

FURTHER COMPROMISE AT TOP OF THE PCI *continued*

As reformed evangelical Protestants we totally reject the arrogant and, more importantly, unscriptural titles and claims of the pope. Consequently, we publicly disassociate ourselves from and condemn those church leaders who would welcome and meet him. By their actions they not only give credence to his spurious claims, but betray the very creeds they once professed to believe, teach and defend.

While we take no pleasure in this proposed visit, it will present us with a challenge to highlight the contrast between the teaching of scripture and the false doctrines of the papacy. Our supreme aim and overriding concern is to exalt the only King and Head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ. To this end we call all people, of all denominations and none, to a personal faith in Christ the Saviour as the only mediator between God and men.”

Rev. Ian Brown

Clerk, Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster.



MEETINGS TODAY

- Sunday School – 10.15am
- Morning Worship – 11.30am: *12th Message in the Galatians Series: “Sonship: Our Great And Fountain Privilege”*
- Evening Service – 7.00pm: *“What The Path To Paradise Looks Like”*

INSPIRATION IN A SENTENCE

“Exhibit as much as you can of a glorious Christ. Yea, let the motto upon your whole ministry be: Christ is all. Let others develop the pulpit fads that come and go. Let us specialise in preaching our Lord Jesus Christ.”

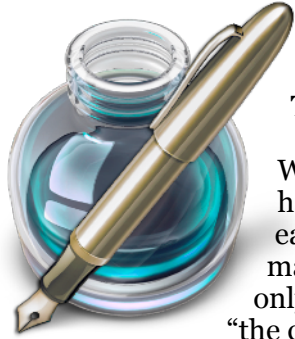
[Cotton Mather]



FURTHER COMPROMISE AT THE TOP OF THE PCI

In response to news that the new Moderator of the Presbyterian Church has said he would “relish” an opportunity to meet the Pope during his visit to Ireland this year, I submitted the following letter to the *Belfast Newsletter* and *Belfast Telegraph*:

“Given the recent decision of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to open up dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church on one of the key doctrines of the Reformation, justification by faith alone, it is hardly surprising to note that their Moderator designate, Rev Charles McMullen, now speaks of ‘relishing the opportunity of meeting the pope.’



OUR GREAT AND FOUNTAIN PRIVILEGE

Text: **Galatians 4:8-20.**

With at least 30,000 idols in Athens, it is hardly surprising that it was said that it was easier to meet a god on its streets than a man. Mammon, Baccus, Venus, Sophia were only some of idols Paul spotted as he noted “the city wholly given to idolatry” (**Acts 17:16**).

Before they were converted, the Galatians had been slaves to false gods: Zeus and Hermes to name but two. Paul preached them out of idolatry into grace – but over the course of **Galatians 4:8-20** the apostle expresses his disappointment that, under the influence of the Judaisers, the Galatians were being dragged away from the joys of their sonship in Christ – “our great and fountain privilege” (John Owen) – back into spiritual slavery. Paul pinpoints their:–

[1] RECEPTION OF THE GOSPEL OF GRACE; 4:8-20.

In **4:8-9**, Paul reminds them how they had been delivered **(a) FROM IDOLATRY / EMPTINESS.**

The “*but now*” at the beginning of **4:9** highlights the change they had experienced: through Christ they had entered into the realm of real knowledge; depicted as the knowledge a son has of his father – and the corresponding knowledge that the father has of his son. This knowledge includes intimacy and love.

The Galatians had also received the Gospel **(b) WITH INTENSITY / EAGERNESS.**

Note the incredible manner in which they had greeted Paul, **4:14** – as a result of which they had entered into blessing, **4:15.**

In this ‘first flush’ of their faith, the Galatians had received the Gospel **(c) DESPITE INFIRMITIES / ENFEEBLEMENT.** Their love for the things of God allowed them to overlook minor irritants, such as Paul’s physical ailment, **4:13-14**, and spurred them to give sacrificially to Christ’s cause, **4:15.**

[2] REGRESSION FROM THE GOSPEL OF GRACE; 4:9-10, 15-18.

However, **(a) THE DIRECTION** in which they travelled after the entrance of the Judaisers is amazing. The expression “turn again” (Gk. *epistrepho*) occurs 39 times in the New Testament; the strength of this term appears when we consider that it is translated as “be converted” in **John 12:40, Acts 3:19; 28:27.**

(b) THE DETAILS about this defection are given in **4:10.** Having allowed the Judaisers to foist both circumcision (**2:3**) and Jewish food laws upon them (**2:11-14**), they now submit to the further demand to observe the Jewish calendar.

(c) THE DESIRE with which they defected was the point that jarred most with Paul: how could they possibly regress from Christ with such relish? John Calvin and Charles Simeon provide the answer. The former spoke of the human heart as an “*idol factory*”; the latter noted, “*The human mind is very fond of fetters, and is apt to forge them for itself.*”

(d) THE DESTITUTION that attended their actions should be noted. They were reduced to beggary and bound with fetters, **4:9**; had lost their appetite for Gospel truth and were now classifying the preacher of truth as an enemy, **4:16**; they forfeited their former blessings, **4:15**; and came under the malign influences, **4:17-18.**

[3] RECLAMATION TO THE GOSPEL OF GRACE; 4:11,19-20.

Paul expressed his concern about **(a) HIS EXPENDITURE FOR THEM; 4:11,19-20.** He feared that though he had laboured to the point of exhaustion for them, this labour may be wasted / empty. Yet he vows to persist in this labour, **4:19-20.**

(b) HIS EXPECTATION FROM THEM; 4:19-20: Paul compared himself to a mother with birth pangs as he longed for them to be transformed into the image of Christ (the term “formed” in **4:19** speaks of a ‘morphing’ into the image. This contrasts with the aim of the Judaisers who wished the Galatians to be clones only of them. God’s purpose is for each of His children to be like Jesus (cf. **2:20; Romans 8:29**).