonville, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Byron Center PRC express their Christian sympathy to Rich and Sylvia VanBaren, Bryan and Elizabeth VanBaren, and Marvin and Marcia Gritters and their families in the death of

TILLIE BRUMMEL.

"For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living" (Romans 14:8, 9).

Ken Elzinga, Vice-President
Dale Bartelds, Clerk

NOTICE!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, January 13, 2010, at the First Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk by December 12, 2009.

Jon J. Huiskens, Stated Clerk

TEACHERS NEEDED

The Protestant Reformed School in Wingham was unable to hire teachers to fill its classrooms last year. Therefore we have changed our plans and are hoping to open for the 2010-11 year, D.V. We are seeking a teacher/administrator for a class of 9 students in grades 7-12. Teaching will be assisted by online curriculum for the upper grades. We are also seeking an elementary teacher to teach a class of 16 students in grades K-6. Volunteer assistance will be available. For more information please contact board vice-president Mr. Harvey Kikkert at (519)523-4823 or email hkikkert@hurontel.on.ca.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Byron Center PRC express their Christian sympathy to Leo and Marcia Holstege in the death of their grandson,

DERRICK HOLSTEGE.

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2).

Ken Elzinga, Vice-President
Dale Bartelds, Clerk

Check out the
RFPA web page at
www.rfpa.org

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Holland PRC express Christian sympathies to Jenny Jongekrig and family, who grieve the recent loss of
HARVEY JONGEKRIJG.

The Lord in His infinite wisdom and love called him unto his eternal home on Tuesday, October 13. We pray for the strength and comfort that can be found in God's word: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all" (Psalm 34:19).

Wes Koops, Vice President
Jack Warner, Asst. Clerk

Reformed Witness Hour

December 2009

Date	Topic	Text
	<i>The Blessings of Immanuel's Reign</i> (Isaiah 35)	
December 6	"Then Shall a Lame Man Leap As an Hart"	Isaiah 35:3-6
December 13	"The Mirage Shall Become a Pool"	Isaiah 35:6, 7
December 20	"Great Joy Brought to You"	Luke 2:10, 11
December 27	"A Highway Through the Desert"	Isaiah 35:8-10