

CURRENT

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**LUTHER'S SECOND
MAJOR DEBATE**

**FROM ATHEISM TO
CHRIST**

**JUSTIFICATION BY
FAITH ALONE**

**BIBLE
ANSWER MAN
DUPED**

**THE OSTRICH
NOT JUST A BIG DUMB BIRD**

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General Editor, Rev. Ian Goligher. Assistant Editor, Rev. Andy Foster. Copy Editor, Jill Saunders. Graphic Design, Moorehead Creative Designs. Printer, GotPrint.com.

The editor may be reached at cloverdalefpc@telus.net, phone: 604-897-2040, or Cloverdale FPC, 18790 58 Ave., Surrey, BC V3S 1M6.

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BIBLE ANSWER MAN DUPED BY WRONG ORTHODOXY

by Rev. Ian Goligher

I was personally shocked and alarmed on the day after Palm Sunday when I heard Hank Hanegraaff pronounce on his radio program that he had been *chrismated* (prayed over for the anointing of the Spirit) into the Greek Orthodox Church. Better known by his programs on an array of radio stations in North America as the “Bible Answer Man”, Hanegraaff has fallen from a contender for the faith to a pretender of orthodoxy.

Mr. Hanegraaff succeeded the late Dr. Walter Martin, the founder of the Christian Research Institute, a ministry dedicated to countering the cults. Since 1989 Hanegraaff has touted the line, “Equipping the saints to defend the faith with dignity and respect.”

Hanegraaff has exposed many unbiblical trends within Christianity. He spoke against the Charismatic counterfeit revival, the prosperity gospel, and the “Osteenization” of the church – a spin on the name and false ministry of Joel Osteen, Pastor of Lakewood Church, Texas, which according to *Church Growth Today* is America’s largest and fastest growing church. Hence, it was with shock that I learned that Hanegraaff had sunk to the depths of joining the Greek Orthodox Church.

Hanegraaff has had to use a grievous amount of spin to explain himself, which has caused a mire of confusion and, either by necessity or new-found zeal, Hanegraaff has made himself an advocate for the false doctrines and practices of the Greek Orthodox Church, which some refer to as *Roman Catholicism Lite*.

Upon research, you will find that Eastern Orthodoxy leaves many things to mystery.

While they are insistent on historical issues, falsely claiming to be the successors of the apostolic church, they define doctrine rather loosely.

Using the five Solas of the Protestant Reformation as a guide, we immediately discover that Mr. Hanegraaff, his wife and two of their sons, who were all chrismated into the Greek Orthodox Church on Palm Sunday, have sadly fallen into deep, dark apostasy. The Greek Orthodox Church misses the essential Christian doctrines which Hanegraaff himself pleaded for so laudably over the years.

Scripture Alone

The Bible is not founded on the church; the church is founded on the Bible, as the Word of God. Greek Orthodoxy makes the church to be the interpreter of Scripture. In most instances, Greek Orthodoxy does not use the term “the Word of God” when referring to the sacred Scriptures. They reserve that designation to the Lord as the living Word, leaving themselves open to spurious notions not based on the written Word of God.

Grace Alone

God’s full and free offer of the gospel without any works performed by man is the basis of salvation by grace. Christ’s obedience alone is the ground of salvation. Grace makes salvation God’s gift to hell-deserving sinners. Because the Greek Orthodox Church denies that Adam’s guilt is transferred to all men, and teaches that man is capable of reform from his propensity to sin, the concept of salvation by grace alone is lost. Through a spurious doctrine of “theosis” they teach that baptized members within the Greek Orthodox

Church are continually being reformed into the image of God. To them, salvation is a continuous process, not an act of God’s free grace.

Faith Alone

Gospel liberty hinges on redemption applied by faith alone. The Protestant Reformers rediscovered this Biblical doctrine so thoroughly revealed in the book of Romans. When Martin Luther read that “The just shall live by faith,” he threw off all attempts to justify himself by his own efforts. Sadly, as with Roman Catholicism, Greek Orthodoxy does not allow its people to enjoy the assurance of salvation by faith alone. To them, salvation is a continuous journey commencing at baptism and lasting throughout this life and even beyond death.

Christ Alone

This is the gospel of all Bible believers. There is no other Savior, nor Mediator. Within Greek Orthodox churches, however, there is a plethora of icons and relics of saints and of Mary in dazzling view, all to be venerated. Mary is highly exalted as an intercessor. The church’s arguments against charges of idolatry are as deceitful as their images are artful.

The Glory of God Alone

A life that glorifies God must be based on justification by faith alone, for then God will reward our good works for Christ’s sake, and He will receive them as done for His glory. Works that are offered before justification as human merit to earn salvation God rejects as filthy rags. God is glorified when we glory in His perfect righteousness provided through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son. Greek Orthodoxy is a religion of works. It robs God of the glory due to His name for giving us His Son as our all-sufficient Savior, the Author and Finisher of our faith.

We deeply regret the apostasy of the Hanegraaffs from the gospel of Christ. We tremble for the ministry of the Christian Research Institute and fear that Hank’s influence by radio will lead unwary listeners into the spiritual darkness of the Greek Orthodox Church. May God in mercy send deliverance to them and to all who are deceived by this counterfeit form of Christianity. ■

Rev. Mark Fineout

Rev. Mark Fineout is a New Yorker now living in the American mid-west. He is well known in our denomination for his musical abilities and is frequently called upon at our presbytery weeks of prayer to lead our ministers and elders in singing. He is the minister of Lee's Summit Free Presbyterian Church, Missouri. He pastors the church, preaching at all the services each week, and works full-time to provide for his family. His ready answers to our questions, especially on the issues of church music, are insightful and will prove to be helpful to ministers, musicians, and all worshipers in our congregations.



Tell us about your home community where you grew up in New York State.

From the time I was born until I went off to college, I lived in a little village called Fair Haven on the shore of Lake Ontario. Our village was so small that it didn't even have a drug store or a stop light. My father also grew up in Fair Haven and much of his family lived there. So, I had aunts, uncles, and cousins throughout town. Everybody knew everybody, and everybody knew whose child you were, so anybody that was up to mischief could be easily identified. The area was filled with dairy farms, orchards and boats innumerable by the water. The countryside around the town was thoroughly rural, and I usually tried to spend my free time in the forests or by the shore of Fair Haven Bay. Looking back, it's hard to imagine a more wonderful place for a boy to grow up.



Mark as a boy in 1960

What kind of sports did you pursue in your youth?

Living next to a bay which froze over in the winter, ice hockey was my favorite sport. Along with many other boys in town, I

would rush home from school almost every day in the winter, meet the gang on the ice (where we spent the first hour shoveling off the snow), and play until dark. Eventually, after we got our driver's licenses, some of us went to a nearby city to play hockey in the city leagues in the evenings. During the summer, I enjoyed baseball, softball, and tennis.

When the Lord saved you as a boy, how did He change the focus of your life?

This question would be easier to answer if I could pinpoint the exact moment of my conversion experience. My parents took me to a fundamental Baptist church from infancy where the gospel was plainly preached. I can remember as a boy of four or five praying that the Lord would come into my heart and save me. That prayer was repeated often. I must have concluded that you weren't saved until you felt saved. Knowing just when the Lord regenerated my heart is hard to say. Regarding the faith of children, Mr. Spurgeon said, "Little faith is real faith." I know that the Lord does not turn away from the cry of little people, and He did not turn away from me. This I know because I trust Him now, and that can only be a result of His saving grace that has been worked out in my heart to trust Him. From my youth, I sensed that the Lord was preparing me for His service, though I have to admit it, I ran from the thought even through my early years at college.

How did you develop a love for music and when did you decide to pursue a music major at Bob Jones University?

I don't know if I developed a love for

music generally as a boy, or whether I just acquired a love for the sound of trumpets. On Sunday evenings, a few of the men would bring their trumpets and play with the congregational singing. Most of us who can remember those nights chuckle because, what was observed, few would call music! It was more like a competition: "Who can be the loudest?" Accuracy and intonation were of no real concern. I was convinced that I had to learn the trumpet, too. When I was in high school, I also sang in the school chorus and was chosen by the director as a participant in an all-county chorus competition and later for a state-wide chorus. Other opportunities arose at school to sing and I began to think about what I could do for the Lord through music. But there was a problem. I believed the Lord had begun to show me that I was to preach and not necessarily devote myself to music. So, hoping that the Lord might be content to let me be a "music minister", I went off to BJU to major in sacred music and history, but the Lord dealt with me through the course of my senior year. I knew I had to come to grips with the calling of the Lord even though I was heavily involved in music at BJU. I eventually submitted to the Lord and acknowledged that music was not my calling. The next fall, I went to graduate school to prepare for the ministry.

Tell us about your family. How did you meet your wife, Robin, and when were you married?

Robin and I have been married twenty years now and have two daughters, Katie (14) and Grace (12) whom we are home schooling. How and when my wife and I

met is a long story: long in time and long in distance. We met in Greenville while I was a student in the seminary in 1987. Robin had just completed her studies at BJU and had started attending Faith Free Presbyterian Church. Although we noticed each other, nothing romantic transpired. In 1991, I moved to Atlanta and Robin moved back to Kansas. Most people would conclude “that was that.” But five years later, January 1996, Robin sent a gift for the church in Georgia. I wrote to thank her and asked her how things were going in far away Kansas. That started the “long distance dating” which meant letters, phone calls, and airplane rides. We were married the following February, ten years after we met.

After graduating from Geneva Reformed Seminary, how did you determine that you should plant a Free Presbyterian Church in Lee’s Summit, Missouri, near Kansas City?

The seminary in the “old days” was called the Theological Hall, from which five of us graduated in 1987. After graduating, I spent the next three years traveling and doing pulpit supply for extended periods in

Robin and I were married during these days. On a visit to Robin’s parents in Kansas City, Robin’s dad said to me that if I came there to start a church, he would come. I thanked him for saying so, but could not imagine such a thing. On another visit, we had prayer with Robin’s parents in the café of a grocery store, where we asked the Lord for direction as they couldn’t find a place to worship. On that same trip, a number of Robin’s relatives gathered one evening at Robin’s sister’s home and we had a time of worship. After I had preached briefly, Robin’s grandmother approached me and, while thumping me on the arm, said that I had to come to Kansas City because there was a need of “real preachers” in that city. Once again, I could not imagine such a possibility, but the Lord kept bringing my father-in-law’s words to my mind.

In September 1998, I was reading in 2 Samuel 5. The words of verse 24 impressed my heart, “And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then shall the LORD go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines.” I acknowledged in my heart that I needed and hoped to hear an unmistakable leading like this, but I was not

persuaded that this was a word from the Lord. Ten days later, I felt the need to pray over that verse. That day I also read a sermon by C.H. Spurgeon on the same verse. The verse began to grip me tightly; however, I said nothing to Robin. The next Sunday evening after a service in Woodstock, GA, Rev. Bill Neese asked how the Lord was leading us. I informed him that I was praying

over something that the Lord had shown me. Not knowing that I had been praying over 2 Samuel 5:24, he looked at me and said, “Well, when you hear the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, it’s time to move.” A week or so later, I was in Calgary at the Week of Prayer and I was asked about our plans in a Presbytery meeting. I told the Presbytery that I was praying over a “door that may be opening.” Dr. Frank McClelland spoke up and said, “Sometimes you need to push the door

to see if it will open.” I was struck by the thought and discussed the remark with a fellow-minister who confidently concluded that here was a “sound in the trees.” I went home to tell Robin we were moving. The Lord gave us a place to hold services the very day we drove into Lee’s Summit.

As someone who has graduated from Bob Jones University with a degree in Sacred Music and received a Master of Divinity degree, you must have strong convictions concerning the widening acceptance of contemporary Christian music and the accompanying tools used to provide “leadership” in worship. What are those convictions and why do you have them? Can you offer a guideline for developing congregational singing?

These are enormous questions! They are enormous because the answers can hardly be accommodated in the space allowed. Beyond that, they are enormous because the subject impacts the whole vision of what it means to be a church (who we are and what we offer), of what is the only true attraction to the place of worship, and most of all, of what we are holding up before the face of God as true worship.

My conviction revolves around this simple truth: “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). This verse defines worship in the most absolute and unchanging terms. It rules out the notion that changing times require changing standards. We, as God’s people, are commanded by this to exercise the utmost care that what we offer to God as worship is true in all its ways and motives. Further, we must ensure that our worship is “in spirit,” meaning that it is both in keeping with the purity of the Spirit of God and led by Him. Consider the words of Paul: “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit ... So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8:5, 8). Here is the plain truth: that which pleases the flesh does not please God. And that which pleases God,



Rev. Fineout with Dr. Ian Paisley and Dr. Alan Cairns, 1987

some of our works. During this time, I was seeking the Lord about where He would have me labor. Eventually, I went to Atlanta to commence a work with a small group, but when the Lord chose to relocate a family which was the backbone of the work, I knew I needed to move on. From Atlanta I went to Columbus, GA, for a couple of years to minister to another group to see if the Lord would bring a church into existence. That also ended and I moved back to Atlanta to wait on the Lord.

the flesh is not going to appreciate, nor will the flesh gravitate toward it. The flesh and the Spirit are opposites and go in opposite directions. If we are introducing music or implementing methods into our worship that pleases the flesh, even in the smallest way, we are not worshipping our God in the manner He demands. We are moving away from God. We must also understand that true worship is not meant to please or



The Fineout's Wedding 1997

satisfy ourselves. We worship to please God only. Here then is the plain application: for us to be enthralled with the “sound” of our music or to be enamored by the feelings and the emotions that it stirs within us, is not worship *in truth*. Why not? The answer is simple. In such worship the *whole* heart and soul is not given to loving the Lord our God (Deuteronomy 6:5), but part of our heart seeks something for Self.

The questions then arise: “How do we treat music written recently?” “Must we sing only hymns that are generations old?” The fact of the matter is that the vast majority of modern Christian music has based its appeal solely on its sound, and the mood that it creates. Christian songs that sound more like love ballads from movie soundtracks than songs of worship are the norm. Why? It is because they stir the emotions. They capture our feelings. This is not true worship. It is possible that a song of worship could be written today, but honesty would compel us to admit that such bland and unmoving music is very unlikely to “sell.” The motives for the use of modern Christian music, worship leaders, and theater-like auditoriums appear to be very different than what aligns with true and proper worship.

What pitfalls do you see that Free Presbyterians may fall into as we seek to maintain a sound position on congregational singing with psalms and hymns?

I see the danger in two parts mainly. First, as more and more of our people in the FPC listen to the kind of music that “stirs” the emotions, we will develop a taste for it that is hard to suppress. I think an appropriate question to ask is, “Are we already seeing this happen?” The second danger is embracing the notion that, unless we give the casual and curious observers something that they like, they will never be interested in attending our services and joining our churches. “If disinterest in the FPC happens long enough,”

we might suppose, “then the FPC will dry up and blow away.” The simple answer to that notion is this: “If all we have to offer the man on the street is what appeals to his flesh, it’s time for us to blow away.” This denomination exists and was built by one thing only – the power of the Gospel preached. If we start looking for other things to “preserve” us, we are already gone because we have forgotten who and whose we are.

What advice would you give to fledgling congregations with pioneer ministers on the development of congregational singing for all age groups?

The first thing that comes to mind is that there is no need to buy into the idea that traditional congregational music cannot universally appeal to all age groups. By that I mean that there is no need to accept the idea that what appeals to youth will probably not appeal to older folks and vice versa. This begs the question, “Should what appeals to man be the test for what we use in our services?”

Many churches attempt to deal with the supposed “appeal” gap by having some songs for the young people coupled with songs for the older ones. This will soon become lop-sided with the music becoming solely that which appeals to the youth. Choruses will replace hymns and the singing of psalms will be completely forsaken. Another good question to ask is, “Why must we imagine that there is a need to have different styles of music for different age groups? (I exempt from consideration songs used for little ones in a Sabbath School setting). The need is to preach and teach Christ to all age groups. If the people in the congregation fall in love with the Lord Jesus, they will want to sing what truly worships Him – no matter if the tune is “old-fashioned.” In fact, I have heard testimonies by some coming out of a lifetime of contemporary Christian music that the hymns with their solid doctrine and solemn tunes have actually proven to be a great blessing. The second thing that a pioneer minister needs to understand is that discontentment over music is never a primary problem. Discontentment over music simply reveals issues of a deeper sort.

Though you work full-time as well as pastoring the flock in Lee’s Summit, if you should get a day off what might you be found doing?

I must confess that the answer depends on what time I finally wake up. I love gardening and working in the yard is something that I am consistently doing. I also enjoy fishing and hunting. But the appeal of just sitting and reading is also very strong; however, my first preference would always be to go out somewhere with my wife and spend the day with her. ☞



Mark, Robin, Grace, and Katie



FROM ATHEISM TO CHRIST

Do you know how to become a Christian? People aren't born into Christianity, nor are they all saved in the same way. Some become Christians when they are young, others when they are older; some when things are going well in life, others when things are not. But in another sense, everyone's salvation experience is the same. Every person is born with the same spiritually-depraved condition before God and with the same spiritual needs. All must learn that they are shut out of heaven due to the curse of sin, and all must learn that Christ has opened the way to heaven as the only cure for sin.

For me, life began in a non-religious home in Scotland. My father was from Iran, raised in a nominal Eastern Orthodox home, and my mother was from Northern Ireland, raised in a devout Protestant home. Neither, however, had any deep interest in spiritual matters and I don't remember anything particularly spiritual being taught in the home when I was young. Through my teenage years I had an interest in the theory of evolution, which eventually led me to confessing atheism. I remember discussions with friends and arguments with Christians in which I would mock belief in God. I was very self-confident, and the Bible describes such people: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Psalm 14:1). From my perspective, religion was to blame for the world being in such a mess, and only madmen were religious.

So what changed? When I was eighteen years old, my mother was converted to Christianity and her life was transformed. Immediately, her appetite for smoking and alcohol seemed to be replaced with Bible reading and prayer. Instead of frequenting bars on the weekend, she went to church several times a week. I found it very peculiar, as you can imagine. I couldn't deny that God had done something in her life. The

Bible says, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). My mother was a new woman, and I didn't know what to make of it.

Soon after her conversion, she began to invite me to church. It took a couple of months before I eventually conceded and went one Sunday evening at the beginning of January 2002. I heard the sermon, but I remember walking away wondering: "What if there is an eternity? Where will I be?" The Bible says that the unbelieving "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone" (Revelation 21:8) and I certainly knew I was an unbeliever.

For a number of months, I found myself discussing religious matters more and more, even with my unsaved girlfriend. On May 12, 2002, two young men who attended the same church as my mom and sister invited me to go. I went with them, and afterwards they took me to another meeting where the preacher shared the story of the moral young man who came to Jesus wondering how he could obtain eternal life. The young man was very sad, because Jesus asked him to give up what he really worshipped: his money. As the preacher spoke, I saw myself in that young man.

After the meeting, those who had taken me to church shared the gospel with me in the car on the way home. I had many doubts and questions, and still thought there was no way I would ever become a Christian. But as I discussed these matters in the car, I felt sinful for the first time in my life and sensed my guilt. Why did I feel guilty? Before whom was I guilty? I knew I was guilty in the eyes of God. I didn't understand it then, but later I would learn that this "conviction" was the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said it is the work of the Holy Spirit to "reprove

the world of sin" (John 16:8). A strange thing happened to me because I began to believe what I had resolutely denied. Why? The Lord was changing my thinking. I believe it was the effect of the Word of God being shared with me. The Bible says, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). My arguments crumbled and under a sense of guilt in the presence of my sister and the two young men, I wept. I didn't know how to pray, so I simply asked God to save me.

That day my life changed forever. Immediately, I stopped going to nightclubs, which had been a major part of my life for four years. I started reading the Bible, praying, attending church, and for reasons I could never have foreseen, became more fulfilled and content, and this continues to this day. The psalmist said, "O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him" (Psalm 34:8).

In retrospect, I think I always knew God existed, but I had tried to suppress it so that I could avoid accountability. The Bible talks about people who deny God and "hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:18). I used to tell myself that if there was a God, He would weigh my good works in the balance, and because I considered myself to be a good person, I believed I would be fine. Perhaps you think like that? The reality is that every person is a sinner. We're all guilty, for the Bible clearly teaches that no one can reach God's perfect standard which demands that men keep every detail of God's law. The apostle James said, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10).

There is only one answer for sinners — Jesus Christ. I am living proof that He is able to deliver people who are far away from Him. Jesus came into this world to save the guilty by suffering the punishment we deserve. His death on the cross secures everlasting life for those who believe in Him. You've only got one short life, friend. You need to think seriously about what comes next. ❧



Rev. Armen Thomassian

is minister of
Calgary FPC, Alberta.



LUTHER ON JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE

The Heart of the Gospel: The Hallmark of the Reformation

Historians often equivocate the beginning of the Reformation with Martin Luther's nailing of his ninety-five theses to the door in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517. While that is considered a historic moment, Luther had no comprehension of the impact that his words would have on the world. In fact, when he nailed the theses to the door, Luther was still developing his position on indulgences, purgatory, and the pope's position as "head of the church."

But gospel light began to flood Luther's mind with remarkable speed and conviction so that within three years he jettisoned all three errors and declared that the pope was antichrist rather than head of the church. While Luther came to see clearly the error of the church of Rome in these areas, one main area where he never fully understood the truth of Scripture was concerning the ordinances of the church, baptism, and the Lord's supper. As his spiritual growth progressed, Luther began to see that some men of the past like John Huss, whom he had thought were in error, were actually holding forth the truth of the gospel. Luther stated: "I believed and I taught all the doctrines of John Huss without being aware of it; and so did Staupitz. In short, although unconscious of it, we are all Hussites. Paul and Augustine were so themselves."

Luther was still learning at the time he nailed his theses; however, he had truly

begun to grasp the doctrine of justification by faith. During the autumn of 1515, Luther lectured through Paul's *Epistle to the Romans*. While studying for these lectures, the seed of the truth of justification by faith began to grow. Later, while preparing his 95 theses, he wrote, "Every Christian who truly repents of his sins, enjoys an entire remission both of the penalty and of the guilt, without any need of indulgences" (36). "Every true Christian, whether dead or alive, participates in all the blessings of Christ or of the Church, by God's gift, and without a letter of indulgence" (37). (A few months later in April of 1518,) Luther traveled to Heidelberg to discuss his *Paradoxes*. He asserted in thesis number 25, "That man is not justified who performs many works; but he who, without works, has much faith in Christ." These declarations demonstrate that Luther had begun to understand that justification by faith is freely bestowed. As this truth grew in Luther's soul, it had a profound effect on both the Reformer and those around him. Through an increased understanding of this doctrine, multitudes were liberated from the bondage of Romanism. The younger reformer, Philip Melancthon, was freed by this gospel, and he wrote about Luther's teachings: "There is no one among all the Greek and Latin writers who has come nearer than Luther to the spirit of St. Paul." Therefore, it is worth taking time to understand better the importance of this doctrine as preached by both Luther and Paul.

First, it is important to realize that we are justified by grace and not personal merit.

During this time, Rome taught that man was saved by grace, but what they meant was *sacramental* grace. The sacraments were religious works that are still being used in their system today to obtain God's favor. In other words, sacramental grace is achieved through a religious work, specifically participating in the sacraments. The Apostle Paul refutes this error when he confesses that we are "justified freely by his grace" (Romans 3:24). We do not earn God's grace, but He freely gives it. Paul also clearly contrasted this saving grace with religious works: "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work" (Romans 11:6). Luther followed Paul's example and stated that salvation was solely of grace. Luther wrote, "It is a great error to pretend of oneself to make satisfaction for our sins to God's righteousness; God pardons them gratuitously by His inestimable grace." And again he declared, "Wherefore we must needs say, that we be pronounced righteous by grace alone, or by faith alone in Christ, without the law and works."

Second, we are justified by faith in Christ alone, not faith in Christ plus faith in the church or her sacraments. Luther taught, "This is the true meaning of becoming a Christian, even to be justified by faith

in Jesus Christ, and not by the works of the law.” In contrast, Roman Catholic theologians asserted that each person’s trust should be in the church and her sacraments. For instance, when an infant is baptized, the Roman Catholic Church teaches that not only are all its sins forgiven and its soul regenerated, but the infant is also justified. In reality, they confuse justification and sanctification by clearly teaching that an infant is justified without faith by simply placing water upon its head. While Luther was not clear in all his conclusions on baptism, he did fully and faithfully teach that it was only by faith in Christ that a man is justified. “Faith in Christ takes away from you all trust in your own wisdom, righteousness, and strength; it teaches you that if Christ had not died for you, and had not thus saved you, neither you nor any other creature would have been able to do it. Then you learn to despise all those things that are unavailing to you. Nothing now remains to you but Jesus Christ—Christ alone, Christ all-sufficient for your soul. Hoping for nothing from any creature, you have only Christ, from whom you hope for everything, and whom you love above everything.”

Also, we are justified through the atonement of Christ, not through any cleansing we earn or purchase. Romanism teaches that in the sacrament of penance, a soul can receive forgiveness and merit in the form of an indulgence. Even in purgatory, where the soul is supposedly being purified from sin, those on earth can obtain forgiveness and merit for the one in this fictitious place of torment. In contrast, Luther pointed to the atonement of Christ alone: “If thou feel thy sins and the burden thereof, look not upon them in thyself, but remember that they are translated and laid upon Christ, whose stripes have made thee whole (Isaiah 53:5).” And again, he asserted, “O man! figure Jesus Christ to yourself, and contemplate how God in Him has shown thee His mercy, without any merit on thy part going before. Draw from this image of His grace the faith and assurance that all thy sins are forgiven thee. Works cannot produce it. It flows from the blood, and wounds, and death of Christ; thence it wells forth into our hearts.”

Finally, we are justified by the imputed righteousness of Christ, not by our own

personal obedience to the law. Luther understood Paul’s teaching when he stated, “It is called the righteousness of God in contradistinction to man’s righteousness which comes from works.” The Roman Catholic church teaches that God’s righteousness is poured into the infant’s heart at baptism and that the child lives out that righteousness throughout his life. According to Romanism, a person’s own righteousness is all he has before a holy God. There is no righteous position or standing in Christ. In contrast, Paul taught that Christ’s righteousness is imputed to a believer (Romans 4:1-25; 5:1, 16-19). Luther agreed with the apostle and believed that there was a complete substitution of Christ’s righteousness for the believer’s imperfections. He said, “I have no righteousness but Christ; Christ has no sin but mine.” This understanding is the language of both the Old and New Testaments. Christ is called “our righteousness” in Jeremiah 23:6, and “[He] is made unto us . . . righteousness” (1 Corinthians 1:30). Believers are “made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21), and “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth” (Romans 10:4). The Apostle desired therefore to “win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Philippians 3:8-9). In Romans 4, Paul used the Old Testament word “impute” (Genesis 15:6) to refer to the transaction of declaring a sinner to be righteous (Romans 4:1-8; 22-23). The word “impute” has to do with God’s thoughts toward or view of a believer. God considers a person to be a certain way, in this case perfectly righteous, and then treats him in that fashion. In a courtroom setting, to “impute” means “to lay to one’s account.” Luther understood that God laid the righteousness of Christ to his account, and then God treated Luther as if he were perfectly righteous.

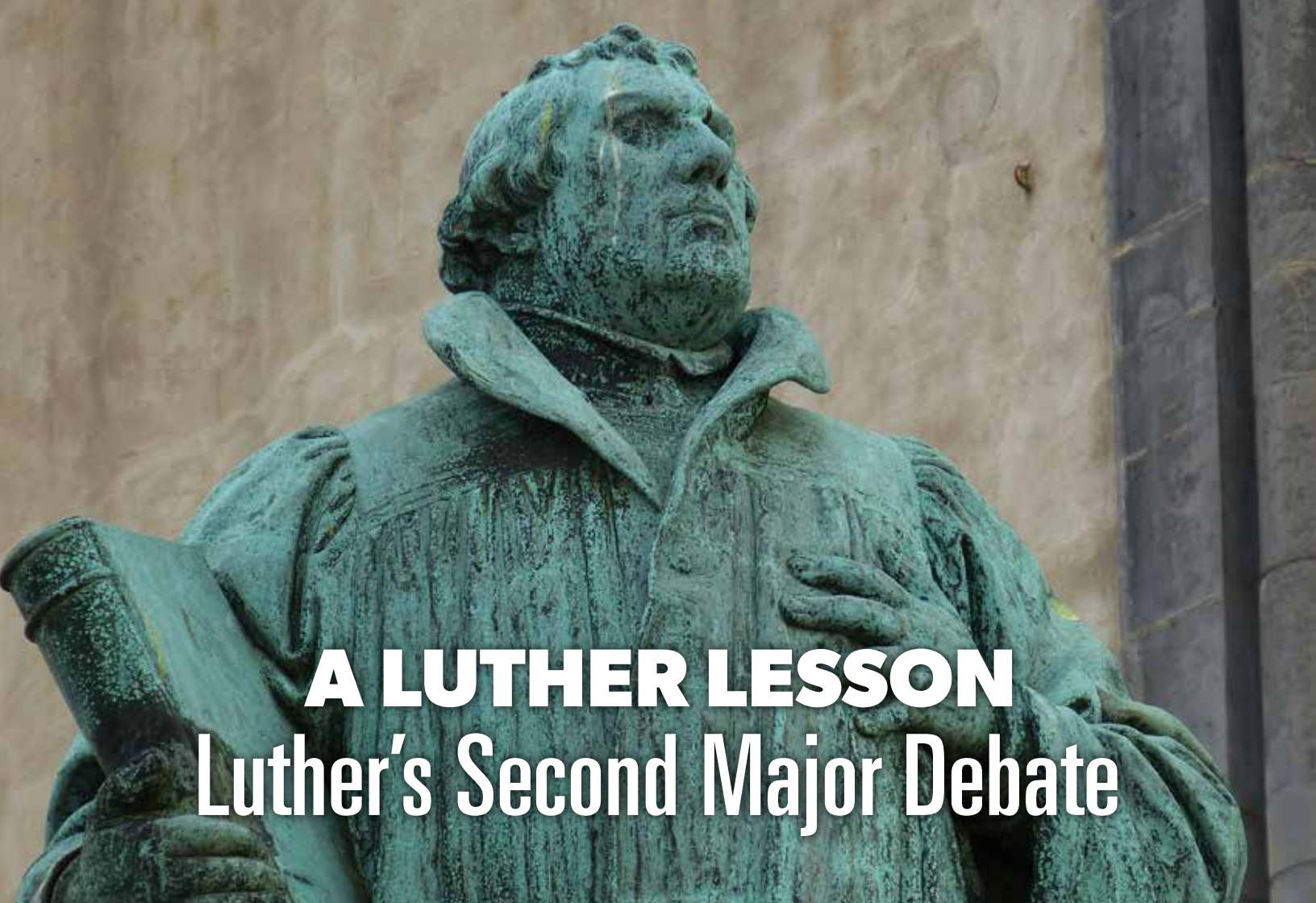
To emphasize that the believer did not earn this righteousness, Luther taught that it was an *alien* righteousness that God reckoned to the believer. “The first is alien righteousness, that is the righteousness of another, instilled from without, this is the righteousness of Christ by which He justifies through

faith, as it is written in (1 Corinthians 1:30.)” In his commentary on Romans, Luther asserted, “So, then, we must teach a righteousness which in every way comes from without and is entirely foreign to us.” This means that our righteousness is outside of the believer’s experience and has to do with his standing or position before God. Literally, our righteousness is that of Christ Himself that He earned in His earthly ministry. On the one hand, this righteousness is alien to the believer’s experience, but on the other hand, it is personally his in his position before God. John Bunyan captured this truth in his statement, “Indeed this is one of the greatest mysteries in the world—namely, that a righteousness that resides with a person in heaven should justify me, a sinner, on earth.”

Ultimately, Luther realized that in justification an *infinite* righteousness is accounted to a believer. “This is an infinite righteousness, and one that swallows up all sins in a moment, for it is impossible that sin should exist in Christ. On the contrary, he who trusts in Christ exists in Christ; He is one with Christ, having the same righteousness as He.” When the Church Fathers defended that Christ was one Person, they clearly taught that the atonement of Christ was infinite. Due to Christ’s one divine Person, He was able to give to His finite sufferings an infinite value. Luther clearly saw that a similar argument must be made for Christ’s righteousness. The actions of Christ when He was on the earth were perfectly righteous. Due to the deity of His Person, Christ is able to give His righteousness an unlimited or infinite value that will stand for all of the believer’s need for righteousness. Would that all would heed the admonition of Luther when he exclaimed, “O man! Figure Jesus Christ to yourself, and contemplate how God in Him has shown thee His mercy, without any merit on thy part going before.” ■



Dr. Mark Allison is president of Geneva Reformed Seminary, located in Greenville, SC, and serves as Chairman of the Foreign Missions Board.



A LUTHER LESSON

Luther's Second Major Debate

The Place

Leipzig, Germany

The Date

June 24 – July 16, 1519

Luther's Opponent

Dr. John Eck of Ingolstadt, a scholastic Roman Catholic prelate

The Main Issue

The supremacy of the pope over the Catholic Church

Dr. Eck's Contention

"There is in the church of God a primacy that comes from Christ, Himself. The church militant was formed in the image of the church triumphant. Now, the latter is a monarchy in which the hierarchy ascends step by step up to God, its sole chief. For this reason Christ has established a similar order upon earth. What a monster the church would be if it were without a head."¹

Luther's Reply

"The head of the church militant is Christ Himself, and not a man. I believe this on the testimony of God's Word. 'He must reign,' says Scripture, 'till he hath put all enemies under his feet' (1 Corinthians 15:25). Let us not listen to those who banish Christ to the church triumphant in heaven. His kingdom

is a kingdom of faith. We cannot see our Head, and yet we have one."²

The Result

Dr. Eck claimed the honor of winning the debate with his usual ostentation. The truths which Luther contended for, however, prevailed in the hearts of many hearers at the debate, even those who were formerly hostile to the Reformation. "Luther's words had sunk with irresistible power into the minds of his hearers. Many of those who daily thronged the hall of the castle were subdued by the truth. It was especially in the midst of its most determined adversaries that its victories were gained. Dr. Eck's secretary, familiar friend, and disciple, Polianders, was won to the Reformation and in the year 1522, he publicly preached the gospel at Leipzig.

John Cellarius, professor of Hebrew a man violently opposed to the reformed doctrines, was touched by the words of the eloquent doctor and began to search the Scriptures more deeply. Ere long he gave up his station and went to Wittenberg to study humbly at Luther's feet. Sometime after, he was pastor at Frankfurt and at Dresden."

"This Leipzig disputation was, therefore, perhaps the most important episode in the whole course of Luther's career. It made him for a few years at least the 'man of Germany' with almost every German."³ ❧

¹ Merle D'Aubigné, *The Triumph of Truth*. Translated by Henry White; edited by Mark Sidwell (Greenville: Bob Jones University Press, 1996) 212.

² D'Aubigné, *Triumph* 119-120.

³ Thomas Lindsay, *Martin Luther: The Man Who Started the Reformation* (Christian Focus, 1996) 75.

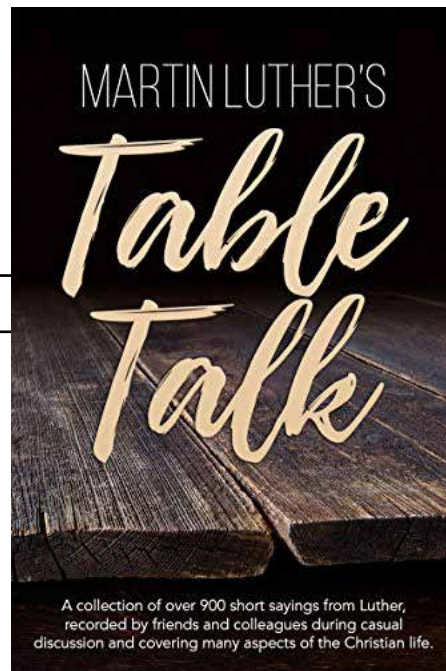
THE TABLE TALK OF MARTIN LUTHER

Providentially Preserved and Profitable to All

A string of God's remarkable providences brought Martin Luther's *Table Talk* into English. The enemies of Luther had burned many thousands of copies of the book. In fact, an edict had been issued by Emperor Rudolphus II, commanding the burning of Luther's works and death to anyone possessing them. While such burnings were taking place, a man in Germany carefully wrapped a copy in linen cloth and covered the wrapped book with a heavy layer of wax. Then he buried it in a deep hole under his house. The book stayed there well-preserved for many years until the preserver's grandson Casparus Van Sparr was in the process of building a new house where his grandfather had lived. It was 1626, and while the foundation of the new house was being dug, the book was discovered. Mr. Van Sparr knew that having the book at that time in Germany was still dangerous.

Casparus Van Sparr met Captain Henry Bell from England while Bell was on business in Germany. Van Sparr sent the book to Bell who was a Protestant and fluent in German. Captain Bell did not think that he had time to translate the book, but God moved in the situation. The Lord Treasurer of England owed Captain Bell some wages, which was quite in arrears. When Bell pressed the Treasurer for payment, the Treasurer had Bell imprisoned. For ten years, Bell was incarcerated, but five of those years were spent in translating the *Table Talk*.

When Archbishop of Canterbury William Laud heard that Henry Bell had a copy of Luther's book, he sent a Doctor Bray to ask Bell if he could read it. Bell was reluctant to give up his only copy, but Laud promised that he would get it printed if Bell would only let him read it. After a year, the book had not been returned nor printed. Laud sent ten gold livres to Bell in prison asking



to read the wonderful book once more. But Bell sent word to Laud that, if he did not return the book soon, he would appeal to parliament, and make known the excellence of the work to the King in order to get it published. Archbishop Laud sent it back with another forty gold livres. Captain Henry Bell was liberated by the intercession of King Charles I, but Laud was beheaded, leaving *Table Talk* unpublished in English. Bell appealed to parliament to publish the book. On November 10, 1645, parliament found *Table Talk* to be an excellent book, worthy to be published, and finally gave the order for publication on February 24, 1646. The contents for Martin Luther's *Table Talk* were gathered from different places: notes taken by some of Luther's followers from sermons and lectures, and from Luther's actual conversations spoken at mealtimes or during walks through the gardens. From the chapter on "Jesus Christ" Luther said, "It is indeed, a great and a glorious comfort (which every good and godly Christian would not miss, or be without, for all the honour and wealth in the world) that we know and believe that Christ, our High Priest, sits on the right hand of God, praying and mediating for us without ceasing—the true pastor and bishop of our souls, which the devil cannot tear out of His hands."

Having lost young children to death, Luther knew how to draw comfort from God's Word and also how to minister that comfort to others. In a letter to Dr.

Benedict Paul, whose son died from a fall from a rooftop, Luther said: "Although it be nowhere forbidden in Holy Scripture to mourn and grieve over the death of a child or friend...yet there ought to be a measure in sorrowing and mourning. Therefore, loving doctor, while you do well to mourn and lament the death of your son, let not your grief exceed the measure of a Christian in refusing to be comforted. I would have you, first, to consider 'twas God gave that son unto you, and took him from you again; secondly, I would wish you to follow the example of that just and godly man, Job, who, when he had lost all his children, all his wealth and substance, said: 'We received good from the hand of the Lord and shall we not receive evil? The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.' He rightly considered that both good and evil come of the Lord; even so do ye likewise; then you shall see that you have much greater gifts and benefits left of God to you than the evil that you now feel.... You forget the glorious treasure that God has given to you, in the true knowledge of His Word, a good and peaceable conscience, which alone should outweigh all the evil which may happen unto you.... Loving brother, God's mercy is greater than our tribulations. You have, indeed, cause to mourn...but your son is very well provided for; he lives now with Christ; oh! would to God that I, too, had finished my course; I would not wish myself here again."

Luther's book, so marvelously preserved by Divine Providence, has helped not only to further the spread of the Gospel, but also to reveal some of the subtle errors of Romanism. It is also an authentic look into the everyday life and personality of the great man, servant of God, and reformer Dr. Martin Luther. ■

Table Talk is available in hardback and paperback; Kindle and audiobook; Amazon; Barnes and Noble; and E-bay. I especially recommend Dr. Ron Cooke's edition, *The Best of Luther's Table Talk*. It will save you time and money. To order a copy from Dr. Cooke, you can write to: 4927 East Lee Highway, Max Meadows, VA 24360, or phone 276-620-8858, or email info@breckhillbiblecollege.org



Rev. Myron Mooney is minister of Trinity FPC in Decatur, Alabama and presently serves as moderator of the FPCNA.

TRANSITIONS AT GREENVILLE WEEK OF PRAYER

The Week of Prayer and regular meeting of the presbytery returned to the facilities of Faith FPC, Greenville, SC May 8-12. Around twenty-five members of the presbytery registered their attendance at the opening day of the presbytery meeting. This Week of Prayer began just four days after Rev. and Mrs. Derek Erwin returned to their home country of Northern Ireland to begin their retirement years. The presbytery heard a brief report about the farewell service in Orlando FPC on April 28, an occasion at which some members of the presbytery were in attendance (See the report on page 16 of this issue).

The transition in leadership in Orlando proved to be not the only such circumstance in the presbytery. Among the items of business the presbytery had to consider during its meeting was an official call from the congregation of Omagh FPC in Northern Ireland to Rev. Colin Mercer, inviting him to become that church's next minister.

Rev. Mercer informed the presbytery that he had decided to accept the call, and the presbytery voted to release him from his membership in the presbytery effective on the occasion of his official installation in the Omagh church. The moderator allowed a period of time for members to speak concerning their friendship with Rev. Mercer during the nearly eight years of his ministry in Greenville. His ministry there will conclude officially at the end of July.

Thus, the Week of Prayer proceeded against the backdrop of this change in the Greenville pulpit and in the presbytery. It was most encouraging that two official delegates from the Ulster presbytery were present throughout the week. They were Rev. Brian McClung, minister of Newtownabbey FPC near Belfast and Rev. John Woods, minister of John Knox Memorial FPC in Belfast. For Mr. Woods, his journey represented his first opportunity to visit the United States. Both Rev. McClung and Rev. Woods preached during the week.

The men's prayer times featured a solemn awareness of the Lord's presence and much pleading for the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into the harvest. The wives of ministers, elders, and students who were present also met for their own prayer sessions and enjoyed other opportunities for fellowship. Throughout the week, the visitors basked in the warm hospitality of the congregation and enjoyed the various meals that were generously provided.

On May 9, Rev. Myron Mooney of Trinity FPC in Alabama, moderator of the presbytery, called the spring 2017 presbytery meeting to order, and presided over the annual election of officers. All but one of the incumbent officers received election to additional terms in office; however, the transition in Greenville meant that the presbytery had to choose a replacement for Rev. Mercer, who served the past year as deputy clerk. The members elected Rev. Geoff Banister of the FPC of Indianapolis in Indiana to that office. Subsequently, the presbytery reappointed two assistants to the presbytery officers: Rev. Derrick Bowman, associate minister in Winston-Salem, NC as minute secretary and Mr. Tim Farr, elder at Faith FPC, as assistant treasurer.

One of the presbytery's major decisions arose out of the report of the Liaison Committee for the International Congress of Free Presbyterians. Lord willing, the fourth meeting of the Congress is to take place July 30-August 3, 2018. The presbytery decided to hold the evening meetings of the Congress in the facilities of the Free Presbyterian Church of Malvern, meaning that a number of nearby hotels will be possibilities for hosting the delegates traveling to the Malvern area for the Congress.

The presbytery also heard reports from two commissions that the members appointed to conduct special services. Rev. Mooney participated in each of those occasions. The first was the formal constitution of the new congregation in Mexico City on February 5 that also included the ordination

and installation of Rev. Jason Boyle as the church's minister. Another commission traveled to the Malvern church on April 7 to conduct the installation of Dr. Stephen Pollock as the new minister of that church.

The Publications Committee announced the availability of newly printed editions of *A New Beginning* by Dr. Alan Cairns, as well as copies of a special publication from the Ulster presbytery that is part of the commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation.

Other committees issued their regular reports. The Mission Board reported that the new vehicle to be used in the work in Liberia arrived there and that the missionaries were using it. The Seminary Committee provided updates on the students under care of the presbytery, most of them in missionary settings. The Finance Committee issued its final report of the presbytery's finances at the end of 2016. The Constitutional Documents Committee secured the adoption by the presbytery of three additional chapters in the Code of Practice and Discipline in the *Book of Church Order*.

The presbytery also received the report that the session of Covenant FPC in Columbia, SC had called a congregational meeting for June 8 to elect as many as three ruling elders. The report of that election will be on the presbytery's agenda for its meeting in Fredericton, New Brunswick during October.

As the presbytery adjourned late in the afternoon on May 11, the moderator reminded the members of their next regular meeting to be held in Fredericton FPC in New Brunswick, Canada, October 2-6, 2017. ■



Rev. David G. Mook

is the minister of Phoenix Free Presbyterian Church in Peoria, Arizona. He serves as clerk of the presbytery of the FPCNA, chairman of the Constitutional Documents Committee, and is an adjunct professor in the field of practical theology at Geneva Reformed Seminary.

THE OSTRICH

NOT JUST A BIG DUMB BIRD



"Gavest thou . . . wings and feathers unto the ostrich?

Which leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in dust,

And forgetteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them.

She is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers: her labour is in vain without fear;

Because God hath deprived her of wisdom, neither hath he imparted to her understanding.

What time she lifteth up herself on high, she scorneth the horse and his rider"

Job 39:13–18

In the final chapters of Job, God seeks to increase Job's spiritual understanding by using an extended object lesson. The Lord points to the physical world and asks Job if he has the power to create like that or if he even understands how it works. Generally, God asks Job to consider demonstrations of His vast power. But according to some Bible scholars, in Job 39 the Lord singles out one creature that seems to contradict His pattern.

It would seem that God chose a "stupid" bird with poor parenting skills when He points to the ostrich. Then, as if to compensate for its weak points, the Lord adds that the bird can outrun a horse. Some have suggested that God made the bird so stupid that He had to give it speed in order to survive—an apparently weak point in an otherwise convincing line of arguments. Those who reach such conclusions need to re-examine the ostrich. Only then will they appreciate that its parenting, speed, and even apparent lack of "wisdom and understanding" are a significant demonstration of God's infinite power.

Ostrich feathers and speed

The male ostrich stands over five feet tall at the shoulder and holds its head up to eight feet high. At 300 pounds, it is the largest known living bird. It has a black body with

A bird will build the nest of its species, no matter how complicated it is, on the first try.

white wing and tail feathers. Females are smaller and drab in color. An ostrich head is about the size of an orange, its brain the size of a walnut. It has two-inch eyeballs, the largest of any living land dwelling animal. Its

keen sight and height are useful in spotting predators on its native African plains.

The stubby wings and tail sport fluffy feathers which have gotten the bird in trouble. Egyptian Pharaohs in chariots used to chase ostriches, shoot them with arrows and use their feathers in decorative fans. Ostrich feathers have adorned everything from kings' crowns to soldiers' helmets. Hunting has led to the extinction of several ostrich species. Today, most ostriches live in nature reserves, zoos, or ostrich farms where they are raised for feathers and meat.

While ostrich feathers are beautiful, they are useless for flying. People assume they are just for decoration; others suggest they provide a fan to cool the bird. Some evolutionists consider them *vestigial*: evolutionary leftovers that should be evolving away. But recently, scientists have determined that the ostrich feathers actually help the bird to run. Holding its wings and tail at the proper angle, the ostrich allows the wind to pass over its feathers, helping to lift it so that

its strong legs can propel it with fifteen-foot strides. With the aid of its feathers, ostriches can reach forty miles per hour. Compared to the fifteen mph of a sprinting human and the thirty-five mph of a galloping horse, the Biblical description is exact when it says that “what time she lifteth herself on high, she scorneth the horse and his rider.”

Ostrich Parenting

The male ostrich mates with one or two females and the eggs are laid in one large scooped-out place in the sand. The male stands guard during the day and takes on incubation duties at night. In the morning and early afternoon, the camouflaged females stay on the eggs. It appears there is only a single male in the area. In the warm afternoons, the eggs do not need incubation and the parents wander around in search of food.

During incubation, a bird's eggs must be turned or the chick will attach to the shell and emerge deformed. When turning its eggs, the ostrich appears to be kicking them around, but they do not break. A chicken egg cracks under eleven pounds of pressure, but an ostrich egg is five times thicker and requires over 120 pounds of pressure to crack. Lion cubs have played with ostrich eggs without breaking them.

When the chicks hatch, the male assumes most parental responsibilities. If a predator approaches, the parent emits a loud call getting the predator's attention and the chicks *freeze*. Their coloring camouflages them. Then the parents meander away, often making a wing-flapping ruckus with occasional stops to peck at things. It appears like they did not notice the predator. “She is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers.” The predator stalks, but the ostrich keeps ahead of it. When the predator finally dashes, the ostrich “lifts herself on high” and leads the predator farther away. When the predator gives up, the ostrich circles back to its nest.

Deprived of wisdom & understanding

Do older ostriches tell young parents about the need to rotate eggs and that kicking will not break them? Do the chicks freeze because the parents properly instruct them during “predator protection drills?” Does

the ostrich plan diversionary tactics to lead the predator away from the family? No. Scientists question if an ostrich-sized brain has enough mental capacity to do that level of thinking or communicating. These actions are instincts: part of the mental package the ostrich is “hatched” with. Different birds have different instinct

The evolutionist's idea of instincts evolving over many generations does not make sense. A means of transferring the knowledge of what worked to the next generation as an instinct has never been explained or demonstrated.

packages. For example, different birds build different kinds of nests. But how does a bird figure out how to build its nest? Does it carefully study the nest it hatches in? Does it take lessons from experienced nest builders? No. Even when raised in isolation, never having seen any nest and being offered various building materials, a bird will build the nest of its species, no matter how complicated it is, on the *first try*. That is the way instinctual programming works.

In a predator-filled environment, it is doubtful if ostriches would have survived long enough to have worked out the needed instincts. The evolutionist's idea of instincts evolving over many generations does not make sense. A means of transferring the knowledge of what worked to the next generation as an instinct has never been explained or demonstrated.

At first glance, humans may judge ostrich instincts as “stupid.” Kicking its eggs and leaving the family rather than attacking a predator seems irresponsible. But when we do not understand an animal's instinctual behavior and judge it unwise, or when we apply human standards to an

animal's behavior and judge it inappropriate, the problem is with our judgment—not with the animal nor its instincts.

Scripture tells us “God hath deprived [the ostrich] of wisdom, neither hath he imparted to her understanding.” The ostrich does not know why or what it is doing. “Her labour is in vain without fear.” Neither fear of the predator nor concern for the chicks causes its actions. If an ostrich understood its predicament and had to decide what to do, there would probably be a dead chick or two and a wounded ostrich before it was over.

Without wisdom or understanding ostriches respond with a wise plan. But it is not ostrich wisdom. It is God's wisdom. God knew what He was doing when He designed and created the ostrich. He knew where it would live and what it would face and He gave it a complex set of instincts that permit the species to thrive. Only human intervention has caused ostrich populations to decrease.

All that “knowledge” is passed down for generations in a tiny portion of a walnut-sized brain. Job's object lesson in ostrich behavior does not demonstrate a weak example of God's power. Rather, it is an example of God's incomprehensible knowledge and immense power displayed in the complex minutia of life as well as in the vast greatness of His creation. ❏



William Pinkston teaches science at Bob Jones Academy in Greenville, South Carolina. He is a member of Faith FPC



Youth Camp 2017

by Rev. Colin Mercer, camp director



The FPC Youth Camp took place at Rock Mountain Bible Camp July 15-22. Over 65 campers and almost 30 staff members converged on the scenic camp site on Saturday evening. After supper was held, I took delight in welcoming the campers before they were assigned cabins, tee shirts, and camp booklets. Following “get to know you games” they returned to the cabins for the first of many cabin devotionals led by their counselors and assistant counselors.

The camp theme this year was the work of the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts. The services on the Lord’s day, and the evening meetings throughout the week focused on various themes concerning the person and work of the Holy Spirit. There was a sense of the Lord’s presence at each meeting

with many counselors reporting excellent and in-depth conversations with campers throughout the day. Staff prayer meetings were a particular blessing for ministers and staff. These meetings focused on the prayers in the book of Acts.

Healthy competition filled the morning and afternoon sessions at camp. An avidly contested Bible quiz on the “Jeopardy” model saw teams from Malvern and Winston Salem compete in the final with Winston Salem coming out just in front.

Many of our campers this year were “first-timers” and it was a special encouragement to see the “old-timers” taking care of them and involving them in the various activities. Team participation was more important

than winning. The growth in grace evident in young lives makes camp worthwhile. We are indebted to the Lord for His gracious provision for us.

We are thankful for staff who sacrifice time and effort to make camp possible. Their commitment to helping young people understand the gospel and enjoy God’s provision is a great blessing. We thank our congregations for praying for us. As I write, camp is fast coming to a close. Long distances must be traveled to reach home. It is our prayer that the Word preached throughout the week will linger in hearts long after camp to bring forth fruit to God’s eternal glory. ■



MISSIONARY WEEKEND IN TORONTO

The Toronto church was delighted to welcome several speakers for a special missionary weekend from May 5 - 7, 2017. The theme of the conference was taken from the apostle Paul's words, "Labourers together with God" (1 Corinthians 3:9).

Among the missionaries and guests were Rev. Jason Boyle, accompanied by his wife, Danielle. He spoke of their ministry in Mexico City and gave an encouraging report of the newly constituted congregation and its desire to honor Christ by its witness in that vast city of 25 million people. Jason said that God is at work in the life of his congregation, and that at a recent youth camp young people showed genuine desire to grow in the Lord through their study of His Word.

The Toronto congregation also rejoiced to have Mr. Richard Craig from the mission church in Little London, Jamaica. This was Richard's second visit to the Toronto church and he used the opportunity to encourage the people to continue to pray for the work in Jamaica. During the conference, Richard spoke of the Lord's direction in his own life, leading him to apply to Geneva Reformed Seminary to commence ministerial studies in the fall. He asked for prayer while he pursues the necessary studies to fulfil the Lord's calling in his life.

Also present was the chairman of the Mission Board, Dr. Mark Allison, who was pleased to announce the exciting news that Rev. David DiCanio, our missionary in Liberia, was close to launching a Free Presbyterian radio station located on the mission compound. He added that the programs are to be aired from its own

antenna on a government-assigned FM frequency, which may be heard throughout Monrovia, Lord willing.

As the president of the seminary, Dr. Allison spoke of two pastors, Marcos Reyes and Lalo Peña from Mexico, along with Ramon Sosa from the Dominican Republic, who are presently enrolled as students through the seminary's distance learning program. He also spoke of Milos Solc, who ministers in the Czech Republic, announcing that he will soon complete the ministerial program. Dr. Allison emphasized the need to pray that the Lord will be pleased to call young men of His choosing to train for the ministry of the FPC in North America.



FAREWELL SERVICE IN ORLANDO FPC

by Rev. David Mook

The Orlando church held a farewell service for Rev. Derek Erwin and his wife Anne to mark their retirement after thirteen years of ministry in the congregation. Members of the presbytery, along with a number of visitors, attended the special service on Friday evening, April 28. Rev. Erwin was the church's second minister, succeeding

the founding minister, Rev. John Wagner. The service reflected the impact that Rev. Erwin's ministry had since his arrival in 2003.

Among the visitors was Rev. Vicente Alcivar, a U.S. Army chaplain who entered the Free Presbyterian ministry as a member of the Orlando church, having grown in grace under the labors of both former ministers. Rev. Myron Mooney (Trinity, Alabama), moderator of the presbytery, presided at the service with Rev. David Mook (Phoenix, Arizona) and Rev. Stephen Hamilton (Walnutport, Pennsylvania) also taking part. At the request of the Orlando session, Rev. Reggie Cranston (Port Hope, Ontario) preached the farewell message. He expounded on the characteristics of the ministry of John the Baptist that were also apparent in the ministry of Rev. Erwin. Dr. Amanda Mulder, a former member of the church during her student years in Orlando, agreed to play the piano for the service. During the service, Mr. George Walker from the session and Mr. Gary Thomas from the church committee made special presentations to the Erwins, including a substantial monetary gift to help them in their return to their home

country of Northern Ireland. There was a wonderful sense of the Lord's presence in the gathering of the people.

Following the service, the congregation enjoyed an extended time of refreshments and fellowship. The church prepared a video presentation from the years that the Erwins spent in Orlando. Rev. Erwin preached for the last time as the church's minister on the following Lord's Day, April 30. On the evening of May 4, the Erwins boarded their

flight for the United Kingdom. We wish them good health and many years of God's blessing to enjoy their retirement. The presbytery has appointed Rev. Mooney as the interim moderator for the congregation, and the members are looking to the Lord to provide another man to undertake the care of the congregation in Orlando.



A SPECIAL GIFT CELEBRATING THE MUSIC MINISTRY OF JOAN PINKSTON

by Dr. Alan Cairns

After 49 years of teaching piano at Bob Jones University, Joan Pinkston is retiring. It is the end of an era. For almost half a century, Mrs. Pinkston has instructed thousands of students. Her influence on the lives of those young people has been immense, for Joan is not only a wonderfully gifted musician, composer and teacher, but a lady whose first aim is ever to glorify Christ and show forth His love and grace. Her students learned music, but more importantly, they “learned Christ.”

Since the beginning of 1980 when I took up the pastorate of Faith Free Presbyterian Church in Greenville, Mrs. Pinkston has been an integral part of the music ministry of the church. She has been the chief church pianist and has always had a unique ability to make the congregation want to sing their very best. Over the years she has played a vital role in ensuring that our music remained not only of the highest quality but soundly biblical, Christ-centered, and God-glorifying.

At the end of each Sabbath evening service, after the benediction, Joan plays some appropriate hymn and the congregation remains in prayerful silence. Her choice is always just right and her treatment of the hymn provides the perfect complement to the message. So many people were blessed through those little pieces that I prevailed on Joan to allow us to produce a music cassette. She had doubts that her spontaneous performances merited such treatment, but knowing that so many people really wanted to have them convinced her that perhaps the cassette was a good idea. That tape became one of the most beloved recordings we ever produced. Those lovely melodies, so thoughtfully and beautifully played, brought a sense of

peace and tranquility—as well as hours of enjoyment—to people in Greenville and in many a far off place.

Joan's ministry has touched the entire denomination. Through her efforts we have the hymnal *Hymns of Grace and Glory*, a treasure shared by churches around the world. She accomplished that work at a time when she was facing such severe health challenges that she prayed specifically that the Lord would spare her life long enough to see it completed. The Lord answered prayer and, though Joan still suffers greatly, she continues to serve the church with her incomparable musical skills. She has entered a well-earned retirement from teaching at Bob Jones University and, God willing, will continue to serve the Lord both by composing and performing Christian music that glorifies God and edifies His people.

Another greatly gifted musician once said to me, “We will never see anyone quite like her again.” A lady of great Christlikeness, a musician of the highest standard, a gracious, humble believer, a zealous servant of the gospel, a faithful friend, and co-laborer in the Lord's work—Joan Pinkston, we thank God for you and gratefully celebrate your life and ministry.



FAREWELL TO THE MERCERS

As you will learn from the presbytery report in this issue of *Current*, Rev. Colin Mercer has accepted a call from Omagh Free Presbyterian Church in Northern Ireland to become their minister. This will be a painful parting for the congregation at Faith FPC, but we trust that under God it will be a great blessing for the Omagh congregation. A special dinner in their honor is being arranged by the Faith congregation to be held on July 28, at a facility in Bob Jones University. We hope to give a full report of that special event in the next issue of *Current*.



WEDDING BELLS

Lieutenant Benjamin Gardner, a member of Greenville FPC and Miss Julia Kearns from Malvern FPC were married on July 8, at Faith Free Presbyterian Church in Greenville. Ben is First Lieutenant in the US Air Force stationed at Moody Air Force base in Valdosta, GA.



LET'S LEARN ABOUT MARTIN LUTHER

by Cosette Landon



Every time we think of the Protestant Reformation, we think of the name Martin Luther. He has fascinated students of history for generations. Though the ideas of the Reformation did not start with him, he did so much to move it forward, and we could call him the “cornerstone.” Fortunately, there is a lot written about him, so that we can get to know him pretty well. This time in *Kid's Corner*, we'll look at some interesting facts about this remarkable servant of the Lord.

Martin the Trembler

Martin Luther showed amazing courage when he had to stand alone for God's truth, but that might make us think he was naturally fearless. He was not. As we study his life, we see his strength came from God's grace. When he was a boy at school, his schoolmasters did not show kindness to children, so he learned to be very afraid of them. His father sent him away to school, and sometimes he had to beg for food, and suffer bullying and rejection. But as Martin grew, he learned to fear offending God

more than man, and this lesson would be extremely valuable in his battles when he became a reformer in Germany.

Martin the Scholar

It may not surprise you that Martin Luther read a lot. God gave him a very keen mind and the curiosity to ask questions. One author described him this way: “The strength of his understanding, the liveliness of his imagination, the excellence of his memory, soon carried him beyond all his schoolfellows.”*

“He often addressed questions to his [teachers] . . . and all that he read or heard remained constantly present to his mind; it was as if he had seen it himself.”*

God was preparing Martin Luther to be a reformer. That's someone who turns things around to make them better. In his case, he wanted to turn people to the Bible. Sometimes, he had to challenge the most brilliant men and religious leaders of his

time. He had to know the Bible very well to make it clear and simple for people to understand. He had to know the truth so that he could defend it.

Martin the Musician

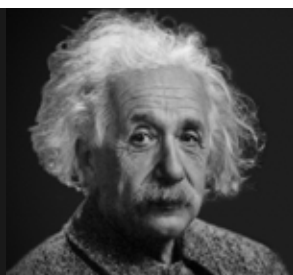
Part of young Martin's training included the fine arts. That means he learned to play musical instruments and sing. He played the flute and the lute, and had a fine singing voice. The Lord used his talent in music to greatly bless the church as it grew during the Reformation. Martin Luther believed that music was an important part of worship and he wrote hymns that are still popular in church today.

Martin the Husband

The fact that Martin Luther got married was very, very important to the new Protestant Church. Up until this time, Roman Catholic priests were not allowed to marry. That meant there were no examples of family life from church leaders for people to follow. The happy home-life of Martin and his wife Katharina was a blessing, and pastors have followed his example ever since.

Martin Luther's life was arranged by the Lord to help him to do a great work for God. Even what seemed to be small things at the time, became great blessings. Because Martin studied the Bible and followed the Lord with all his heart, his life brought glory to God and strength to the church in many, many ways. We appreciate what he did because it has even helped us today! ❏

* These words come from a book called *The Triumph of Truth* by Jean Henry Merle D'Aubigné.



A WORD WORTH KNOWING

Scholar

a student, a person who has studied to become an expert in one or several subjects



Spring 2017



Maggie Bowman

Grace FPC, Winston Salem, NC



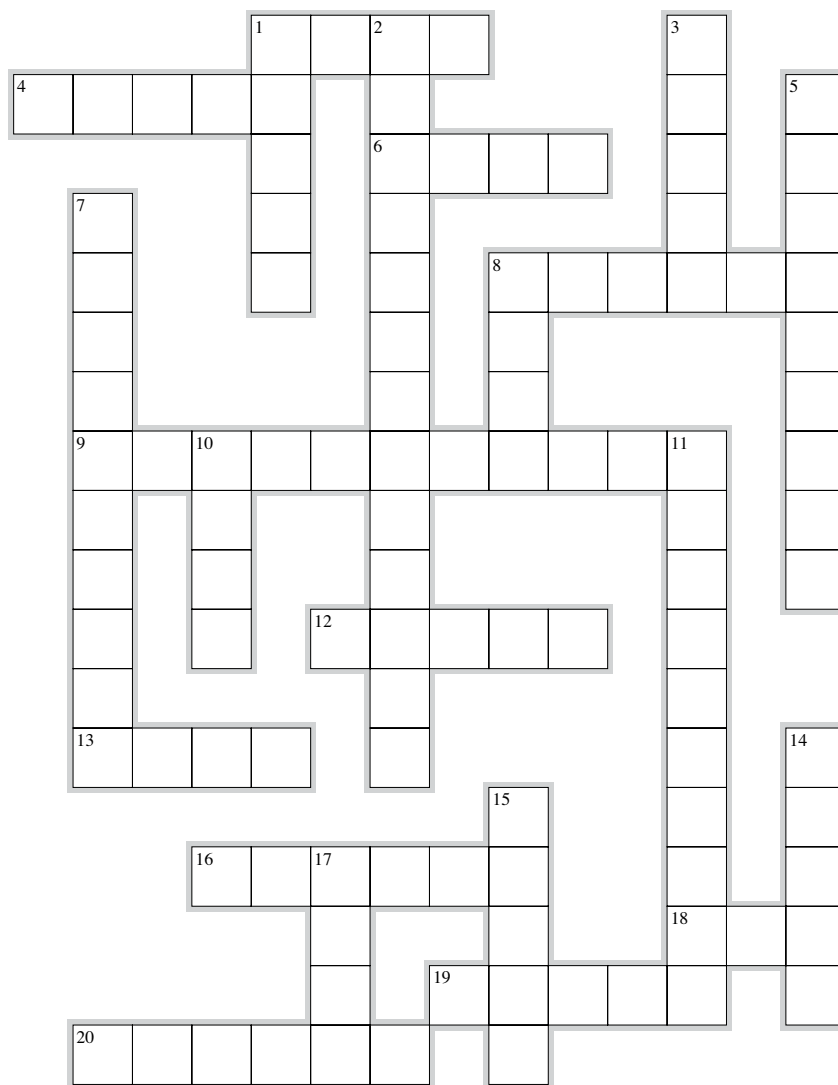
Kyle Munger

Grace FPC, Winston Salem, NC

Kid's Crossword Puzzle

Across

1. "David took an ___, and played." (1 Samuel 16:23)
4. "___ all things." (1 Thessalonians 5:21)
6. "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a ___ thing." (Proverbs 18:22)
8. "The LORD giveth ___." (Proverbs 2:6)
9. "With musical ___ of God." (1 Chronicles 16:42)
12. "Of a ___ mind." (1 Peter 5:2)
13. "___ unto the LORD a new song." (Psalm 96:1)
16. "Behold, God is mine ___." (Psalm 54:4)
18. "He found them ___ times better." (Daniel 1:20)
19. "___ to show thyself approved unto God." (2 Timothy 2:15)
20. "If I be ___ up from the earth [I] will draw all men unto me." (John 12:32)
5. "To him that is poor ... and ___ at my word." (Isaiah 66:2)
7. "More exceedingly zealous of the ___ of my fathers." (Galatians 1:14)
8. "The husband of one ___." (1 Timothy 3:2)
10. "Wherewith shall I ___ Israel?" (Judges 6:15)
11. "In ___ and godly sincerity." (2 Corinthians 1:12)
14. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and ___ and spiritual songs." (Ephesians 5:19)
15. "The ___ shall make you free." (John 8:32)
17. "Husbands, ___ your wives." (Colossians 3:19)



Down

1. "Come unto me all ye that labour are ___ laden." (Matthew 11:28)
2. "Their ___ is of me, saith the LORD." (Isaiah 54:17)
3. "Moses his chosen ___ ... in the breach." (Psalm 106:23)

PLEASE NOTE: Please send your completed puzzle to *Current Kids' Corner*, Attn: Mrs. Rachel Carper, 3 Elmira St., Greenville, SC 29615, or by email to rcarper@bju.edu by Aug. 30, 2017. Include your name, address, age, and the name of the church you attend. Five winners will be drawn from all correct submissions received. The contest is open to young people ages 5–12, and winners will receive a \$10 cash prize.



CALENDAR

OF EVENTS

JULY 15-22

Free Presbyterian Youth Camp, Rock Mountain Bible Camp, Scranton, PA

JULY 27

Ordination of Ruling Elders in Columbia FPC, SC

JULY 28

Farewell service for Rev. Colin and Mrs. Heather Mercer in Greenville, SC

OCT 2-6

Presbytery Week of Prayer hosted by Fredericton FPC, New Brunswick, CAN

JULY 30 - AUG 3, 2018

International Congress of Free Presbyterians, Pennsylvania, USA

I Have a Shepherd



As I sit down with the challenge to write about my favorite hymn from among the many I love so well, I am immediately settled in my mind because today is our twelfth wedding anniversary. There is such an abundance of rich, precious hymns in our hymnal to choose from, but for me there is one hymn that stands out above the rest. Its words have proven to be true over and over in our lives.

When we were married on the 24th May, 2005, someone commented that we had chosen unusual hymns for our wedding ceremony. I remember being slightly surprised by this comment, but upon reflection perhaps our selection of hymns wasn't the norm for a wedding. To us, our wedding day was as much about our consecration as a couple to the Lord as it was about our declaration of love for each other. This was reflected in our choice of wedding hymns and one of the pieces we chose was the beautiful hymn by Leonard Weaver, "I Have a Shepherd."

*Following Jesus, ever day by day,
Nothing can harm me when He leads the way;
Darkness or sunshine, what'er befall,
Jesus, the Shepherd, is my All in All.*

It would be difficult not to say a resounding "Amen" after reading this refrain. How true those words have been to us, as we have navigated married life together! The Lord has certainly led us in paths we could never have imagined, even to this very day as we now live in Canada, and serve the Lord here. He has proven to be our "all in all." I can fully echo the sentiment contained in the first verse too, "How He has blessed me tongue can never tell."

While it is difficult to fully articulate what the Lord has done for me throughout my life, I am confident that surrender to the Lord is everything. If we follow Him every step of the way, we have no need to fear the future, even though what is ahead may appear impossible for a time. Why? He is the One who holds the future, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

At times the Lord may press on our hearts some task that we feel is beyond us, or we fear

the outcome of some present providence. I know what that's like, yet I'm thankful to be able to encourage you to trust the Shepherd and Bishop of your soul. The way ahead may be uncertain, but the outcome is certain to be good: good for us personally, and good in the eyes of the One who is leading the way. Just as David wrote in Psalm 23, I have assurance that "mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

Therefore, let us never fear to put all of our lives on the altar, holding nothing back from the Lord. Truly His ways are perfect. And thus, may each one of us be able to rest in these comforting words:

*Pastures abundant doth His hand provide,
Still waters flowing ever at my side,
Goodness and mercy follow on my track,
With such a Shepherd nothing can I lack.*



Mrs. Melanie Thomassian

is the wife of Rev. Armen Thomassian, minister of Calgary Free Presbyterian Church, Alberta.