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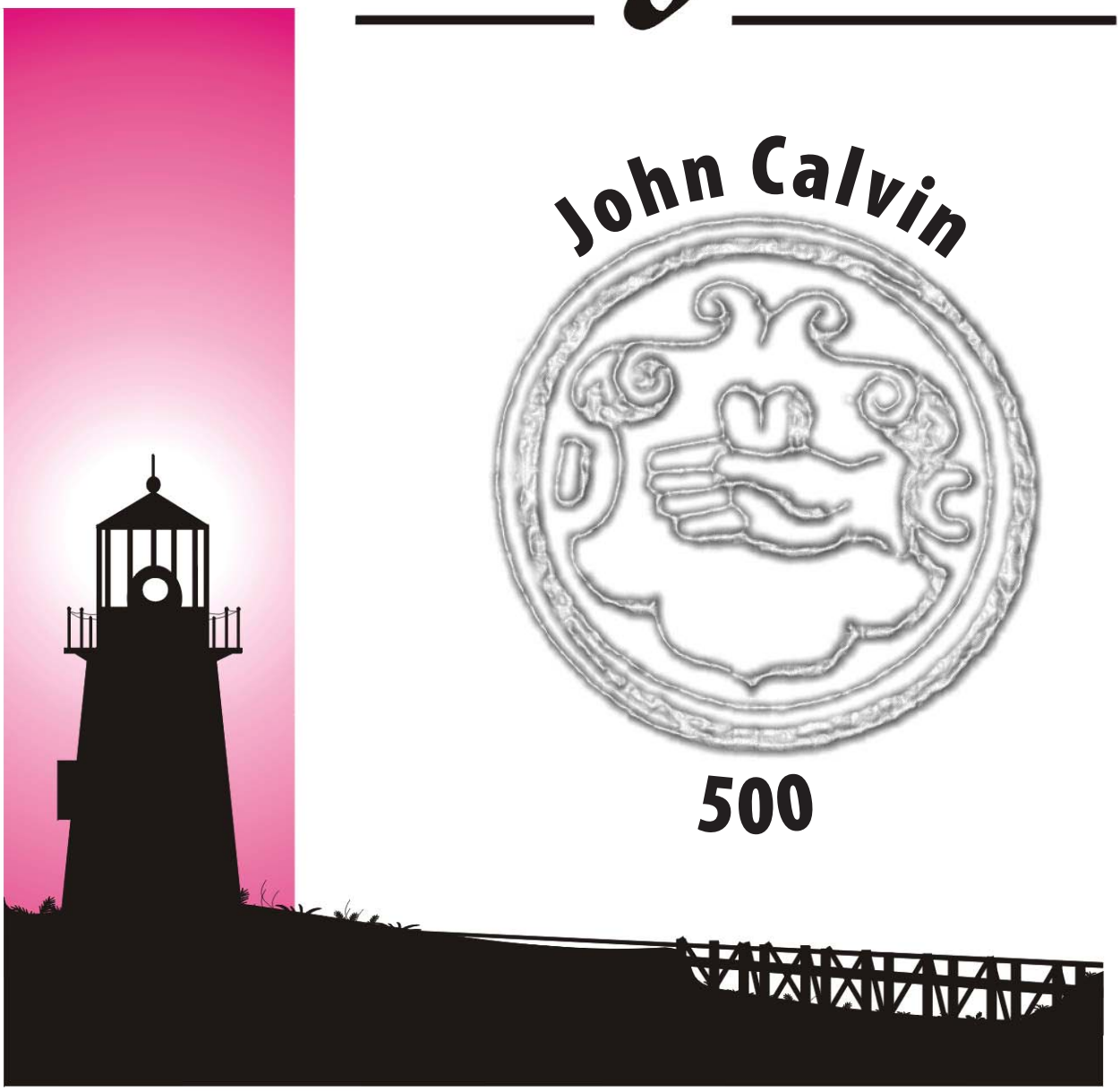

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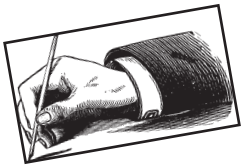


Becoming Soft

by Ryan Barnhill

Depending on where you read this, chances are that you live in a wealthy place. Especially in America, you and I have an unthinkable amount of food, clothes, and technology. For the most part, we have the freedom to do whatever we desire, and may say what we want, when we want to. Strikingly, this kind of wealth is not the norm in church history. In fact, not only do we find that the past church was less wealthy, but also that she was often persecuted for clinging to the truth. Having said this, we must think hard about our calling in a wealthy, abnormal time in church history. Are there dangers in such times? What does God call us to do in such a time of peace and freedom for the church?

We live in an unusual time. Many nations, especially from the "Christian" west, are free from physical persecution. There are no lions waiting in coliseums to devour Christians. You will not find government officials gathering up Christians and killing them. And yet, Satan is working feverishly hard.

Persecution strengthens the church in her antithetical walk. But what happens when the church experiences freedom and peace in the land? Freedom and peace pose a danger for the church because, in many cases, it allows her to become lax. The Lord addressed this danger in Deuteronomy 6:10-12, when he warned the people of Israel against forgetting him in their prosperity. The danger for the church today is that she forgets God, the giver of all good things, and places her trust in the pleasures, entertainment, and goods of this world. All we need to do is look at ourselves. Our schedules are filled to the maximum with work, pleasure, and fun. We may do whatever we want. Especially in the summer, recreation and pleasure is the name of the game. We are all guilty of becoming soft: after a long day at work or a sweltering day at the beach, we are too tired to complete our devotions before we go to bed; we avoid Bible studies because they eat into our "free" time; we stay out late with friends on Saturday night and sleep through the church service Sunday morning. We all struggle with becoming lax in our spiritual lives.

Satan is making us soft. He seeks to fill our days with Facebook, television, the beach, and all the rest. He does not threaten us with guns and swords, but with an endless flow of pleasure, entertainment, and fun. Satan works through Hollywood to tell you that life is just an endless game, and serious study of the Bible is not worth your while. It is as if Satan sets a whole menu before us displaying endless possibilities for fun. The world tells you that the universe revolves around you, and that you can have it your own way. But what of God's Word? Let it collect dust. After all, you are young only once. Summer beckons you to have fun. Satan's lie is dangerous. His work is deceptive.

This tide of pleasure and entertainment is rising around the church. We must not, of course, think that having fun with friends and participating in God-glorifying activities is wrong. However, when these things are allowed to capture our hearts and lives, there is a spiritual problem. Do you feel this flood rushing beneath your feet? Do you and I recognize the danger of our comfortable living style and how it can lead to a lukewarm-at-best spiritual life?

What are we to do to prevent this lukewarm spiritual life? Is there not something that can stop the dangerous flood? The Word of God is clear: exercise! Paul wrote to Timothy, a young pastor in the church, that he needed to exercise himself unto godliness (I Timothy 4:7).

The calling is to exercise. Exercising, as you know, is hard work. It takes dedication and perseverance. Imagine a marathon runner training for a race. Many days he is outside training, running eight miles a day through all four seasons. He keeps running as the sweat streams down his face and his lungs burn. Many days he feels like calling it quits, but he has a goal in mind and will not give up. As a result of months of intense exercise and practice, he is fit to run the race that is before him.

Just as an athlete must exert himself, so our spiritual life needs regular and vigorous exercise. In a world where entertainment and pleasure demand so much of our time, we become flabby, weak, out of shape, and lose our spiritual sharpness. A few ways that we can strengthen our spiritual life both during the summer and also throughout the rest of the year:

- First, and most important, we must sit under the faithful preaching every Sunday so that we take in our spiritual nourishment.
- Attend a Bible study. Since our churches do not often hold Bible studies during the summer, start a small group Bible study with your friends. You would be surprised how much you get out of the discussions.
- Catechism is an essential exercise for the Christian youth.
- Sit down and formulate a devotions schedule. Be hard on yourself. We are all prone, because of sin, to find time for anything else but reading God's Word and regular prayer. Set aside specific times in the day for your devotions, choosing a quiet time so that you can read and pray with concentration.
- Start reading good theological books and magazines. You will find many published by the RFPA.
- Surround yourself with godly friends with whom you can discuss spiritual matters. Friends can be a positive spiritual influence, but choosing the wrong ones can send any Christian down a very dangerous path.

In doing these things, we keep ourselves spiritually fit. All of the items on the above list require much work and time. Doing these things consistently takes God's grace, and much of it. There is a very real battle raging inside of us at all times between the old man, who seeks endless pleasure and entertainment at the expense of serious Bible study, and the new man, who desires spiritual growth (Romans 7:19). Because it is all of grace, we must not approach who we may think is a weaker Christian only to haughtily criticize him or her for lack of spirituality. We come to them in humility, knowing that we all struggle and that we all need encouragement to exercise in the Word.

Strenuous exercise in the Word will tell us more about God whom we love and about what he has done for us in Jesus Christ.

What comes of such exercise? Strenuous exercise in the Word will tell us more about God whom we love and about what he has done for us in Jesus Christ. What knowledge! There is no greater prize for which we press than the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ. Nothing in this world is able to give us such joy and satisfaction than that knowledge.

Arduous exercise in the Word will give us the strength to effectively use the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, and the rest of our spiritual armor (Ephesians 6:13-17). May it be, in the terrible last days to come, that Antichrist will find the church to be a formidable foe.

May God give us the strength from day to day to exercise ourselves in his Word. In this way, God will build up the youth of the church to be strong elders, deacons, mothers, fathers, singles, and workers in the church. This is the church that God will bless. ❖

Ryan is a member of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

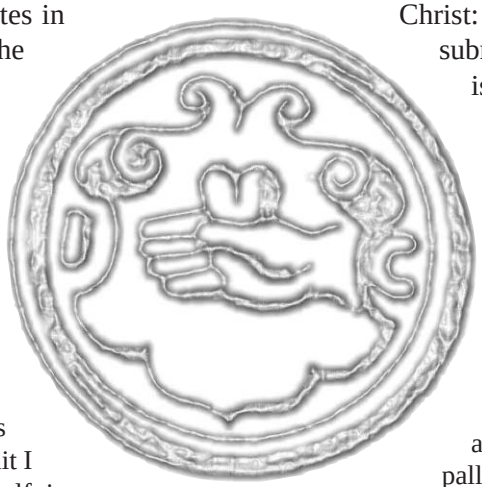
Calvin's Motto

by John Huizenga

My Heart To Thee, O Lord I Offer Promptly and Sincerely

What are your plans for the life you have ahead of you? You may find, as John Calvin did while a young man, that God has plans that are entirely different. Calvin writes in his preface to his commentary on the Psalms,

> When I was as yet a very little boy, my father had destined me for the study of theology. But afterwards, when he considered that the legal profession commonly raised those who followed it to wealth, this prospect induced him to suddenly change his purpose. Thus it came to pass, that I was withdrawn from the study of philosophy, and was put to the study of law. To this pursuit I endeavoured faithfully to apply myself, in obedience to the will of my father; but God, by the secret guidance of his providence, at length gave a different direction to my course. And first, since I was too obstinately devoted to the superstitions of Popery to be easily extricated from so profound an abyss of mire, God by a sudden conversion subdued and brought my mind to a teachable frame, which was more hardened in such matters than might have been expected from one at my early period of life. Having thus received some taste and knowledge of true godliness, I was immediately inflamed with so intense a desire to make progress therein, that although I did not altogether leave off other studies, I yet pursued them with less ardour.



By the power of God's grace, Calvin's attitude toward God and the life and abilities that God had given to him became one of humble submission to God. This attitude he pictured in his crest or seal showing a hand holding a flaming heart. The "I" and the "C" could stand for the Latin spelling either for John Calvin or Jesus Christ: *Ionnes Calvinus* or *Iesus Christus*. The submissive attitude that this seal represents is summarized in his life's motto: "*Cor Meum Tibi Offero Domine, Prompte Et Sincere,*" which can be translated "My heart to Thee I offer Lord, promptly and sincerely." And again in his preface to his commentary on the Psalms he writes:

> Although the Psalms are replete with all the precepts which serve to frame our life to every part of holiness, piety, and righteousness, yet they will principally teach and train us to bear the cross; and the bearing of the cross is a genuine proof of our obedience, since by doing this, we renounce the guidance of our own affections, and submit ourselves entirely to God, leaving him to govern us, and to dispose of our life according to his will, so that the afflictions which are the bitterest and most severe to our nature, become sweet to us, because they proceed from him.

Calvin did not put his motto into words until he faced the call to leave his peaceful studies at Strasburg to which he had retired after being driven from the rebellious tumult of Geneva, and return again to Geneva. Calvin explained why he went back to the place of bitter afflictions in a letter to William Farel in August 1541,

> As to my intended course of proceeding, this is my present feeling: had I the choice at my own disposal, nothing would be less agreeable to me than to fol-

> low your advice (to return to Geneva). But when I remember that I am not my own, I offer up my heart, presented as a sacrifice to the Lord… Therefore I submit my will and my affections, subdued and held-fast, to the obedience of God; and whenever I am at a loss for counsel of my own, I submit myself to those by whom I hope that the Lord himself will speak to me (J*ohn Calvin: Tracts and Letters*, Volume 4, p.280-281).

In these words we also hear the first answer of the Heidelberg Catechism, "That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ."

The world is filled with people who give themselves body and soul to their lord. Terrorists sacrifice themselves to Allah with suicide bombs. Capitalists sacrifice themselves to the almighty dollar. Everyone one of us is tempted to set up our own lords of self image, pleasure, etc. Jesus himself confronted Saul on the road to Damascus with the all important question: do you know who the Lord is? And he confronts you and me with the question as well. Do we know the one and only God of heaven and earth? Is our knowledge of him rooted soundly in his word, or do we rely on the philosophies of man, our experience, or what we see in the world around us? And when we do search the Scriptures and listen to the preaching of the word, do we look for words that make us feel good, or the truth of God's glory?

…when I remember that I am not my own, I offer up my heart, presented as a sacrifice to the Lord … Therefore I submit my will and my affections, subdued and held-fast, to the obedience of God

In his confrontation with the Roman Catholic Cardinal James Sadolet, Calvin addresses the important question of what motivates us. During his absence from Geneva, Sadolet had written a letter to the city in an attempt to drive Geneva from the Reformed faith and back to the Roman Church. The Council of Geneva forwarded the letter to Calvin in Strasburg for a response. In his response, Calvin chides Sadolet with the words

> "[Your] zeal for heavenly life [is] a zeal which keeps a man entirely devoted to himself, and does not, even by one expression, arouse him to sanctify the name of God." He continues, and explains, "it is not very sound theology to confine a man's thoughts so much to himself, and not to set before him, as the prime motive of his existence, zeal to illustrate the glory of God. For we are born first of all for God, and not for ourselves."

Zeal to illustrate the glory of God; does this zeal burn in your heart and motivate you to offer your whole life to him? Is this the prime motive of your very existence? Calvin's theological work reverberates with the glory of God and we today cherish the doctrines which he was able, by the grace of God, to set forth clearly and distinctly: the great truths of God's sovereign predestination, the unconditional covenant, and irresistible grace we hold dear today. Many churches, including an institution of higher learning which holds Calvin's seal as a registered trademark but has changed its motto to "minds in the making," have lost this focus of God's glory, and therefore as Calvin put it, are prone to "unsound theology."

When we seek the glory of God, God directs our attention to his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Two passages make this clear: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). In Christ we see the sovereignty of God in salvation. We also understand that our lives, even as Christ's, must be lives of humble submission to God and not to our own glory. Calvin's motto also included the words "promptly" and "sincerely." Don't wait. Begin today to hold this motto before you: "My heart to Thee I offer Lord, promptly and sincerely." Doing this, we also will put behind us the insecurities and anxiety of confining our thought to ourselves, and begin to enjoy the only comfort in life and in death. ❖

John is a member of Randolph Protestant Reformed Church in Randolph, Wisconsin and is Editor of Beacon Lights.

A Prayer on Preparing to Go to School

Psalm 119:9, 10
"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments."

O Lord, who art the fountain of all wisdom and learning, since thou of thy special goodness hast granted that my youth is instructed in good arts which may assist me to honest and holy living, grant also, by enlightening my mind, which otherwise labors under blindness, that I may be fit to acquire knowledge; strengthen my memory faithfully to retain what I may have learned: and govern my heart, that I may be willing and even eager to profit, lest the opportunity which thou now givest me be lost through my sluggishness. Be pleased therefore to infuse thy Spirit into me, the Spirit of understanding, of truth, judgment, and prudence, lest my study be without success, and the labor of my teacher be in vain.

In whatsoever kind of study I engage, enable me to remember to keep its proper end in view, namely, to know thee in Christ Jesus thy Son; and may every thing that I learn assist me to observe the right rule of godliness. And seeing thou promisest that thou wilt bestow wisdom on babes, and such as are humble, and the knowledge of thyself on the upright in heart, while thou declarest that thou wilt cast down the wicked and the proud, so that they will fade away in their ways, I entreat that thou wouldst be pleased to turn me to true humility, that thus I may show myself teachable and obedient first of all to thyself, and then to those also who by thy authority are placed over me. Be pleased at the same time to root out all vicious desires from my heart, and inspire it with an earnest desire of seeking thee. Finally, let the only end at which I aim be so to qualify myself in early life, that when I grow up I may serve thee in whatever station thou mayest assign me. AMEN

Psalm 25:14
"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant." ❖

From John Calvin's Selected Works*, vol. 2, pp. 96-97.*

Calvin Commemoratives

This uniface plaquette was produced in bronze in 1909. It is 51mm by 39mm in dimension and was done by the German company Mayer & Wilhelm of Stuttgart to commemorate the 400th Anniversary of Calvin's birth. It has a left-facing bust of Calvin with an inscription reading: JEAN CALVIN | 1509-1564. M & W St. (the producer of this commemorative) is inscribed under the shoulder. This is a rare piece and not easily found. There also exists a similar piece commemorating the life and work of Martin Luther.

Early Medals of John Calvin

The commemorative medal first appeared in Italy in the 15th century and was the product of sculptor and engraver, Antonio Pisanello (1395-1455). These early works featured the portrait or bust of his subject along with a description of the person's accomplishments and/or historical significance. The art of making medals quickly spread to Germany and the rest of Europe. By the late 17th century the making of medals was seen as an important state activity with many employing their own engravers.

From the time of the Reformation to the present, there were literally thousands of medals produced commemorating those men God raised up in the midst of darkness to preach the Gospel and spread the light of Jesus Christ throughout Europe. Chief among them are the more than 2,000 known medals depicting the German Reformer, Martin Luther (1483-1546). While the contributions of Luther and Calvin to the spiritual reformation of Europe are of similar importance, Calvin does not enjoy the same proliferation of medallic representations as Luther. In cataloguing the medals of John Calvin, our list (available at the link found at the end of this article), including major variants, would put the number at just over 80 known works; a rather large disparity. It is also important to note that the original purpose of these medals was not to produce objects of worship and veneration, as was and is the practice of Rome, but to simply commemorate those men God used as instruments in bringing people to himself.

There are approximately 10 medals of Calvin struck during his lifetime. I only own two of these; one from 1555 and one from 1557.

This first medal was struck in bronze in 1555 and is 37mm in diameter. The sculptor is unknown and the reason for the commemoration is also a mystery. **Obverse**: Right-facing bust of Calvin encircled by the inscription: IO CAL GENEVENS ECCL PASTOR 1555 which translated means 'John Calvin, Pastor of the Genevan Churches 1555.' Under the portrait it is signed 'H.' but no historical record has been able to identify the medallist. **Reverse**: A picture of a man sowing seed encircled by the inscription: DAT DEVS INCREMENTUM, which translated means "God giveth the increase." The obvious symbolism of this commemorative was to show Calvin as a "sower of seed," which God then caused to grow throughout the Reformation and beyond.

This second medal was struck two years later in 1557 in both bronze and tin (pictured) and is 60mm in diameter. This particular example was looped in order that it may be worn around the neck or easily fastened to one's clothing. The irony of this practice is that Calvin himself would most probably have abhorred the wearing of his image, as well as the producing of such medals in the first place. This is a uniface medal with a left-facing bust of Calvin encircled by the inscription: IOANNES CALVINVS E SVAE XLVIII QVOVSQ DOMINE A 1557 which is difficult to translate but means something like 'John Calvin, a Master at the age of 48.'

John Calvin in Chocolate

Good things are still coming out of Geneva! **Jacot-Chocolatier** sells reproductions of the 1835 Antoine Bovy medal in chocolate, made from the original dies. Swiss chocolate which commemorates the life of Calvin—now that's a treat!

John Calvin by Antoine Bovy

Charles Spurgeon, in Volume 2 of his *Autobiography*, tells of a time in the summer of 1860 when he spent an afternoon in Geneva with Dr. J. H. Merle D'Aubigne at the house of Mr. Lombard:

> I am not superstitious, but the first time I saw the medal bearing the venerated likeness of John Calvin, I kissed it, imagining that no one saw the action. I was very greatly surprised when I received this magnificent present. On the one side is John Calvin with his visage worn by disease and deep thought, and on the other side is a verse fully applicable to him: 'He endured, as seeing Him who is invisible.' This sentence truly describes the character of that glorious man of God.

This is the medal given to Spurgeon that day. It is the "king" of all Calvin numismatic commemoratives. It is a large, solid bronze piece measuring 108mm (4.25 in) in diameter. It is considered the masterpiece of the famous Swiss medalist, Antoine Bovy (1795-1877).

Obverse: Prominent left-facing bust of Calvin encircled by the inscription: JOHANNES CALVINUS NATUS NOVIODUNI 1509 MOR TUUS GENEVÃ† 1564, which translated means: 'Born Noyon 1509 Deceased Geneva 1564.' **Reverse:** A gothic cathedral motif encircled by an inscription reading: CORPORE-FRACTUS : ANIMO-POTENS : FIDE-VICTORE | ECCLESIÃ-REFORMATOR-GENEVÃ | PASTOR-ET-TUTAMEN, which translated means: 'Weak in Flesh : Strong in Spirit : Faithful to the End | Reformer of the Genevan Church | Pastor and Protector.' The larger fields are inscribed in French thusly: IL | TEINT | FERME | COME | S'IL | EVST VEV | CELVY | QVI | EST | INVISIBLE, which translated is the last portion of Hebrews 11:27, 'He endured, as seeing him who is invisible.' The two small panels on the pulpit are inscribed: HEBR. XI. 27; and signed GENEV | JVBIL | AN | 1835. The medal was cast to commemorate the 300th Anniversary of the Reformation in Geneva.

Two other medals were subsequently produced using the original dies of Antoine Bovy. The first, done in 1864, was to commemorate the 300th anniversary of Calvin's death. It was done by Hugues Bovy (1841-1893). It is smaller in size (60mm) and an exact replica of the larger Bovy with the inscription H.BOVY. D'APRES A. BOVY added to the obverse and the inscription 27 MAI 1864 added to the reverse side.

The second was a restrike of the 1835 medal (108mm), and it was made to commemorate the 400th

anniversary of Calvin's birth. The Numismatic Cabinet of Geneva produced 73 specimens of this medal in aluminum (which was an extremely rare metal at the time) from the original dies. Proceeds from the sale of these medals went to benefit the Hospital Gourgas in Geneva. Being such a limited run, these medals are very rare.

Calvin's influence on Christianity was, and still is, the greatest of anyone who wrote outside the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. By no means an overstatement of Calvin's importance, Spurgeon continues his thoughts that were stirred that day in 1860:

> Among all those who have been born of women, there has not risen a greater than John Calvin; no age before him ever produced his equal, and no age afterwards has seen his rival. In theology, he stands alone, shining like a bright fixed star, while other leaders and teachers can only circle round him, at a great distance "as comets go streaming through space" with nothing like his glory or his permanence. Calvin's fame is eternal because of the truth he proclaimed; and even in heaven, although we shall lose the name of the system of doctrine which he taught, it shall be that truth which shall make us strike our golden harps, and sing, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever;" for the essence of Calvinism is that we are born again, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."
>
> I preached in the cathedral at Geneva; and I thought it an honour to be allowed to stand in the pulpit of John Calvin…I did not feel very happy when I came out in full canonicals, but the request was put to me in such a beautiful way that I could have worn the Pope's tiara, if by so doing I could have preached the gospel more freely…It was John Calvin's gown, and that reconciled me to the idea very much. I do love that man of God; suffering all his life long, enduring not only persecutions from without but a complication of disorders from within, and yet serving his Master with all his heart.

To those who love the doctrines of grace, we owe a great debt to John Calvin; the man God used to bring his light out of the darkness.

Four Reformers

This medal is one of the most beautiful of the medallic reformation pieces ever done. It was cast in 1835 by Antoine Bovy to commemorate the 300th Anniversary of the Reformation in Switzerland. It is considered extremely rare in silver and although not common in bronze, it is obtainable.

Obverse: The Seal of Geneva connecting four busts of the Swiss Reformers: John Calvin, Pierre Viret, Theodore Beza, & William Farel. The circular inscription reads: JVBIL REFORMAT RELIG GENEV TERT SEC CELEBR AVG D XXIII AN MDCCCXXXV, which translated means 'The Celebration of the 300th Jubilee of the Religious Reformation in Geneva 1835.' **Reverse**: Two women symbolizing Faith & Reason, support a Bible on a lectern beneath a radiant dove. The circular inscription reads: BIBLIA FIDEI ET RATIONI RESTITVTA, which translated means 'The Restitution of a Rational Biblical Faith,' and signed A. BOVY INV ET F. It is 60mm in diameter.

The four reformers commemorated:

John Calvin (1509-1564): The acknowledged leader of the Swiss Reformation in Geneva.

Pierre Viret (1511-1571): The Swiss Reformer from Lausanne.

Theodore Beza (1519-1605): Calvin's successor in Geneva.

William Farel (1489-1565): The founder of the Reformed churches in NeuchÃ¢tel, Berne, and Geneva.

Very few in our day appreciate or even understand the impact that these men have made on Western civilization. Much of our way of life owes a debt to the freedoms gained by these men, particularly Calvin, during the Protestant Reformation in Europe.

John Calvin by Sebastian Dadler

This medal, cast in both silver (pictured) and bronze in 1641, was done to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of John Calvin's return to Geneva after his three and a half year exile. It is 58mm in diameter and was crafted by the famous German medalist, Sebastian Dadler.

Calvin was exiled from Geneva when both he and William Farel refused to serve communion on Easter Sunday to the "Libertines" ; those worldly church-goers

who desired to live as they pleased. In his zeal to protect the purity of the Lord's table, Calvin exclaimed that he would rather have his blood dye the wood he stood upon than dishonor the Lord. This position led to Calvin's ejection from the city whereupon he took up residence in Strasburg; a city that had taken in thousands of persecuted Christians, primarily from France. He lectured here for three and a half years and it was also here that he married Idelette de Bure.

Meanwhile, Geneva was in turmoil under the rule of the Council that asked Calvin and Farel to leave. Letters were sent to Calvin begging for his return so that order could be restored in the city. Calvin remarked in a letter to Pierre Viret on the possibility of returning to Geneva that he would rather "submit to be crucified" or perish in some other horrible manner. But after numerous pleas, Calvin returned to the city that exiled him, to teach the gospel and bring reform to Europe through submission to the scriptures until his death in 1564.

This medal is struck in silver and is 60mm in diam-

eter. **Obverse:** Right-facing bust of Calvin with inscription: IOANNES CALVINUS PICARD : NOVIODUN : ECCLES : GENEV : PASTOR; which translated means 'John Calvin of Noyon Picardy Pastor of the Genevan Church.' It is also signed '1641 SD' beneath Calvin's shoulder. **Reverse:** Woman representing fame blowing on a trumpet holding an open book encircled by the inscription: DOCTRINA & VIRTUS HOMINES POST FUNERA CLARAT; which translated means 'Doctrine and Virtue followed after him with brilliance.' 'VIRTUS' also appears on front of the plinth and signed 'SD' on right edge of plinth.

John Calvin by Arvid Karlsteen

If you were to hold this medal in your hand you would be able to both see and feel how beautiful it is. It is heavy in substance with a bright lustre that few medals have; it is one of the nicest of all the Calvin commemoratives.

The medal was done by the famous Swedish medalist, Arvid Karlsteen, and the story of its origination is somewhat unusual. In 1683, the French ambassador requested Karlsteen to create a medal to commemorate Pope Innocent XI. Some time later the English ambassador came to see Karlsteen and when he saw his work on the Papal medal, suggested that he should first do a medal of that great reformer, John Calvin. Just after this visit, however, the Swedish King, Charles XI, himself a numismatist and interested in medals, came to visit Karlsteen's workshop and upon seeing the two unfinished medals, ordered the sculptor to do a medal of Martin Luther before the two others. That request was granted and the Calvin medal was finished soon after.

It was cast in silver and tin in 1683 and is 45mm in

diameter. **Obverse:** Right-facing bust of Calvin encircled by the inscription: IOHANNES CALVINVS. M: and signed 'AK' under the shoulder of bust. **Reverse:** A hand coming out of the clouds holding a heart beneath rays of sun with the inscription: PROMTE | ET | SINCERE | IN | OPERE | DOMINI which translated means 'Prompt and sincere in the work of the Lord.' This was Calvin's motto and an apt description of how he laboured tirelessly for reformation where the Lord would have it spread.

Commemorating the Geneva Academy and Calvin's Birth

July 10th, 1509, John Calvin was born in Noyon, France. Of the 80 known medals commemorating the life and work of Calvin, several were produced to remember the work of the Geneva Academy started by Calvin and Beza in 1559. The ones that follow were done in 1909 by the M. M. Jacot Guillarmod Brothers of Switzerland. [As an aside, 2009 will mark the 500th Anniversary of Calvin's birth and there are rumours at this stage that both Princeton and Calvin College will be issuing commemorative medals to mark the occasion. I'm sure others will soon announce similar plans but those are the only two known at the moment.]

This first plaquette was done in bronze and is

36mmX25mm. **Obverse:** Left-facing bust of Calvin with inscription: 1509-64 | CALVIN and signed A.J.G. along right edge. **Reverse:** Seal of Geneva with inscription: LE 5 JUILLET 1909 | LES GENEVOIS | RECONNAISSANTS ONT | CELEBRE LE 350EME | ANNIVERSAIRE DE LA | FONDATION DU COLLEGE | ET DE L'ACADEMIE | INSTITUES PAR | CALVIN which translated means: July 5, 1909, The Grateful Genevans Celebrate the 350th Anniversary of the College and Academy Insituted by Calvin. It is signed: JACOT-GUILLARMOD. FR.

This version was struck in bronze and is 24mm in diameter. **Obverse:** Left-facing bust of Calvin with inscription: 1509-64 | GALVIN (sic) and signed A.J.G. along back of portrait. **Reverse:** Seal of Geneva encircled with the Reformation motto: POST TENEBRAS LUX which means: After Darkness…Light. It is signed J. G. F. below seal.

This is a beautiful uniface plaquette made of silvered bronze which measures 40mmX28mm. Description: Left-facing bust of Calvin in circular bronze section with inscription: 350E | ANNIVRE | DU COLLEGE | INSTITUE PAR | J. CALVIN | GENEVE 1909 which translated means: 350th Anniversary of the College Instituted by J. Calvin in Geneva 1909. Signed: JACOT-GUILLARMOD FR.

This last example is a plaquette similar to the first one above which was first done in 1905 to commemorate the life of Calvin. **Obverse:** Left-facing bust of Calvin with inscription: 1509-64 | CALVIN and signed A.J.G. along right edge. **Reverse:** View of the city out of a window in St. Peter's Cathedral in Geneva with books, branch, quill and inkwell in the foreground. ❖

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Watching Daily At My Gates

by Chester Hunter

August 17 Read Revelation 6:1-8.

As Christ reveals to us the contents of God's counsel found in the book, we must pay attention to it. For in it are signs of our Lord's return. The first four seals reveal to us things that have happened and will continue to happen throughout history. Even now we see the results of the riding of the four horsemen. If you pay attention to news of happenings not only in our country but also in the world at-large, you will definitely see these results. The white horse continues to conquer for the gospel. There are wars, financial problems, and death caused by all manner of diseases. What should our reaction be? Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly and rescue us from this place of woe. Sing Psalter 246.

August 18 Read Revelation 6:9-17

Even persecution against the church must be fulfilled before the coming of Christ. Men like John Wycliffe, Stephan, and James wonder how much longer before their deaths are to be avenged by God's hands. The answer is that they must wait for others to die for the cause of the gospel. Will it be one of us? Do we have what it takes to proclaim the gospel in the face of ultimate persecution? But the comfort for them and for us is that the end will come, and God the judge of heaven and earth will come and avenge those who have fought the good fight of faith even unto death. May we be ready for the day of his coming. May we watch and pray for that day. Sing Psalter 224.

August 19 Read Revelation 7:1-10

God's church is made up of an exact number and is a church drawn from all nations of the earth. That exact number is known only by our covenant God. It is not some multiple of the 153 as represented by the miraculous catch of fish during Jesus' last days on earth. It is not 144,000. But it is a number known only by God. That those members are drawn from every nation and tongue is testified of in Scripture and throughout history. The day will come when we will all join together in a loud and unified chorus of praise to our God and his Son. Let us anxiously await that day and include in our prayers, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Sing Psalter 166.

August 20 Read Revelation 7:11-17

The promise of what awaits us in heaven is great. Reread verse 15 and 16. First of all we will enjoy being in the presence of almighty God. What a blessing that will be! Think of all those who throng to see some celebrity on this earth. That cannot be compared to the experience that awaits us in heaven. Then all earthly pains and sorrows will be taken away. What is the reason for all of these blessings? It is not our work. The merit is only the work of the Lamb. That, too, should provide to us great comfort. Let us live lives on this earth awaiting that day. Sing Psalter 53.

August 21 Read Revelation 8:1-6

In Psalter 247 we have the phrase "Time like an ever rolling stream bears all its sons away..." There is also the coming phrase "time marches on." But as we see in this portion of Scripture, time belongs to God. He instituted time during creation week. As we see the seven seals running into the seven trumpets, we understand that this only happens at God's behest. These prayers that are offered are the prayers of the child of God that ask that Christ return. They are the prayers that ask for deliverance from this world of wickedness. Are they our prayers? Do we pray to leave this world which is not our home? As we wait for and watch for the signs of the time, let us pray often for our Lord Jesus Christ to take us on the clouds of heaven to our heavenly abode. Sing Psalter 247.

August 22 Read Revelation 8:7-13

The opening of the seals gave way to the sounding of the trumpets. While each of them shows forth history, they do it from a differing perspective and a differing intensity. Each of these trumpets signals a different sign of the end or a different happening which is a prelude to the end. We must watch for these signs. We should not be shocked at their effects, but they should help us to be ready for the joyous return of our Lord and Savior Christ Jesus. While the first four trumpets signal a momentous happening, the pause and the announcing of the triple woe tells us that more is coming. Are we watching prayerfully? Are we living lives that show that we are listening for the trumpets? Each of us, no matter what our ages, no matter our station and calling, must watch and wait for the great and terrible day of the Lord. Sing Psalter 198.

August 23 Read Revelation 9:1-12

Can we conceive of more wickedness around us than there is now? But yet that is the message of this portion of Scripture. Satan will unleash a horde of wickedness that will torment men unbelievably. Our comfort is that they will not be unleashed upon the church. But yet these effects will be felt by the church. We see the wickedness and some of it will be enticing. We must constantly pray to be kept from temptation and to be delivered from the evil one. May we fight the fight of faith today and each day in our lives. Sing Psalter 188.

August 24 Read Revelation 9:13-21

Once again we come to the end of a cycle in the book of Revelation. We saw the cycle of the seven seals; now we have the cycle of the seven trumpets. As we said before, each cycle examines the coming of the end. Each cycle gives to us a little different picture of what will happen. Here we see that before Christ will come will be a time when many will die. For the reprobate world it will be a time of great torture, but it will have no effect upon their spiritual state. They will not repent because they cannot. For the elect it should be a time of comfort. Not that we will escape the effects of the trumpet, but by watching and waiting in prayer we will know that our Savior will be coming to take us upon the clouds of heaven. Are we watching? Are we waiting faithfully? Are we praying? Sing Psalter 190.

August 25 Read Revelation 10:1-7

Once again there is an interlude in the sequence of events as shown to John. John is once more on earth in his vision. The sixth trumpet has sounded. He then sees an angel. From its description it seems to be Christ. There are many interpretations of its identification. The seven thunders reveal more calamities to John. He understands the voices and is about to write what they said. Thunder is usually used to signify judgment. It was not and is not time to learn of what further judgment God will have upon the wicked. Because Christ appears with the covenant-signifying rainbow, there is peace and comfort for the child of God. That is for us in this part of the prophecy. Sing Psalter 165.

August 26 Read Revelation 10: 8-11

John is a prophet, and he must prophesy. What must he prophesy? He must prophesy that which must come to pass yet. He has to prophesy to all the effects of the blowing of the seventh trumpet. He must bring that message to many and to all kinds of people. It is the truth because it is sweet in his mouth. But it has woeful effects as we see by the bitter result of digestion. Yes, the end has a glorious ending, but there are the woes to come. May God give to us the grace to live in these final days of wickedness, which announce the coming of Christ. Sing Psalter 193.

August 27 Read Revelation 11:1-2

We come to a very important section in the revelation of Jesus Christ. It is a section of much symbolism. We must be careful to treat it as symbolism, or we will do like many and miss Christ and his coming. John and we are shown that the church is not all that calls itself church. The church is only the place that God dwells, and he only dwells within his people. We must realize that there are those who act like they are true believers but they are the false church. We know them because they do not have the marks of the true church as we confess in the Belgic Confession of Faith. This period is obviously between the first and second comings of Christ as the church is battered by the forces of evil. Let us remain faithful and pray, "Even so come, Lord Jesus." Sing Psalter 368.

August 28 Read Revelation 11:3-13

In the period of apostasy and tribulation, Christ sends his two witnesses. These typify the church in the new dispensation. Their message is none other than the preaching of the Word. To the wicked world and the false church, the witnesses must preach. As we find in other parts of Scripture, that preaching has power. This part of the prophecy also makes a mention of antichrist. The beast shall arise and silence these witnesses. But there is comfort found here as well. The beast only works a short time, Christ will return, and his witnesses will live again. Yes, we have the tribulation through which we must go, but we have the comfort of Christ's return. Thanks be to God! Sing Psalter 334.

August 29 Read Revelation 11:14-19

We come to the end of the trumpets. The seventh trumpet signals the events that will culminate in the coming of Christ. Again we see only part of those events; the rest will be revealed in later chapters of Revelation. But the summary is glorious and comforting. The enemies of the Christ and his church will be destroyed, and Christ will receive all glory due to his name. Judgment will be meted out upon Satan and his hosts, and Christ's church will receive the reward merited by Christ's death on the cross. As we await that day and the sounding of the seventh trumpet, let us watch and pray for the coming of our Savior on the clouds of heaven. Sing Psalter 327.

August 30 Read Revelation 12:1-6

John and the church of all ages get a glimpse into the churches' lot during the time before the end. The church portrayed by the woman will live on this earth but will be persecuted by Satan-the red dragon. Since the mother promise of Genesis 3, Satan has been trying to destroy the church of Christ. God has preserved his church as shown in verse 6. Notice that the number of days here correspond to one-half of seven years. The time that Satan rages is cut

short by the sovereign God. The church will be preserved and cared for. This is our hope and our comfort. Sing Psalter 348.

August 31 Read Revelation 12:7-12

Again we have words of great comfort for the church of Christ. The war that was fought between the angels of light and the angels of darkness came to a victorious conclusion when Christ finished his work on the cross. This was not a physical battle but a spiritual one. The objects were the souls of all the saints who died in the old dispensation. Because of Christ's victory over death and the grave, we have a sure place in heaven. As we fight the battle of faith on earth, let us pray for the confidence to face Satan and all his wiles. Let us fight knowing that the victory is sure because we are washed in the blood of the Lamb. The time is short but the battle will rage. Pray for strength to stand each and every day. Sing Psalter 352.

September 1 Read Revelation 12:13-17

Do we expect persecution? Do we live lives that invite it? According to these verses, persecution will come to the members of Christ's church. Satan hates us and will do all that he can to make us fall away from the truth. We must live in that truth and out of that truth. This is not easy to do. It is easier, much easier, to hide our faith and not confess that we belong to our faithful Savior. The comfort that we have is that the time of persecution is short. Our bridegroom will come and deliver us to the eternal feast in heaven. Let us wait patiently but watchfully for his return. Sing Psalter 351.

September 2 Read Revelation 13:1-10

John is given a vision which concerns antichrist and the antichristian kingdom. We see various symbolic features in the beast. He has seven heads. He attempts to take the covenant number as part of his power. He has ten horns and crowns. He attempts to use the number of completeness in his antichristian demeanor. He blasphemes God and his church. We read in verse 10 that we cannot wage a physical warfare against him. We must listen to our king Christ. He tells us to be spiritual in all our battles. There is one comforting detail. He only has power for a limited time. He is not an eternal king like our king. Let us hear and heed the words of our king. Sing Psalter 356.

September 3 Read Revelation 13:11-18

Like all religions, the antichristian religion has its prophet or prophets. The prophet is this second beast. Notice the power and influence that he has. His power is so great that he marks all the followers of antichrist. As members of Christ's church we may not receive that mark, and without that mark our very livelihood and lives will be in danger. Without that mark we will be noticed and shunned by all those around us. What is our only comfort in those perilous times? Our comfort is that we belong to our faithful Savior Christ Jesus. We do not belong to him whose number is incomplete. We will need to be on our guard that we do not become entranced with the prophet's activities. We must be watching, waiting, and praying for the return of our Savior. Sing Psalter 4.

September 4 Read Revelation 14:1-5

From the darkness of the antichristian kingdom, John now shows to us the beauty of the kingdom of Christ. We see the victorious Christ and his church, the one hundred and forty four thousand, who also have a mark. That mark is the name of God written on them. When Christ will appear victorious over antichrist, there will be great rejoicing. The inhabitants of heaven and earth who look for his return will break out in a beautiful song of praise. This is our comfort as we await his coming. He will come; we are redeemed; the victory is sure. Thanks be to God. Sing Psalter 413.

September 5 Read Revelation 14:6-13

John continues to report on the happenings that signal the end of the antichristian kingdom and the victorious end for the kingdom of Christ. As we await that day we must draw our comfort for the present perilous days from verses 12 and 13. As we listen for the three angels, we must be patient until the coming of the Lord. How do we do this? We must keep God's commandments and the faith wrought for us by Christ. This is not an easy task, but it is one with a glorious end. We have work to do in this fight. This work may cost us our physical lives, but there is the promise and reward of the eternal rest in heaven. Let us fight the battle of faith as we await the vanquishing of the antichristian kingdom and the establishment of the eternal kingdom of Christ. Sing Psalter 108.

September 6 Read Revelation 14:14-20

We see a view of the culmination of the world's history. As the angels carry out their work, we see that they, too, are waiting for this final day when all of the church will be gathered together. Christ takes from the earth all those who are his. Those who are not defiled by the beast's mark are gathered into his barns. Then, an angel is commanded to gather the wicked for they have filled their cup of iniquity. The answer to the souls under the altar is given, and their period of waiting is over. What a day that will be! Are we watching and waiting? Are we praying daily, "Thy kingdom come"? Sing Psalter 150.

September 7 Read Revelation 15:1-4

Chapter 15 is an introduction to what comes in the next chapter. John sees a beautiful and awe-inspiring scene. He sees seven angels holding the last seven plagues. Before these plagues are dashed upon the earth and its wicked inhabitants, the church sings a beautiful song of praise to

God. It is a song that we may sing, and we must sing it. God's works and ways are great and marvelous. They are just. We may not understand them all now, but we will when we take our place by the sea of crystal. Even as Israel stood by the Red Sea so shall the church watch as the wicked are destroyed by these plagues. Let us continue to watch, pray, and sing as the day of the Lord is surely coming. Sing Psalter 86.

September 8 Read Revelation 15:5-8

After the beautiful song of Moses and the lamb, we see the utter terror being wrought upon antichrist and his followers. Notice the angels who carry out this destruction. They are pure. They did not fall away when Satan did but were preserved to carry out this task. Examine the description of God in verses 7 and 8. He is the eternal one. In contrast to all created beings, he is the one who lives forever. His glory is unapproachable by all men unless he permits them to come unto him. The end will come but only as directed by his sovereign hand. Sing Psalter 249.

September 9 Read Revelation 16:1-7

As the world comes to an end, God will make a final judgment upon Satan, antichrist, and their kingdom. The entire world must be affected by these plagues; and as in the last plagues of Egypt, the church is spared. We see in the vials or bowls destruction in its entirety. All men were affected, all the sea became blood, etc. Egypt was a type of the kingdom of Satan and so we see the similarity in the vials to the plagues that God through Moses rained upon it. All that we can say, in fact, all that we may say are the words of verse 5-7. Let us pray that prayer adding to it the words "Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly." Sing Psalter 35.

September 10 Read Revelation 16:8-15

In Psalm 73 Asaph laments the prosperity of the wicked in the first part of the Psalm. Later on he begins to see what they really have. In verse 16 he says, "Then understood I their end." We, too, might echo the thoughts of Asaph. Even as we read these words, the end of the wicked is hard to comprehend now, but the day is coming when we will see, like Asaph, the wicked's end. The day will come when all will see the coming of Christ. His coming will be unannounced except for those who are watching and walking in a way pleasing to him. May this be our goal today and every day that God is pleased to give us on this earth. Sing Psalter 201.

September 11 Read Revelation 16:16-21

Three times a voice has uttered a variation of the words "It is done". First of all when God created all things, he finished that work on the sixth day and rested on the seventh. The creation was complete at that point. There was no evolving among life. Secondly Christ said with a loud voice, "It is finished!" All the work of our salvation was completed. There was nothing left for anyone else to do. All was fully accomplished. And now, as the world is gathered at Armageddon, a voice says, "It is done." No longer will God's people suffer at the hands of the wicked. The wicked's cup of iniquity is full. The elect's prayer for Christ to come quickly is now answered. The day is not here yet, but the signs are there. Are we watching…waiting…praying? Sing Psalter 155.

September 12 Read Revelation 17:1-6

In the previous chapter we saw the end of Satan and his anti-Christian kingdom. History was finished when the voice announced, "It is done." In the next chapters we see an explanation of what previously was described. John is allowed to see the anti-Christian kingdom and its destruction. He sees it for our benefit, comfort, and strengthening. We see in these six verses that this evil kingdom has both a religious and political arm. Being portrayed as a woman shows that she is the false church in all its deviltry. As a city sitting upon a beast with seven heads and ten horns, you see a creature that tries to appropriate God's sovereignty. As people of God, we must identify the woman, the beast, and their wiles, and flee from them. Let us know that God will care for us even in the evil last days that are shortened for our sake. Sing Psalter 30.

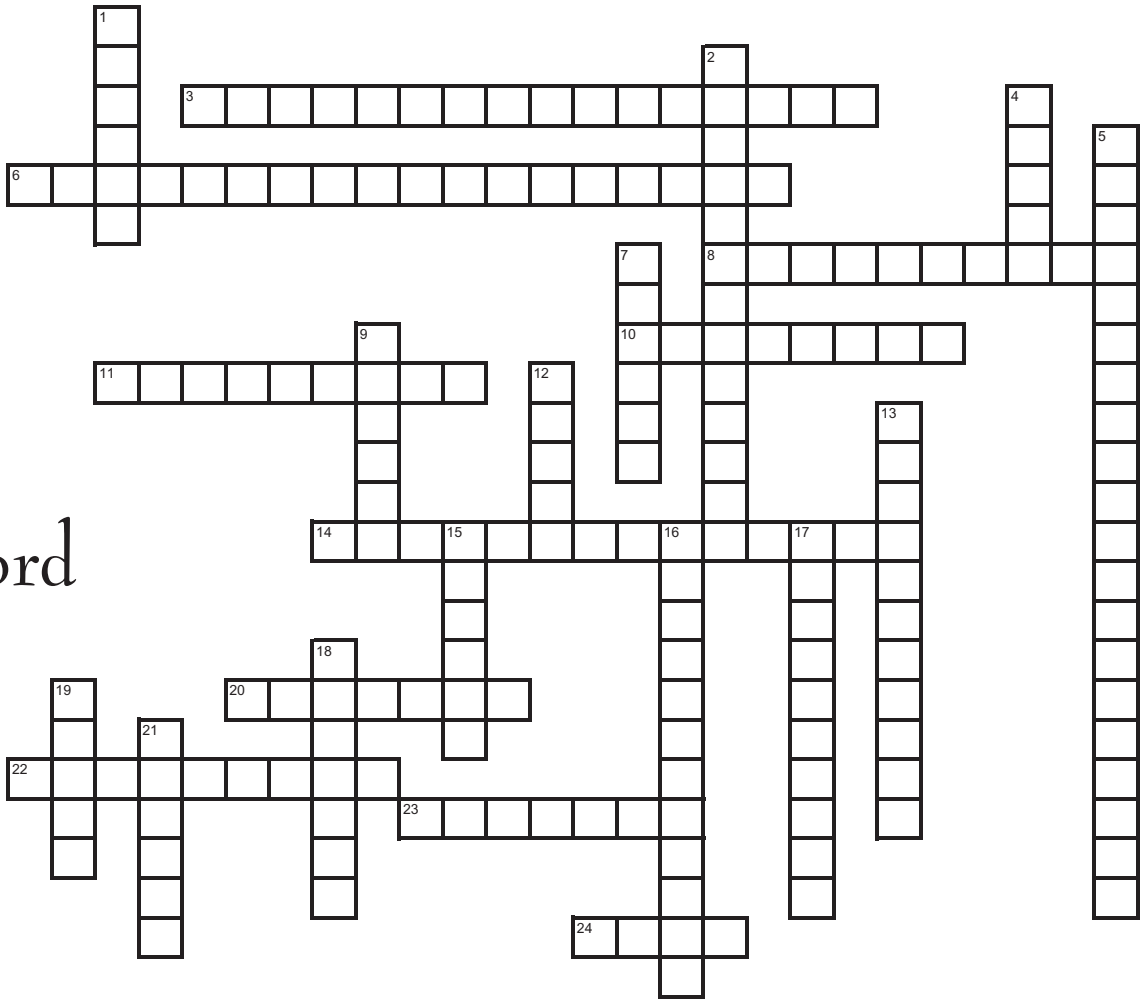
September 13 Read Revelation 17:7-14

We continue with the description of the anti-Christian kingdom in these verses. This kingdom has been evident on earth since the time of the fall. At the Tower of Babel the beast was wounded grievously, but that wound has been healed as best as it could be. Throughout history the church has had to withstand various manifestations of the kingdom. The day will come when the beast will organize itself and make the final attack against the church. Against that day we have the beautiful promise of verse 14. Let us cling to that promise knowing that our eternal home is sure. Sing Psalter 31.

September 14 Revelation 17:15-18

Throughout history the false church and the wicked world have joined to make war against the true church of Christ. As the wicked world gets stronger and stronger, it will not need the false church any longer. That which calls itself Christian will be obliterated and a single false religion will grow up. We need not be afraid, however, because all of this is in God's sovereign power. Reread verse 17 to see this truth. It is important that we stay away from the false church and only cleave to the true church that maintains the marks of that truth. This truth we will only find in Scripture. This is the only way to true peace. Sing Psalter 16.

Calvin Crossword



Across

3 July 10, 1509—day of … (2 words)

6 Key truth that Calvin restored (3 words)

8 Calvin's cousin who argued with him about salvation by grace alone

10 Calvin's wife

11 French Calvinists

14 God's eternal decree to save some and reprobate others

20 Calvin searched the Scriptures like these NT saints (June Little Lights)

22 Emphasized in worship service

23 A man Calvin admired as a student, but later criticized

24 Calvinist leader in England

Down

1 A city of refuge for many Protestants where Calvin established reform

2 Tutored by Wolmar and later wrote a biography of Calvin and promoted Calvinism (2 words—see May Little Lights)

4 Calvin's hometown

5 Secret meeting place in Paris for Protestants (4 words—see July Little Lights)

7 John Calvin's father was a

9 Calvin's Greek teacher

12 Fled from this city when Catholics were persecuting the Protestants

13 John Calvin's birth name (2 words)

15 Calvin's motto: "*Cor meum tibi offero,* _____*, prompte et sincere*" in English "My heart 15 I offer to you, O Lord, promptly and sincerely"

16 Rector of the university and friend who fled Paris with Calvin (2 words—July Little Lights)

17 Published in 1536 to clarify the Reformed faith and vindicate his brethren who were dying at the hand of Catholics

18 King who was persecuting the Protestants in France

19 Fiery preacher who persuaded Calvin to help him in Geneva

21 Calvin's father first wanted him to study to be a…

Answer Key—Page 22

PUBLIC CONFESSION OF FAITH

(Before or after the sermon, the minister requests those who intend to make public confession of their faith to arise and to reply to the following questions:)

1. Do you acknowledge the doctrine contained in the Old and New Testaments and in the Articles of the Christian faith and taught here in this Christian Church to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation?

2. Have you resolved by the grace of God to adhere to this doctrine; to reject all heresies repugnant thereto and to lead a new, godly life?

3. Will you submit to church government, and in case you should become delinquent (which may God graciously forbid) to church discipline?

Answer. Yes.

Will You Submit to Church Government?

by John Huizenga

Will you submit to church government? To this question, each one of us who has publicly confessed his or her faith has answered "Yes." With this "yes" we have also promised to adhere to the doctrines taught in our churches and reject any heresies repugnant thereto. It is a vow which we make before God and the church of Christ; and is something, therefore, that must bring us to our knees in prayer when we find in our heart and mind a sentiment that differs with a decision that the synod, classis, or consistory makes.

That differing sentiment must be carefully guarded within our heart and mind to prevent its escape through our mouth or our fingers to the computer keyboard. A solemn vow is broken when we discuss with others our differences. A solemn vow is broken when we quickly react with derision to the publication of decisions made by classis or synod. Our vow requires that our sentiments be taken before God in prayer and before his Word. There we may wrestle with our difference; and if we find support in God's word for our position, we may carefully formulate it and humbly bring it before those in our congregation who have been appointed by God to hear our sentiment, namely, the consistory.

Are you content with your vow, or do you feel trapped by an exercise of tyrannical power by the church and was only something you were forced to do because it was expected? Why do we have to make such a vow anyway? Is the church afraid that God won't be able to preserve the truth within the church if freedom of speech is allowed? Why not trust that the truth will defend itself or eventually emerge from the life and discussion of the members of the church?

While it is clear that history and our present life is filled with examples of tyrants and organizations which forbid criticism and demand vows of loyalty; one thing separates these from the confession of faith you make in church: God demands this confession while men demand every other vow of loyalty. The church does not require

a public confession of faith because this was a way men decided was useful to protect power and control over its members. Rather, God demands our confession, and the church uses this confession in the work that God calls her to do in guarding the table of the Lord's Supper from those who do not confess a like faith.

Some passages of God's word where he calls his people to confess their faith are as follows: "But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:8-10). "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Mat. 10:32-33).

This confession that we make with our mouth is something that we must do all our life as a natural product of the work of God's grace within our hearts. That confession is found in our songs and testimony as children and continues until our death. And when God calls his people to the table of the Lord's Supper, he requires that some measure of diligence be taken by the church to protect it from participation by those who come with different confessions and bring division and other disturbance to the table (1 Cor. 11:17ff). The church, through the process of the struggles during and after the Reformation has learned that a sufficient measure of protection and order is maintained when a clear statement of the believer's confession is made public (See also the Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 81 and 82).

Notice that we did not confess simply that we believe the doctrine contained in the Old and New Testaments to be the complete doctrine of salvation. The questions to which you answer "yes" call you to recognize that God has used the church throughout history to develop our understanding of the doctrines of Scripture. God is pleased to develop doctrine, not rediscover it anew with each generation. We with our faith do not stand as so many individual and independent believers with our personal relation with our God. We exist as members of a body and inseparable from the church which is manifested in particular congregations at particular periods of time in history. If we limited our confession to the Bible as the complete doctrine of salvation, we would exist as one among millions in a vague changing cloud of "believers" with as many variations of interpretations of the way of salvation. The Bible is the sole and complete foundation of the faith developed and explained by the church in its Articles of confession; and it is that faith as it unites with our personal understanding that we confess.

As you confess your faith, you do so as a member of the body of Christ, the church. It is a body that is ruled by Christ, the Head, through men of a local congregation who are called by God to serve as office bearers. The Reformed church government that we have is also a fruit of God's work among the saints in various historical circumstances. The men of the Reformation looked long and hard in the light of Scripture at the historical development of church government and formulated a biblical course between the abuses of Rome and the chaotic folly of anarchy. When we look around at our fellow members and see that indeed Christ is ruling, feeding, and blessing his church through the work of the pastor, elders, and deacons we are willing to confess that we will submit to that government. We do it recognizing that the men who do this work are sinners like everyone else, but by the grace of God in them as well as others, the church is gathered, protected, and nourished by Christ.

Our vow does not leave us without a voice in the church. We bear the office of believer who continuously confesses his or her faith. Our vow to submit to church government demands, however, that we follow the prescribed means for expressing our disagreements. Satan quickly takes advantage of the chaos that results when every man openly speaks and does what is right in his own eyes. But when truths and principles of Scripture for our life on this earth are carefully discussed in the light of God's word among many men who have been appointed by God through the church, Satan has a much more difficult time finding a foothold. While on this earth as the church militant, God is pleased to preserve the truth among his people in the way of his government and discipline through men. To this government, trusting that God is using this means to develop and defend the truth, we confess that we cheerfully submit. Without a mutual trust in one another as members of the one body of Christ we will not listen to one another nor can we submit.

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John is a member of Randolph Protestant Reformed Church in Randolph, Wisconsin and is Editor of Beacon Lights.

I Remember Herman Hoeksema: Personal Remembrances of a Great Man (11)

by Prof. David J. Engelsma

The Final Test

"That's all I have, Mr. Chairman…"

With these words to Rev. J. A. Heys, president of the synod, Rev. Herman Hoeksema leaned back in his seat, off to my left, in the front row of the delegates assembled as the 1963 synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Slowly he closed the black folder out of which he had been examining me in Dogmatics.

The place was the basement of the original building of First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, at the corner of Fuller and Franklin. In the auditorium of this church, as a small boy, some twenty years earlier, from high in the balcony I had caught my first glimpse of Rev. Hoeksema. For the past three years, I had been training for the ministry under him and Professor Homer C. Hoeksema in a small room across the hall from the large room in which synod was meeting, I was sitting, and the way into the ministry in the Protestant Reformed Churches would be opened to me.

I hoped.

The time was Friday morning, June 7, 1963.

No Relief

At these words, I permitted myself a small, concealed sigh of relief. Four and a half hours of examination remained. But I had made it, more or less successfully, through the part of the public examination before synod that consisted of questioning by Herman Hoeksema in Dogmatics. Dogmatics is by no means the only subject in the seminary curriculum, but it is the main one. The time allotted at synod for the examination of a seminarian in Dogmatics is far longer than the time devoted to any of the other subjects. And every graduate from the Protestant Reformed Seminary knows that he must do well in the Dogmatics examination. Dogmatics gives the aspiring minister of the word and sacraments the essential content of his preaching and teaching.

Towards the very end of the examination, I had stumbled. The question concerned the doctrine of the last things. Hoeksema had asked about the structure of the book of Revelation. The precise answer escaped me. All that came to mind was a vague statement of the intensifying conflict between the kingdom of the beast and the kingdom of the Lamb. Not content with this generality, and teaching to the very end, Hoeksema hinted broadly at the opening of the book by the Lamb in Revelation 5. Recovering myself, I made haste to say that I would like to "revise" my previous answer by referring to the opening of the seven seals, the sounding of the seven trumpets, and the pouring out of the seven vials.

"You must not 'revise' your previous answer," Hoeksema responded, genially, "but retract it."

I had stumbled, but the stumble was not fatal.

The exchange had even drawn a chuckle from the delegates, in which I fancied I could detect some slight sympathy.

A sense of relief at this juncture in the grueling proceedings was appropriate.

Three and a half hours of intensive grilling in Dogmatics by Herman Hoeksema were finished.

I sat alone on the raised platform—the only graduate of the Protestant Reformed Seminary. Before me was the august body of ministers, elders, and professors of theology in whose hands was my future—the "fathers of the synod," as Rev. Marinus Schipper was wont sonorously to address them in his pre-synodical sermons. They seemed eminently patriarchal to me on that June morning, some forty-six years ago now. They were not so much before me as I was before them. If I did not feel myself "naked to mine enemies," as Cardinal Wolsey once described his predicament on the way to his fateful meeting with King Henry VIII, I felt myself "naked to mine" dignified and powerful judges.

It was a very hot and very humid June late morning. If air conditioning had been invented, it had not yet been installed in the basement of First Church.

And I had troubled my already burdensome synodical examination by a foolish decision. The night before the examination would begin, I had yielded to the temptation to play ball. (In my defense, mitigating, though not excusing, my fault, the temptation was well-nigh irresistible. It was fast-pitch softball, and the game was an important one.)

My chastisement was swift and severe. It was inflicted by the powerful right arm of a young Harlow Kuiper. Throwing across the diamond as I wandered about the mound, preoccupied with an impending synodical examination, the youthful Mr. Kuiper (who had an arm, as they say, like a cannon) struck me with great force full on the bones above and below the left eye.

I preached my specimen sermon to the synod the next morning in the auditorium of the old First Church with my left eye completely closed and the flesh around it hideously multi-colored. I gave my answers to the questions in Dogmatics glaring out upon the examiner and the "fathers of the synod" with one eye, and with the nagging thought, "What must they think of a seminary graduate who played ball the night before his synodical examination?"

Surely, I could afford to relax just a trifle at the conclusion of the all-important Dogmatics examination.

"…except that I have one more question for Mr. Engelsma," Hoeksema continued.

I came to full attention, instantly on high alert. There was no doubt in my mind that, whatever this "one more question" might be, coming as it did after the examination in Dogmatics had been completed, it would be unique, and very likely uniquely difficult for me.

To me: "What is more real, the eternal counsel of God, or history?"

Hoeksema's countenance was solemn.

The examination in Dogmatics was continuing. Indeed, it had climaxed. There could be no relief.

The Final Question

The members of the synod did not appreciate the final question. Neither did I. But our failures to appreciate the question were of a different kind. They did not know the reason for the question. No doubt, they were puzzled by it. I understood full well the reason for the question. But I did not like it, and heartily wished Hoeksema had not asked it.

Throughout the three years of my seminary training, Herman Hoeksema and I had carried on a running debate over this very question. He affirmed that the eternal counsel of God is "more real" than history. Early on, already in the first year, studying the first locus of Dogmatics, Theology, I had respectfully demurred. I did not deny that the counsel is "real," or even that the counsel is the source and foundation of the reality of history. But I challenged the comparison, "*more* real." History, I contended, is as "real" as the counsel, because "Jesus Christ died in history." "*More* real" tends to diminish the reality of history and thus the historical cross of Christ.

It was an indication of the great theologian's magnanimity (largeness of spirit) that he never shut me up by imposing his towering stature upon me, a mere student. He took my position seriously. He discussed the issue, rather than to lecture me about his stand. This was characteristic of the man. If one disagreed with him, *on the basis of biblical, creedal, and reasonable grounds*, Hoeksema was willing to discuss and debate.

Which is not to suggest that he changed his view in the least. Heart and soul, he was convinced that the eternal counsel is "more real" than history.

I had completely forgotten our interesting, and sometimes lively, debate over the reality of the counsel and history, eternity and time.

Hoeksema had not.

A final dogmatical question.

Testing

I frankly confess that I considered giving the answer I supposed Hoeksema wanted. For all I knew, the right answer might be decisive regarding my entrance into the ministry. The words, "one more question, Mr. Chairman," deliberately spoken by one who did not speak idly at synod, rang in my ears. Might his reservations about my position be more serious than I thought? Had he decided to make an issue of our difference before the synod, as part—the *climactic* part—of the all-important examination in Dogmatics? At best, the answer expressing my convictions might very well lead to a debate in which I must certainly come off poorly. Was not the entire synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, committed as the Protestant Reformed Churches are to the highest esteem of God's eternal counsel, expecting a seminary graduate to reply, unhesitatingly, "the eternal counsel"?

But, no.

If the synodical examination of a graduate of the Protestant Reformed Seminary before Christ's assembled church and, thus, before Christ himself, means anything at all, it means honesty. Precious as the ministry in the Protestant Reformed Churches is, and, therefore, highly desirable, it must be sought and entered in the way of pure truth, or not at all. Anything else is unworthy of the

church's head.

Carefully, but truthfully, I answered: "I reject the comparison. The counsel of God is 'real.' So also is history 'real,' indeed, 'as real,' because Christ Jesus died in history. The cross of Christ is, and must be, historical. The crucified Christ makes history 'real.'"

For the first time in three and a half hours of examination in the grand truths of Reformed Dogmatics, a broad smile broke across the face of Herman Hoeksema.

"Mr. Chairman, I am satisfied," he said. And if Herman Hoeksema was satisfied, the synod was satisfied.

I had not known Herman Hoeksema as well as I thought I did.

I got to know him better on that June morning, long ago.

Any other answer than the one I gave that morning would have disappointed him, would have disappointed him greatly.

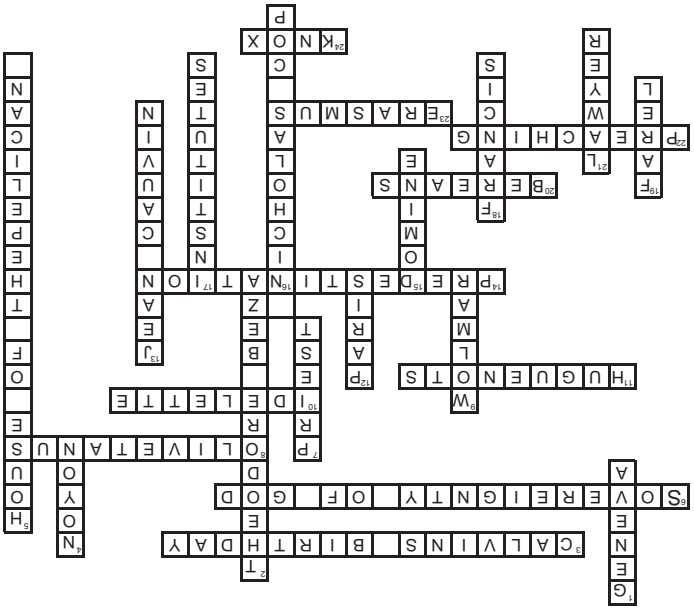
His final question in Dogmatics was far more than a final *question*.

It was a final *test* of his student.

I had passed. ❖

Prof. Engelsma is professor emeritus of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary.

Calvin Crossword Key (Page 17)



The Word of God

The Bible is an awesome book,
Its pages tell a story;
The "new-born babes" may have a look
To see Jehovah's glory.
The simple milk of Father's word
The weak may understand,
And children young, or young-in-faith,
When guided by His hand
Are nourished and find pleasure great
In learning of His love.
They gain the joy of seeking Him
Who dwells in heaven above.

And when they are no longer babes
His word means even more.
They find this book a treasure trove
With grace and peace in store.
The longer that they study it
The richer still it grows;
The Holy Spirit guides their steps
As He new insight shows.
They see their overwhelming sin;
Repent, and are forgiven,
And through their precious Savior's blood
They're welcomed into heaven.

Thelma Westra

500 Years Ago... "Let Us Find the Truth!" (6)

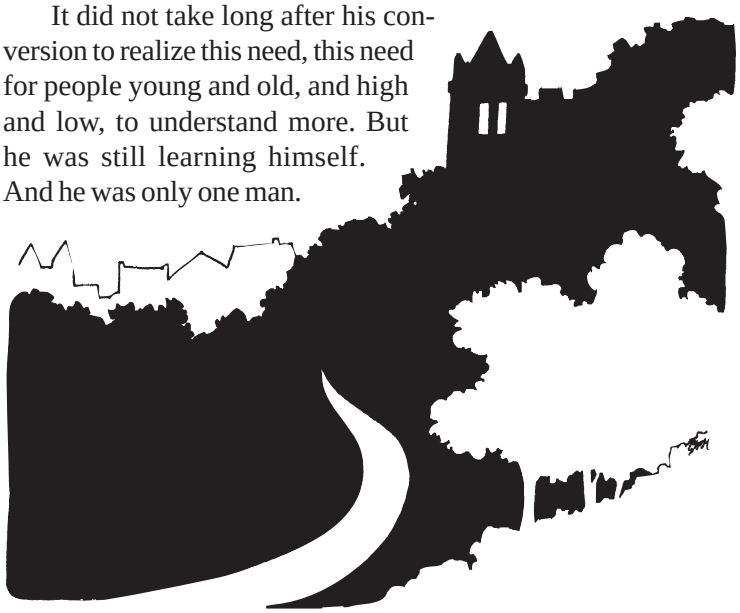
For a time the king of France tolerated the new Lutheran doctrines of justification by faith alone. His own sister, Princess Margaret, embraced these doctrines herself. The princess had heard of John Calvin and his plight. She convinced her brother, the king, to be lenient with this young man, and invited Calvin back to Paris for an interview. She wanted to hear him speak of Reformed things.

The disguised "farmer," only days ago having fled for his life, was now received into the presence of a royal princess!

But Calvin knew he was not safe. The day would come when even the princess would be in danger. Calvin did not stay in Paris, nor could he continue to use his own name. In the cold of winter he traveled to a town built high up on a rock, a fortress where one of his college friends lived. He knew he would be welcome at the du Tillet mansion there. His friend, Louis du Tillet, had inherited a library of several thousand books. This would be an ideal place for "Charles d'Espeville" to hide and study.

Indeed, even as he had already been called upon to teach others about Reformed doctrine, Calvin would be sought out for instruction in this remote place as well. People were hungry for knowledge. And so was he.

It did not take long after his conversion to realize this need, this need for people young and old, and high and low, to understand more. But he was still learning himself. And he was only one man.



"LITTLE LIGHTS" . . . let it shine !

by Connie Meyer

How could he meet this need?

He must research and write another book, a book that would help people understand what true Christianity is all about. And he would begin the project at the home of Louis du Tillet.

Louis was happy to see his friend and introduced Calvin, or "Charles," to other educated men who lived nearby. One of them was called "Pope of the Lutherans." "Gentlemen, meet a dear friend of mine from college. He is interested in reading the church fathers and discovering the truths of Scripture. Like you, he is interested in many things..."

Calvin regularly met with these men to discuss books and ideas and doctrines. Whenever a book was opened, the twenty-four-year-old visitor from Paris encouraged them with complete assurance, "Let us find the truth!" And Calvin made sure his meaning was clear: the truth existed and would indeed be found.

Find the underlined words of the following text in the puzzle below:

And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Luke 11:9, 10

K	C	O	N	K	H	A	E	K	F
S	P	U	O	Y	T	N	Y	O	I
A	O	P	E	N	E	D	O	T	N
Y	T	H	H	A	V	K	U	N	D
D	N	I	F	T	I	E	K	U	E
E	U	M	H	T	E	K	S	A	T
N	M	K	N	O	C	K	E	T	H
E	S	A	Y	R	E	V	E	N	A
P	D	F	F	O	R	E	K	E	T
O	G	I	V	E	N	Y	A	H	S

Connie is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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Church News

BAPTISMS

"For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Act 2:39

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:

Matthew John, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dave Korhorn—Faith, MI

Nathan David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dan DeJong—Faith, MI

Evan David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Kleyn—Grace, MI

Alyse Akaya, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mark Van Dyke—Grandville, MI

Karli Ann, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mark DeBoer—Grandville, MI

Brennan Zachary, son of Mr. & Mrs. Eric Gritters—Hudsonville, MI

Ashtyn Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Greg Kalsbeek—Hudsonville, MI

Cassidy Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brad Kuiper—Hudsonville, MI

Chloe Mikayla, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jason Tolsma—Immanuel, Lacombe, Canada

Lyla Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joe Kuiper—Southwest, MI

Nadya Hope, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Henry Westhuis—Trinity, MI

Isabelle Jane, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Phil Steenwyk—Trinity, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

"Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established." Proverbs 4:26

Public confession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ was made by:

Amber Geerdes—Doon, IA

Lynette Kleyn—Grace, MI

Kristin Mol—Faith, MI

Kelly Kaptein—Faith, MI

Abigail Kamps—Hope, MI

Jordan Koole—Hope, MI

Philip Miersma—Hope, MI

Benjamin Rau—Hope, MI

Jared VanBaren—Hope, MI

Jessica Bosman—Holland, MI

Lisa Gritters—Hudsonville, MI

Courtney Peterson—Hudsonville, MI

Nikki Westing—Hudsonville, MI

Matt DeBoer—Hudsonville, MI

Annie Zuverink—Hudsonville, MI

Kamy Zwak—Hudsonville, MI

Kyle Zwak—Hudsonville, MI

Lydia Rau—Southwest, MI

Renae Rau—Southwest, MI

Hannah Westra—Southwest, MI

Brian Feenstra—Trinity, MI

MARRIAGES

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Proverbs 3: 5 & 6

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. Kenneth VanDenTop and Miss Amber Geerdes—Doon, IA

Mr. Vance Grasman and Miss Susann Huizinga—Hope, MI

Mr. Michael Uittenbogaard and Miss Stephanie VanUffelen—Loveland, CO

Mr. Scott Ferguson and Miss Rosanna Hanko—Lynden, WA

Mr. James DeZwarte and Miss Meri Zandstra—Southwest, MI