

REFLECTIONS

The Monthly Newsletter of Grace OPC

MEMORIAL TO A FRIEND

By Pastor Brian De Jong

This past Monday marked the end of the earthly pilgrimage of an old friend. Charles Rodd – a remarkable man – has gone to glory and now sees his Savior face to face! The last years of Charles’ life were not easy as he suffered from deteriorating health. Yet his spirits were good and his cheerfulness remained undiminished.

I first met this gentle soul in Marion, Illinois. I was pastoring a small PCA church plant in a community that knew not Reformed theology. One day I received a call from a woman in Atlanta, Georgia – Mr. Rodd’s daughter. She attended a PCA church in Atlanta, and found me in the directory.

Could I possibly visit her father? Her mother Florence had just died and this new widower was having a hard time of it. Charles needed a friend, and I had the privilege to fill the void.

In the years that followed, Charles became a surrogate grandfather to our children. He gave Ian his first job cutting grass, usually treating him to an ice cream sandwich after the lawn was done. On a fall day, Charles would sometimes show up in our driveway with a jug of apple cider, because “things are always better if they’re shared.”

How well we remember the time when he gave us our first lesson on canning tomatoes, providing a pressure canner and all the advice we needed to learn the art. He was a friend to us, and more than a friend. Though he was a

lifelong Baptist, he encouraged his young Presbyterian pastor with a mature godliness.

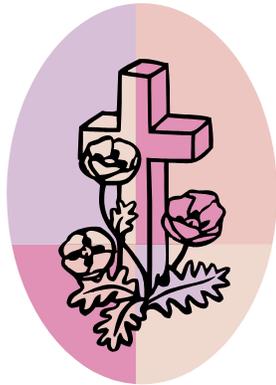
After we moved to Michigan, Charles continued to show kindness to us. When he learned that Ian was off to college, he made a donation to Ian’s college fund. If we happened to travel through central

Ohio, where Charles lived for his last years, he and his second wife Faye would have a sumptuous meal prepared for us. He was always happy to talk on the phone, or to see us in person. We could pick up right where we left off – he was an excellent friend.

As I reflect on my relationship with Charles Rodd, several thoughts flood my mind. First,

how very good God is to give us Christian friends in this life. If we didn’t have people like Charles, how lonely we would be and how isolated we would feel. Knowing that he was there, and that he cared for us made a great difference. Praise God for His providence in raising up this good man, and bringing him across our path at the perfect time.

Second, I am reminded that although he was a great friend, Charles was a mere mortal with feet of clay. His was far from perfect, and he could not save my soul. But in Charles I saw reflections of a greater, truer, better friend – a friend that sticks closer than a brother. If it is good to have earthly friends, how much better to have a heavenly Friend – the Lord Jesus Christ...



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Mnemonics...

- *Session Meeting, 13th*
- *Congregational Meeting, 20th*

Eternity

by R. C. Ryle

*“The things which are seen are temporal;
but the things which are not seen are eternal.”*

(2 Corinthians 4:18)

A subject stands out on the face of this text which is one of the most solemn and heart searching in the Bible. That subject is eternity.

The subject is one of which the wisest man can only take in a little. We have no eyes to see it fully, and no mind to grasp it; and yet we must not refuse to consider it. There are star-depths in the heavens above us, which the most powerful telescope cannot pierce; yet it is well worth it to look into them and learn something, even if we cannot learn everything. There are heights and depths about the subject of eternity which mortal man can never comprehend; but God has spoken of it, and we have no right to turn away from it altogether.

The subject is one, which we must never approach without the Bible in our hands. The moment we depart from “God’s Word written,” in considering eternity and the future state of man, we are likely to fall into error. In examining points like these we must have nothing to do with preconceived notions as to what God’s character is like, and what we think God ought to be, or ought to do with man after death. We only have to find out what is written. What does the Scripture say? What does the Lord say? It is wild work to tell us that we ought to have “noble thoughts about God,” independent of, and over and above, Scripture. Natural religion comes to a standstill here. The noblest thoughts about God, which we have a right to hold, are the thoughts which He has been pleased to reveal to us in His “written Word.”

I ask the attention of all, into whose hands this paper may fall, while I offer a few suggestive thoughts about eternity. As a mortal man, I feel deeply my own insufficiency to handle this subject. But I pray that God the Holy Spirit, whose strength is made perfect in weakness, may bless the words I speak, and make them seeds of eternal life in many minds.

I. The first thought which I commend to the attention of my readers is this: We live in a world

where all things are temporal and passing away.

Surely, a man must be blind indeed who cannot realize this. Everything around us is decaying, dying, and coming to an end. There is a sense, no doubt, in which “matter” is eternal. Once created, it will never entirely perish. But in a popular practical sense, there is nothing undying about us except our souls. No wonder the poet says:

“Change and decay in all around I see:

O Thou that changest not, abide with me!”

We are all going, going, going, whether high or low, gentle or cruel, rich or poor, old or young. We are all going and will soon be gone.

Beauty is only temporary. Sarah was once the fairest of women, and the admiration of the Court of Egypt; yet a day came when even Abraham, her husband, said, “Let me bury my dead out of my sight.” (Genesis 23:4) Strength of the body is only temporal. David was once a mighty man of valor, the slayer of the lion and the bear, and the champion of Israel against Goliath; yet a day came when even David had to be nursed and ministered to in his old age like a child. Wisdom and power of brain are only temporal. Solomon was once a prodigy of knowledge, and all the kings of the earth came to hear his wisdom, yet even Solomon in his latter days played the fool exceedingly, and allowed his wives to “turn away his heart.” (1 Kings 11:2)

Humbling and painful as these truths may sound, it is good for us all to realize them and lay them to heart. The houses we live in, the homes we love, the riches we accumulate, the professions we follow, the plans we form, the relations we enter into—they are only for a time. “The things seen are temporal.” “The fashion of this world passeth away” (2 Corinthians 4:18; 1 Corinthians 7:31)

The thought is one that ought to rouse everyone who is living only for this world. If his conscience is not utterly seared, it should stir in him great searchings his heart. Oh, take care what you are doing! Awake to see things in their true light before it be too late. The things you live for now are all temporal and passing away. The pleasures, the

Eternity Concluded...

amusements, the recreations, the profits, the earthly callings, which now absorb all your heart and drink up your entire mind, will soon be over. They are poor fleeting things that cannot last. Oh, do not love them too much; do not hold on to them too tightly; do not make them your idols! You cannot keep them, and you must leave them. Seek first the kingdom of God, and then everything else will be given to you. "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things." Oh, you that love the world, get wisdom! Never, never forget that it is written, "The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever." (Colossians 3:2; 1 John 2:17)

The same thought ought to cheer and comfort every true Christian. Your trials, crosses, and conflicts are all temporary. They will soon come to an end; and even now they are working for you "an eternal glory that far outweighs them all." (2 Corinthians 4:17) Receive them patiently; bear them quietly; look upward, forward, onward, and far beyond them. Fight your daily fight under a steadfast conviction that it is only for a little while, and that rest is not far off. Carry your daily cross always remembering that "what is seen is temporary." The cross will soon be exchanged for a crown, and you will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God.

II. The second thought that I bring to your attention is this: We are all moving towards a world where everything is eternal.

That great unseen state of existence, which lies beyond the grave, is forever. Whether it is happy or miserable, whether it is a condition of joy or sorrow, we know that in one respect it will be utterly unlike anything in this world—it will be forever. There will be no change and decay, no end, no goodbye, no mornings and evening, no alteration, and no annihilation. Whatever there is beyond the tomb, when the last trumpet has sounded, and the dead are raised, we know it will be endless, everlasting, and

eternal. "What is unseen is eternal."

We cannot fully realize this condition. The contrast between now and then, between this world and the next, is so very great that our feeble minds cannot grasp it all. How we live our lives in this

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world brings consequences in the next, that are so tremendous, that they almost take away our breath, and we shrink back from looking at them. But when the Bible speaks plainly we have no right to turn away from a subject, and with the Bible in our hands we will do well to look at the "unseen things that are eternal."

Let us settle it then in our minds, for one thing, that the future happiness of those who are saved is eternal. However little we may understand it, it is something that will have no end: it will never cease, never grow old, never decay, and never die. "God will fill us with joy in His presence, with eternal pleasures at His right hand." (Psalm 16:11) Once they arrive in paradise, the saints of God will never ever leave that wonderful place. Their inheritance "can never perish, spoil or fade." They will "receive the crown of glory that will never fade away." (1 Peter 1:4; 5:4) Their warfare is finished; their fight is over; their work is done. "Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst." They are traveling on towards an "eternal glory that far outweighs" all their struggles; towards a home which will never be broken up, a meeting without a parting, a family gathering without a separation, a day without night. Faith will be swallowed up in sight, and hope in certainty. They will see as they have been seen, and know as they have been known, and "be with the Lord forever." I am not surprised that the apostle Paul adds, "Encourage each other with these words." (1 Thessalonians 4:17, 18)

*Taken from Practical Religion by J. C. Ryle
Chapter 21, Eternity, first part.*

The Federal Vision

by Pastor Brian De Jong

As a result of our Reformation Conference with Dr. John Carrick, we became acquainted with the justification controversy that is raging in evangelical and reformed circles. To better acquaint you with the movements involved, I wrote an article last month about the New Perspective on Paul. This month we want to shift attention to another movement that is threatening the doctrine of justification by faith – the Federal Vision Movement.

Regarding this movement, I speak from my own experience. There was a time when I was actively recruited by some of the chief players into the Federal Vision. When I resisted their invitations and began examining their doctrine, they proved less friendly. In God's providence I became involved in a protracted ecclesiastical trial of a PCA minister who was promoting the Federal Vision. He was eventually deposed from the ministry and split a church that I deeply loved. I have had the bitter experience of seeing the Federal Vision movement from the inside, and seeing its dreadful effects upon Christian folk.

The roots of the Federal Vision go back to the Christian Reconstruction movement. Writers like Gary North, R.J. Rushdoony, Greg Bahnsen, Joe Morecraft and others developed a view sometimes called "Theonomy" or "Christian Reconstruction." Some of these men – like Bahnsen and Morecraft – were solidly Presbyterian. Others were not so completely committed to Presbyterianism. In Tyler, Texas there was a group of Reconstructionists headed by Ray Sutton, Gary North and James Jordan. While North got the most attention, James Jordan was the brains behind the Tyler Reconstructionists. This group was initially Presbyterian, but moved toward a Reformed Episcopal perspective in later years.

James Jordan eventually left Tyler and relocated in Niceville, Florida. There he runs an independent ministry of writing and teaching. It was Jordan who once tried to woo me into their movement, and influence my thinking toward the Federal Vision. Jim is a very intelligent man with interesting insights, but

he also has an agenda which has developed into the Federal Vision. His theological approach tends to be highly speculative and frequently has an odd ring to it.

Among Jordan's colleagues was Peter Leithart – another Reconstructionist who turned toward the Federal Vision. Leithart imbibed deeply of Jordan's speculative theology, and took it with him when he moved to Moscow, Idaho. There he joined forces with Douglas Wilson – yet another Reconstructionist author, pastor and thinker. From the time Leithart moved to Moscow, the direction of Wilson and his "denomination" accelerated toward the Federal Vision. Wilson then brought his new insights to Auburn Avenue Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Louisiana. His friend Steve Wilkins (another Reconstructionist) was pastor, and their church sponsored several conferences that became notorious. It was there that Steve Schlissel began influencing the development of the Federal Vision, as did John Baruch and Doug Wilson. Those conferences raised awareness throughout the Reformed world that something strange was afoot. Several Reformed seminaries began looking more closely at this new theology.

To his credit, Rev. Joe Morecraft took a strong public stand against the teachings of the Federal Vision. Greenville Theological Seminary also questioned the validity of this movement, sending President Joey Pipa and Dr. Morton Smith to try to convince these men of their errors. Multiple ecclesiastical bodies produced study reports on the Federal Vision, including the PCA, the Mississippi Valley Presbytery of the PCA, and the OPC. In the scholarly community, the Federal Vision has been weighed in the scales and found wanting. Reformed seminaries and denominations have rejected this approach and it is largely discredited. The PCA has even carried out disciplinary proceedings against the Louisiana Presbytery for allowing this viewpoint to be taught.

So what does the Federal Vision teach? What are its main tenets? Let me begin with justification. In his public teaching at the Auburn Avenue Confer-

Federal Vision Concluded...

ences and elsewhere, Rev. Steve Schlissel has asserted that “Luther was wrong on justification.” He has also ridiculed the Reformed “solas” – sola fide (by faith alone), sola gratia (by grace alone), sola Christus (by Christ alone), soli Deo Gloria (Glory to God alone). The Federal Vision has increasingly adopted the views of Norman Shepherd. Shepherd’s view is that works play an instrumental part in justification. Quoting the book of James, the Federal Vision advocates say that the Bible teaches justification by faith plus works. They reject as unbiblical the idea of justification by faith alone. Here they are very similar to the New Perspective on Paul, which substitutes “faithfulness” for “faith” in justification. Therefore your works play an important part in your acceptance with God.

Another area of error for the FV is their commitment to “sacramental theology.” Specifically, they believe that water baptism brings about or causes regeneration to occur. What matters most is the fact that you were baptized. If you can prove that you were baptized with water, then you must be considered a Christian. It matters not if your life is lived in rebellion to the word of God – baptism is enough, they say.

They also believe that the Lord’s Supper is the central element of any worship service and defines the whole of life. Preaching is secondary to the Eucharist in their view. This shifts the focus from the objective truth of Scripture to the subjective experience of the worshiper – a very dangerous tradeoff.

They also advocate paedocommunion – the idea that baptized children have a right to partake of the Lord’s table regardless of their age or of any expression of faith. They reject the right of the elders to examine a child for a profession of faith before admitting him or her to the sacrament.

When it comes to the question of church government, the Federal Vision rejects classic Presbyterian-

ism in favor of a hierarchical model. They are really Episcopalian in their form of church government, with the pastor as the priest in charge of everything. Deacons serve as his direct assistants and are priests in training (like the Levites of the Temple). Elders are tolerated, but only as judges for cases of ecclesiastical discipline. Elders do not play an active role in shepherding the flock. Needless to say, this is a very different and innovative approach to church government, and definitely not Presbyterian.

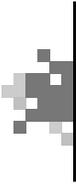
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Another questionable area in their system is their conception of the covenant. They despise anything “introspective” and want to have all of the emphasis on the outward and objective aspects of the covenant. They reject the concept of the invisible church, and say that the visible church is all that matters. Likewise, the spiritual state of one’s soul is never-so-important as his outward obedience. One of the ways this works out is that church membership is a high priority while personal holiness is a low priority.

Beyond the specific problems of this view is their sense of theological restlessness. They seem determined to push the envelope wherever they can. They always have to have some new twist or spin that departs from classic Reformed Christianity. Rather than being “holier-than-thou,” they delight in being “smarter-

-than-thou” and “trendier-than-thou.” Where will this movement finally end up? It is difficult to say, but their trajectory is troubling.





January Birthdays

Brady Froh	3rd		Tom Ver Velde	23rd
Don Schlernitzauer	5th		Kelsey Lorenz	24th
Debra Boss	7th		Ian De Jong	26th
Rachel Taggart	15th		Marge Ten Pas	31st
Ethan Ver Velde	21st			

Front Page Concluded...

...Finally, though his life is now over and his body will return to the dust, I shall see my friend again in glory. And on the last day, his body will be raised and feeble, sickly Charles Rodd will be wondrously glorified. Our friendship will continue on through all eternity, better and sweeter than it ever was here on earth. A glorified eternal friendship – what a blessing that will be!

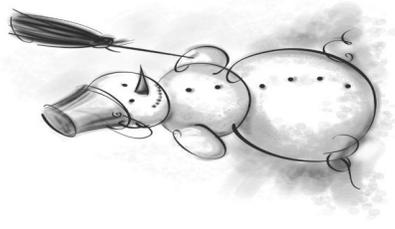




Grace OPC

January 2009

*Showing forth the
excellencies of
Jesus Christ*



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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.	5	6 Prayer Meeting, 7:00 p.m.	7	8	9 Men's Breakfast & Bible Study, 7:30 a.m.
10 Missions Sunday	11 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m. <i>Pine Haven Study,</i> <i>1:30 p.m.</i>	12 Session Meeting, 6:30 p.m.	13 Prayer Meeting, 7:00 p.m.	14	15	16
17	18 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.	19	20 Congregational Meeting, 7:00 p.m.	21	22	23
24	25 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m. <i>Pine Haven Study,</i> <i>1:30 p.m.</i>	26	27 Prayer Meeting, 7:00 p.m.	28	29	30
31 Lord's Supper, (a.m.)						

Slow-Cooker Lasagna

- ★ 1 lb. ground beef (or turkey)
- ★ 1 jar (26 oz.) spaghetti sauce
- ★ 1 cup water (I used a can of diced tomatoes, un-drained, instead of water)
- ★ 1 container (16 oz.) ricotta cheese
- ★ 1 pkg. (7 oz.) shredded mozzarella cheese, divided
- ★ 1/4 cup grated parmesan cheese, divided
- ★ 1 egg
- ★ 2 Tbsp. chopped parsley fresh or dried
- ★ 6 lasagna noodles, uncooked

Brown meat in large skillet; drain. Stir in spaghetti sauce and water.

Mix ricotta, 1 1/2 cups mozzarella, 2 tbsp. parmesan, egg and parsley.

Spoon 1 cup meat sauce into slow cooker; top with layers of half each of the noodles, broken to fit, and cheese mixture. Cover with 2 cups of the remaining meat sauce. Top with remaining noodles, broken to fit, cheese mixture and meat sauce. Cover with lid.

Cook on low for 4-6 hours or until liquid is absorbed. Sprinkle with remaining cheeses; let stand, covered, 10 minutes or until cheese is melted.

For best results, do not cook on the high setting. Makes 6-8 servings.

This is a super easy recipe and it tastes amazing!!

Ashley Boss



“The eyes
of all look
to You,
And You
give them
their food in
due time.
You open
Your hand
And satisfy
the desire of
every living
thing.”



**Proclaiming the
Excellencies of our
Lord Jesus Christ.**

The Monthly Newsletter
of Grace OPC

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GRACESHEBOYGAN

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★ Did you know that the “Huguenots” lived in France and were adherents to the truths of the Reformation proclaimed by Calvin?

★ Did you know that it was the Edict of Nantes” which was passed by King Henry IV in 1598 which spare the Huguenots from religious persecution for their beliefs?

★ Did you know that most of the Huguenots

were from the middle class and wealthy, an oft heard phrase of the time being “Rich as a Huguenot”?

★ Did you know that a typical Sunday for them included 4 sermons?

★ Did you know that it was Louis XIV of France who was responsible for revoking the Edict of Nantes in 1685 all part of his scheme to snuff out freedom & enlarge the borders of France?

★ Did you know that after this time many Huguenots were martyred for their faith?

★ That in order to escape the persecution, many went to other countries such as Germany, the Netherlands, and even America?

★ That those who stayed in France hid in the mountain areas in the southern part of the country?

★ Did you know that many ministers secretly crossed back into France to encourage those remaining, sometimes with the price of their lives?

Information found in The Church in History by Kuiper, Chapter 35 & 44, The Conflict Between Catholics & Protestants Continues & The Reformed Churches Survive Persecution.

Nominations

It’s once again time for nominations for elder, deacon, and trustees. If you have a nominee in mind, please speak with them first. If they are agreeable, you can either slip their name in the box, or speak to a member of the Session.

