

April 8, 2009

Dear Friends of the Foundation:

One of our seminar leaders, Jan Farley, was kind to send me this Calvin quotation recently:

For in the cross of Christ, as in a splendid theater, the incomparable goodness of God is set forth before the whole world. The glory of God shines, indeed, in all creatures on high and below, but never more brightly than in the cross, in which there was a wonderful change of things—the condemnation of all men was manifested, sin blotted out, salvation restored to men; in short, the whole world was renewed and all things restored to order. (Commentary on John 13:31)

There is an echo of Martin Luther's theology of the cross here. Luther observed that previously theology had relied upon positive signification, so that good things on earth were thought to point to better things in heaven. Luther argued instead that theology should function by understanding God to use, and to reveal himself through, the sign of the opposite, so that the humility of the manger showed forth the majesty of God, and the weakness of the cross showed forth the power of God.

Also, this awareness of the "fortunate exchange" between Christ and humanity runs throughout Calvin's writings. He takes on our sin and death and gives us forgiveness and eternal life. We can look for additional expression and articulations of this exchange as we read through Calvin's *Institutes* together this year.

Grace and Peace,

Jim

Dr. James C. Goodloe IV, *Executive Director*

The Foundation for Reformed Theology

4103 Monument Avenue

Richmond, Virginia 23230

www.foundationrt.org

(804) 678-8352

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