

**DEFENDING THE  
REFORMED FAITH :**

**A COLLECTION OF SHORT  
ESSAYS AND TRACTS**

*Edited by J. Parnell McCarter*

***”Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.” - I Peter 3:15***

***Dedicated to Dr. Francis Nigel Lee, who has most ably defended the reformed and Biblical Christian faith.***

**Compiled and edited by J. Parnell McCarter**

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## ***EDITOR'S PREFACE***

Christians are commanded to “*be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.*” While this does not mean every reformed Christian must have an exhaustive knowledge and defense on every issue of the Christian faith, it does imply every Christian should have a reasonable defense of the chief issues of the faith. This collection of short essays and tracts is intended to provide such an arsenal. It by no means addresses every issue that the Christian will encounter, nor is it an exhaustive treatment on the issues it does address, but hopefully it responds in broad strokes to some of the burning objections to the historic reformed faith as it is excellently summarized in the original Westminster Standards and Three Forms of Unity.

This compilation of essays and tracts was originally assembled for my own sons, as a means for me to train them on various issues with which I have had to wrestle in my own Christian life. It, along with a companion Teacher's Manual, is intended as a means for our sons and daughters to be taught in these issues.

All of the essays and tracts appearing in this book were written by the book's editor, except those which explicitly indicate another author.

J. Parnell McCarter  
*Editor*

***SECTION ONE :***  
***MARRIAGE AND PARENTING***

## THE CREATION MODEL FOR MARRIAGE

We live in a time and place where one in two marriages end in divorce. Even more astounding, this divorce rate is almost as great in the professing Christian church as in the world around us. It goes without saying that the model of marriage prevalent in our society today is broken and badly in need of repair. Thankfully, God did not leave man blind as to how marriage can and should be. In fact, from the inception of time God communicated to man how marriage should be. The Creation Model for Marriage that God designed in the beginning is just as relevant today as it was in the time of Adam and Eve. Let's first prove the relevance of the Creation Model for Marriage from the scriptures and then let's consider some of the Model's primary features.

At least three passages in the New Testament establish the continuing relevance and applicability of the Creation Model for Marriage. They prove that the commands of God at the time of Creation relevant to marriage are still in force, and all men would be wise to heed these commands. Mark 10:6-9 is one of these passages. The context of this passage is that the Pharisees came to Jesus, testing him with a question about marriage and divorce. Specifically, they inquired if the implications of a provision in the Mosaic Law implied the acceptability of divorce. Jesus' reply tells us not only what Jesus Christ taught regarding the specific question but also what he taught about the binding authority of the Creation Model for Marriage. He replied thus: "But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Notice how Jesus assumed as the basis for his teaching the authority of the Creation Model (i.e., "but from the beginning"). Based upon certain features of this Model, he reasons "what therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

A second passage establishing its continuing effect is I Corinthians 11:8-12. The context of this passage is the question regarding head coverings for women. The Apostle Paul provides as the basis for his assertion relating to head coverings features of the Creation Model. As Paul writes: "For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man." Clearly the Apostle Paul implies that we can make conclusions about how men and women, husbands and wives behave and relate now based upon the way God set up and designed circumstances in Creation.

A third passage proving its authority is Ephesians 5, and particularly Ephesians 5:31. The latter part of Ephesians 5 provides one of the most comprehensive descriptions of how Christian marriage should be practiced in scripture. In the midst of this discourse, yea as the foundation for its commands, Paul inserts this statement in Ephesians 5:31: "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh." This is a direct quote from Genesis 2:24, part of God's creation ordinances for marriage. The Bible leaves little doubt of the continuing authority of the Creation Model for Marriage.

Having established the continuing authority of the Creation Model for Marriage, let's outline some of its primary features:



- **Monogamy:** One man and one woman are one complete unit, according to Creation ordinance. Genesis 2:24 indicates the one man and one woman are “one flesh”; and Genesis 5:1-2 treats the husband and wife as one complete unit yet in two persons (“...In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created.”) What God created in the beginning was one husband and one wife, and “it was very good.”
- **Fidelity:** The unit of one husband and one wife was not only designed as complete, but inseparable too. This is indicated by the term “one flesh” in Genesis 2:24. Since this is an inseparable union by God’s creation design, it is the obligation of both parties to remain sexually faithful to one another. Jesus Christ drew this conclusion from the Genesis ordinance of “one flesh” (Mark 10:8-9).
- **Male Leadership/Female Subordination:** God ordained in creation the woman to be under the authority, rule and preeminence of her husband. This is evidenced by a variety of texts in the Creation account. First, the preeminent position of the man is evidenced in the wording of Genesis 1:24. The identity of the man and woman are subsumed under the identity of the man alone (see also Genesis 5:1-2). Second, the man was made before the woman, and the woman was made to be a help to the man (Genesis 2:18). Third, the man was given the privilege to name the animals (Genesis 2:20). Fourth, it is implied that man is to initiate the formation of the family as a separate unit, having left his own parents (Genesis 2:24). Fifth, Genesis 3:16 explicitly teaches that the husband will rule over his wife.
- **Male-Initiated Bonds of Love and Unity/Protection/Provision:** Male leadership and authority were never designed to be tyrannical in character. Rather, it was intended to be loving in character. More specifically, this love was intended to be predominantly initiated by the male. It is the man who is commanded to “cleave unto his wife” (Genesis 2:24). Furthermore, the husband is to regard his wife as “one flesh” with him. The Apostle Paul derives the implication from the concept of “one flesh” that the man will love, cherish, and protect his wife, just as he treats his own flesh (Ephesians 5:28-30). The necessity of this protection over his wife’s vulnerability to deception became painfully obvious in the Fall (Genesis 3:1-6). The protection extends to the realm of provision and employment of his wife. He was to be the main provider of the family, and she was to be protectively employed under his authority (Genesis 3:17-19).
- **Female Nurturing/Child-Bearing/Home-Making/Helping:** The woman was created to be a helper and assistant to the man, under his authority, protection, and employment (Genesis 2:18). Primary to her role was child-bearing and family nurturing (Genesis 3:16). From the implications of these creation designs the Apostle Paul reveals the trademark characteristics of a godly wife in Titus 2:4-5, including love of husband and children, keepers at home, and submission to her husband’s authority.
- **Fruitfulness:** Insofar as it is within man’s power, God has commanded him in marriage to ‘be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.’ This commanded was repeated in Genesis 9:1 and commended in Psalm 128:3.

- **Male Preservation of the Family as a Distinct Institutional Unit of Society:** The man was primarily assigned the responsibility to form and uphold the family unit (Genesis 2:24). He must not allow its Biblical definition, responsibilities, powers, rights, and prerogatives to be abdicated to other societal institutions, whether the extended family, the state, the church, etc.

Mankind in the twentieth century has largely sought to repudiate the book of Genesis along with its creation ordinances, and mankind in the twentieth century has reaped the consequences of this dreadful course in the breakdown of marriage. God, be merciful to us and give us grace to believe and implement your Creation Model for Marriage!

## **THE RE-ASSERTION OF PARENTAL AUTHORITY OVER COURTSHIP OF CHILDREN**

There has been a marked diminution of parental authority over children. One area where this decline has been most obvious and most troubling is parental authority over the courtship and marriage of children. It is time that Christian parents, and especially fathers, re-assert their parental authority. In order for this to take place though, it is important that parents understand their God-given rights and responsibilities to assert this authority. Let's consider the Biblical basis for parental authority.

The over-arching principle and basis for parental authority, including over children's courtship and marriage, is found in the 5<sup>th</sup> of the Ten Commandments: "honor thy father and thy mother." (Exodus 20:12) That this commandment, like the other of the Ten Commandments, is still valid and in force the scriptures leave no doubt. The Apostle Paul writes in Ephesians 6:1-2: "Children obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise." This passage not only testifies to the continuing validity of the command, but also testifies that this command means, among other things, that children are under the authority of their parents. As we shall now see, one area where children are under the authority of their parents is in the process leading up to and including marriage. It also implies, as we can learn from a host of passages (I Timothy 3:5, Titus 1:6), that parents are to assert this authority for the good of their children.

Parental authority over the process leading up to and including marriage is especially pronounced when the party involved is the daughter, as demonstrated in I Corinthians 7:36-38: "But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry. Nevertheless he that standeth steadfast in his heart...and hath so decreed in his heart he will keep his virgin, doeth well. So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better." This passage assumes that a father has and will exercise authority over his daughter's courtship and marriage. As Matthew Henry writes concerning this text: "Children should be at the disposal of their parents, and not dispose of themselves in marriage. Yet parents should consult their children's inclinations..." It should be noticed the father's authority is not an afterthought. This is not a situation where the father gives his blessing upon the brink of the marriage between her and a man. Rather, the passage suggests that the father is in control of the whole process up to and including marriage, protecting his daughter because he recognizes her vulnerability and need of loving leadership (I Peter 3:7). It is not reading too much in this passage to say it is the norm that the father has kept his daughter in his house until marriage so he can maintain this loving protection and control.

Although the extent of protection required may be greater for a daughter than a son, even with a son there is direct parental authority over the process leading up to and including marriage. This pattern was demonstrated in the lives of patriarchs such as Abraham over Isaac (Genesis 24:2-3) and Isaac over Jacob (Genesis 28:1-2). Even the strong-headed Samson had to ask his parents to get a wife for him (Judges 14:2-3). Of course, Samson's parents are an example of poor exercise of authority, whereas the patriarchs modeled a good exercise of authority. Their exercise of authority and control fostered

godliness and long-term happiness for their children, whereas Samson's parents' abdication of authority proved ruinous for Samson.

We have a Biblical mandate to exercise authority and control over the process leading up to and including marriage. This means parents should take the steps necessary to insure, within human limits, the sexual purity of their children until marriage. Normally this will mean keeping one's children (especially daughters) in the household until marriage, so that the proper authority can be directly exercised. Joshua said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15). This and many other passages suggest what we all know from experience: parental authority and control can more readily be exercised within the household, but outside the household this authority and protection are more tenuous. This mandate also means parents, and especially fathers, should decide, along with their children, who their children will marry. It does not mean the children's desires will not be considered, but parents should take an active, direct, and leading role in the process. Parents have the mandate, so let's exercise it!

***SECTION TWO :***  
***THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE***

## NO COMPROMISE WITH GOD'S GRACE

Sadly, many churches today deny the total grace of God in the salvation of Christians. They deny the following Biblical truths (often remembered by the acronym TULIP and called the 'doctrines of grace')-

- **Total Depravity** of man before conversion. Men are dead in their trespasses and slaves to sin. Without God's total and effectual grace they will remain so. (Romans 3:10-11, Ephesians 2:1-5, I Corinthians 2:14, Jeremiah 17:9)
- **Unconditional Election** by God of those whom He saves. God does NOT elect to save men because he foresees who will believe. Rather, of His own volition God chooses those whom He will mercifully save. (Romans 9:11, I Timothy 1:9, Ephesians 1:4, John 15:16-17 ). Even faith itself is a gift of God's grace (Ephesians 2:8). God by His grace plants it in the heart of man (Philippians 2:13).
- **Limited Atonement**, or Particular Redemption by Jesus Christ of the elect. Christ died effectually for His elect- taking on Himself their guilt- not merely giving the possibility that people might be saved. (Matthew 1:21, Romans 5:8, John 10:29).
- **Irresistible Grace** of God in the salvation of His people. The Holy Spirit converts sinners so they repent and believe. Those whom God has chosen to save before the foundation of the world He does save. (Ephesians 2:4-5, John 6:44, Acts 16:14 )
- **Perseverance of the Saints** through the work of the Holy Spirit. All those whom God has saved will surely persevere to the end by the power of the Holy Spirit, living a life of evangelical faith and obedience. (II Timothy 4:18, Romans 8:30, Jude 24 and 25).

But Christ's people must not compromise that salvation is totally the work of God and an exhibition of his grace.

- It is a denial of what the Bible teaches. (Ephesians 2:8-10)
- It denies God the glory he alone is due (Ephesians 1:6)
- It puts in jeopardy the Biblical gospel. If salvation is dependent on some work of man (even if faith itself is that work of man), then human salvation rests on human works instead of the grace of God in Jesus Christ. But human works can save no man, because no human works can satisfy God's perfect justice. (Romans 3:19-20)

## IN RESPONSE TO THE 'WELL MEANT OFFER' DEBATE

### **Divine Precepts, like Divine Decrees, Imply Divine Desires**

Certain critics of the Well Meant Offer criticize it for stating that God desires the repentance of men in general. They assert that there is no sense in which God desires repentance except in the elect. But such criticism fails to take into account the very implications of divine precepts or commands. Implicit within the concept of a 'precept' or 'command' is will, desire, delight or pleasure. This is inherent in its definition. The person giving a command is implicitly expressing his will or desire regarding what he wants the recipient of the command to do. He is stating what he is pleased with. Specifically with regards to divine precepts, God is revealing what he desires man to do. His precepts targeted at all humanity, like the duties of evangelical faith and obedience to the Ten Commandments, are nothing less than statements of what he desires in man. 'Revealed will' without 'will' (or desire) is not 'revealed will'. Divine decrees imply divine desires as well. God decrees that which he desires to occur. He decrees nothing but that which his holy will desires. 'Decretive will' then without 'will' (or desire) is not 'decretive will' either.

### **The Necessity of Non-Contradiction**

Certain proponents of the Well Meant Offer suggest that there is a contradiction between the divine desire for repentance of man in general and the divine desire that only the elect repent, at least insofar as man can comprehend. Such proponents generally recognize that there can be no contradiction in God, since contradiction is ultimately impossible and God is a God of order. But such proponents indicate that in terms of human logic and understanding the two propositions are indeed contradictory.

Such an assertion fails to grasp the necessity of non-contradiction, for man as well as for God. Where there is contradiction in human comprehension, there can be NO understanding at all. For example, if I tell my son to go get a ball and not to go get a ball, and say nothing more, then I have truly said nothing. My son is left wondering what I want. Similarly, if someone asserts that 'God desires all humans to repent' and 'God does not desire all humans to repent', without explaining to some degree the different senses of the term 'desire', then one has truly said nothing. We are left wondering what God desires if all we have are two contradictory statements about his desire. Contradiction, even if it be asserted that it is confined to human understanding on a matter, provides NO information whatsoever. Indeed, it is one of the great hallmarks of Biblical Christianity that it is not self-contradictory, and the principle of non-contradiction is a vital tool of Christian theology and apologetics.

It is true that humans may not and do not comprehend all the depths of divine truth. And so with respect to the issue of divine precepts versus divine decrees man cannot fully understand them. Nor does he fully understand the nature of divine desires, whether in terms of God's revealed will or his decretive will. But man must have enough understanding to distinguish them to some degree, or else it must be admitted man knows nothing about divine desires, whether decretive or preceptive.

## **Distinguishing the Various Senses of the Divine Will**

The common error of many proponents and critics in the Well Meant Offer debate centers around a failure to recognize the various senses of the divine will. There is a different sense in which God delights in or desires repentance and obedience in man in general versus his desire that only the elect repent and obey. One may delight in or desire something in the abstract that one does not delight in or desire with respect to other factors, conditions or circumstances. For example, one may desire to have a Rolls Royce automobile, but it would not be desirable if one lived in the country where a pickup truck is more useful. Under such circumstances, it would not be contradictory for the person to say "I desire a Rolls Royce" yet "I do not desire to have a Rolls Royce." The distinction between God's will in his commands versus in his decrees is a distinction in the nature of the object referred to. In a command the object referred to in the will is an abstraction (ie, something considered apart from a particular instance). But in a divine decree the objects referred to in the will are particular instances. When one delights in something in the abstract one does not necessarily delight in it in every particular instance. Midas delighted in gold, but he realized he did not delight in it in every particular instance. It is not contradictory to delight in something in the abstract but not to delight in it in every particular instance. I like gold, but I do not want my children to turn into gold. The story of Midas plays upon this very important distinction.

In the divine economy, everything God does must be perfectly just and perfectly glorious. Therefore, God will save no sinner that Christ did not atone for. But God determined in his wisdom only to atone for the elect. Indeed, he only desires to atone for the sins of the elect. He also desires to reveal his glory by saving only certain fallen men (i.e., the elect). So the divine will in the abstract is distinct from the divine will with respect to these other factors and conditions. God in the abstract delights in or desires repentance and obedience in man in general. But given the condition that no man can repent and obey unless God has atoned for his sins, and God does not desire to atone for the sins of all men, therefore with respect to these other factors God does not desire but the elect to repent and obey. This is neither contradictory nor incredibly mysterious, but something man himself experiences in everyday life. And in scripture we find numerous examples of God being pleased with something under certain conditions but not under other conditions. And we find God being pleased with something in the abstract that he is not under certain conditions. For example, we read how God is pleased with Israel, yet we read elsewhere how God was displeased with Israel when they sinned. The divine will in the abstract is distinct from the divine will with respect to these other factors and conditions and in particular instances.

Francis Turretin described this distinction well when he wrote: "God delights in the conversion and eternal life of the sinner, AS A THING PLEASING IN ITSELF, and congruous with His own infinitely compassionate nature, rather than in his perdition; and therefore demands from man, as an act due from him, to turn if he would live. But although He does not will, in the sense of delighting in, the death of the sinner, He at the same time wills, in the sense of decreeing, the death of the sinner for the display of His justice. Even as an upright magistrate, though he does not delight in and desire the death of the criminal,



yet determines to inflict the just penalty of the law." (Institutes of Theology IV ch xvii/33)

***SECTION THREE :***

***THE REGULATIVE PRINCIPLE  
OF WORSHIP***

# **GOD'S ETERNAL MORAL LAW AND THE REGULATIVE PRINCIPLE OF WORSHIP**

## **God's Moral Law is Eternal and Is Eternally Binding Upon All Mankind**

God's moral law is eternal and is eternally binding upon all mankind. Many passages prove this truth, but the first chapters of Romans are especially clear on this doctrine: Romans 1:19-21 reveals the existence of God's eternal moral law relating to the duty of man to God; and Romans 2:14-29 reveals the existence of God's moral law especially relating to the duty of man to man.

To say that God's moral law is binding is not to say that man can merit God's salvation by the keeping of the law. Since Adam's fall, mankind has been totally incapable of saving himself through any work (Galatians 2:16). God's moral law has served as the basis of mankind's condemnation (Galatians 3:10). However, for those whom God has saved through Jesus Christ, he has through the work of the Holy Spirit written the moral law on their hearts to evangelically, albeit not perfectly, obey the moral law (Hebrews 8:10, Romans 8:13, Ephesians 5:3-6). God wants, expects, and empowers Christians to evangelically obey his moral law.

## **God's Eternal Moral Law is Summarily Comprehended in the Ten Commandments**

The Ten Commandments outline our duty to God in the first four commands (the first table of the Law) and our duty to man in the last six commands (the second table of the Law) (Deuteronomy 4:13). God's eternal moral law is summarily comprehended in these Ten Commandments (Romans 13:9, Romans 1:23, II Corinthians 3:3). These Ten Commandments in turn are summarily comprehended in the two commandments: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart..." (our duty to God) and "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (our duty to man)(Matthew 22:37-40).

## **Each of the Ten Commandments Has a Broader, Implicit Application than Its More Narrow, Explicit Application**

Let's consider two commandments which illustrate this principle: "thou shalt not kill" and "thou shalt not commit adultery". Christ taught that the command "thou shalt not kill" implies that it is forbidden to hate someone without cause (Matthew 5:22) and the command "thou shalt not commit adultery" implies that it is forbidden to look to a woman to lust after her (Matthew 5:28). What is proved with these two commandments could be similarly demonstrated with the others, including the second.

**The Second Commandment, While Explicitly Addressing Idolatry, Implies That All Worship Must Be Done in Accordance with God's Revealed Will, without Addition or Subtraction (what reformed evangelicals call 'the regulative principle of worship') .**

Whereas the First Commandment addresses who should be worshipped (God only), the Second Commandment addresses how God should be worshipped: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath...Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God..." We learn in the Second Commandment that it is an abomination to worship God in a way different from the way he has revealed he wants to be worshipped. We learn he is a "jealous God" who insists he be worshipped only in the way he commands. Thus, if we make idols to facilitate our worship of God, no matter how well intentioned we may be, God regards it as "iniquity." Deuteronomy 12:32 succinctly describes this "regulative principle of worship" contained in the Second Commandment thus: "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it."

**While Specific Details of Worship Have Changed from One Covenant to the Next, the Second Commandment and the Regulative Principle of Worship Have Always Been Binding**

Three examples in Biblical history will illustrate how the regulative principle has always been binding, although the details of worship that God requires have changed over this time. The first is the case of Cain and Abel. God was pleased with Abel's animal offering, but he was displeased with Cain's grain offering. The second is the case of Nadab and Abihu. They used fire that God had not commanded in the worship, and they were punished with death (Numbers 3:4 ). It should be noticed that their error was adding something novel to God's worship, not doing something explicitly forbidden. A third example is the Corinthian church. The Apostle exposed and rebuked many of their novel approaches to worship thus: "But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God " (I Corinthians 11:16 ).

The specific details of worship have, of course, changed from the Mosaic (Old) Covenant to the New Covenant. There is no more sacrifice of animals, which was only a prefiguring of the sacrifice of Christ (Hebrews 10 ). Circumcision has been replaced by baptism and the Passover by the Lord's Supper. There is no more Tabernacle or Temple, but worship may occur anywhere, and is more spiritual in nature (John 4:20-24). But under each Covenant God has wanted to be worshipped only in the way he commands.

The main elements of New Covenant worship include: preaching and teaching of the Word (II Timothy 4:2 ), the Lord's Supper (I Corinthians 11:26), baptism (Matthew 28:19), singing of the God-inspired Psalms and Hymns found in the Book of Psalms (Colossians 3:16), scripture reading (I Timothy 4:13), and prayer (I Timothy 2:1). To add elements without explicit scriptural warrant is prohibited. Furthermore, we must recognize that the details of worship in the New Covenant have changed from the details God required in earlier covenants (John 4:21-24, Hebrews 10 ).

## **Some Specific Applications of God's Eternal Moral Law and the Regulative Principle of Worship**

- Classic Dispensationalism is in error when it teaches that a command has to be repeated in the New Testament to still be binding upon Christians. If a command or principle in the Old Testament flows from God's eternal moral law as summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments, then it is still binding in the New Covenant for Christians. For example, bestiality is never explicitly prohibited in the New Testament, but it is in the Old Testament (Exodus 22:19). Since the prohibition of bestiality flows from the Seventh Commandment's implication of sexual purity, the prohibition is still binding. Thus, those who would argue that Deuteronomy 12:32 is not repeated in the New Testament nor the incident of Nadab and Abihu, so the regulative principle is not in effect, do greatly err. It is proof that an error in systematic theology can lead to other errors in interpretation.
- Many modern additions to church worship are in direct violation of the Second Commandment and the Regulative Principle of Worship. Some examples of these violations include: musical concerts, plays, ballet performances, age-segregated Sunday School classes, puppet shows, and women preaching, teaching, leading in prayer or speaking before the gathered assembly. Where are any of these practices licensed in New Testament worship? Some of them are even specifically condemned. This is not to say that it is immoral to watch a musical concert, for example, but it should not be paraded in church as part of the worship of God.
- Making or using images of God (whether in picture or statue form or human impersonation), of any of the three persons of the Trinity, is forbidden. Deuteronomy 4:15-17, in which God details some of the ramifications of the Second Commandment, reads thus: "Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, The likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth..." In this passage God is saying he purposefully did not show himself in any form before the people when he delivered the Ten Commandments in order to drive home the lesson to them that they were not to make images of him. God has at many other times in human history shown himself in some form to people: he showed himself to Abraham (Genesis 18), he showed himself to Joshua (Joshua 5:14), and he more recently showed himself in the person of Jesus Christ on earth. However, just because he showed himself to Abraham or these other cases, does not negate the command of Deuteronomy 4:15-17. "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:24) Let us not rely on carnal images of God in our worship of him.
- Even family and private worship fall under the domain of the regulative principle of worship. Some may suggest that staring at a mountain is worship, or that having a family re-enactment of a Bible event is worship, or even driving to work is worship, but God defines true worship. The elements of family worship are not very different from church worship: prayer, Psalm singing, Bible reading, and Bible teaching. And the elements of private worship are prayer and scripture meditation and reading. To these may be added such Biblical elements as fasting and covenanting.

## WERE THEY RIGHT ABOUT MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS IN PUBLIC WORSHIP?

**During the first 12 centuries of Christianity musical instruments were banned in church public worship.** Here are some sample quotes from Christian leaders of the first 5 centuries:

The one instrument of peace, the Word alone by which we honour God, is what we employ. We no longer employ the ancient psaltery, and trumpet, and timbrel, and flute. —Clement (church father, Alexandria, A.D. 153-217).

The kithara is the active soul being moved by the commandments of God, the psalterion is the pure mind being moved by spiritual knowledge. The musical instruments of the Old Covenant understood spiritually are applicable to us....The organ is the church of God composed of contemplative and active souls. The pleasant sounding cymbal is the active soul captured by the desire for Christ. —Origen (church father, Alexandria), Commentaries on the Psalms (3rd century).

Of old at the time those of the circumcision were worshiping with symbols and types it was not inappropriate to send up hymns to God with the psalterion and kithara and to do this on Sabbath days (breaking the rest and transgressing the law concerning the Sabbath). But we in an inward manner keep the part of the Jew, according to the saying of the apostle...(Romans 2:28f.). We render our hymn with a living psalterion and a living kithara, with spiritual songs. The unison voices of Christians would be more acceptable to God than any musical instrument. Accordingly in all the churches of God, united in soul and attitude, with one mind and in agreement of faith and piety, we send up a unison melody in the words of the Psalms. —Eusebius (church historian/bishop, Palestine), Commentary on Psalm 91 (4th century).

It was only permitted to the Jews as sacrifice was, for the heaviness and grossness of their souls. God descended to their weakness, because they were lately drawn off from idols; but now, instead of organs, we may use our own bodies to praise him withal.... Instruments appertain not to Christians. —John Chrysostom (church father, Eastern/Greek), Homily on Psalm 149 (4th century).

You [God's saints] are "trumpet, psaltery, harp, timbrel, choir, strings, and organ, cymbals of jubilation sounding well," because sounding in harmony. All these are you: let not that which is vile, not that which is transitory, not that which is ludicrous, be thought of here. —Augustine (bishop, North Africa), Commentary on Psalm 150 (A.D. 354-430).

It is time to turn to the New Testament to confirm what is said in the Old, and, particularly, to point out that the office of psalmody is not to be considered abolished merely because many other observances of the Old Law have fallen into desuetude. Only the corporal institutions have been rejected, like circumcision, the sabbaths, sacrifices, discrimination in foods. So, too, the trumpets, harps, cymbals and timbrels. For the sound of these we now have a better substitute in the music of the mouths of men. The daily ablutions, the new-moon observances, the careful inspection of leprosy are completely past and gone, along with whatever else was necessary only for a time—as it were, for children. Of course, what

was spiritual in the Old Testament, for example, faith, piety, prayer, fasting, patience, chastity, psalm-singing—all this has been increased in the New Testament rather than diminished.—Nicea (bishop, Remesiana), On the Utility of Hymn Singing (5th century).

Simply singing is not agreeable to children, but singing with lifeless instruments and with dancing and clapping; on which account the use of this kind of instruments and of others agreeable to children is removed from the songs in the churches, and there is left remaining simply singing. —Theodoret (bishop, Syria), Questions and Answers to the Orthodox (5th century).

**Yes, they were right!** Here's why:

1. God's rule for worship is that we should only worship Him as He has commanded, without addition or subtraction of worship elements or ordinances (Matthew 15:1-9, Colossians 2:22-23, Exodus 20:4-5).
2. In the Old Testament economy God instituted Tabernacle/ Levitical worship (Hebrews 7:5) and synagogue worship (Acts 15:21). The Tabernacle/Levitical worship expired with Christ (Hebrews 9), but synagogue worship was transformed into New Testament church worship (Acts 17:10-12), with some modifications like the change in day of worship.
3. Musical instruments were to be played by the Levites as part of Tabernacle/Levitical worship (II Chron 29:25) which has now expired, but they were not included in synagogue worship nor were they instituted for New Testament church worship. Since they are not instituted for our public worship, we should not incorporate them.

## SING SPIRIT-INSPIRED PSALMS

**God's rule for worship is that we should only worship Him as He has commanded, without addition or subtraction of worship elements or ordinances (Matthew 15:1-9, Colossians 2:22-23, Exodus 20:4-5).**

We should not incorporate elements into our worship which God has not commanded.

**God commands the inclusion of Spirit-inspired psalms in our public worship of Him.**

There is divine authority for the use of Spirit-inspired psalms, as shown by I Chronicles 16:4, 7; II Chronicles 29:30; Psalm 105:2; Psalm 9:1-2; and Nehemiah 12:24.

Jesus Christ and His Apostles used them to praise God. The 'hymn' of Matthew 26:30 and Mark 14:26 refers to Psalms 113 to 118, the great 'Hallel' of the Passover celebration.

The hymns, songs, and psalms of Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 refer to the Old Testament Psalms, which in the Greek version Bible bore these titles. Paul uses the term 'spiritual' to modify these terms. Here, as elsewhere, the Apostle Paul used the word 'spiritual' in the sense of 'of the Holy Spirit.' These hymns, songs, and psalms were to be thus Spirit-inspired, the very 'word of Christ' (Colossians 3:16) and 'the song of Jehovah' (Psalm 137:4).

**Nowhere does God command merely human-inspired psalms in our public worship of Him. So, in accordance with the regulative principle of worship, we should not add into our worship what God has not commanded.**

God has not blessed man when we have sought to add elements into our worship which He has not commanded. Man's depravity inevitably leads him to add songs promoting various and sundry errors and heresies.

**For the good, peace and ecumenicity of Christian public worship, we should sing the Spirit-inspired Psalms which God has provided us in His divinely-appointed hymn book, the Book of Psalms.**

These, and these alone, are what we are to "teach and admonish *one another*" with in our church worship song.



## ONLY TWO THEORIES OF WORSHIP

There are only 2 possible categories or theories of worship-

1. Worship in which all that is not forbidden in scripture regarding worship is permissible. (In theory both Roman Catholic and Lutheran worship falls into this category, because even Roman Catholics would contend that nothing they do is forbidden in scripture. The fact that they do not perfectly implement their theory of worship does not imply that this is not their theory of worship.)

2. Worship in which all that is not commanded in scripture regarding worship is forbidden. This is commonly called the 'Regulative Principle of Worship', and is descriptive of the theory of worship taught in the reformed confessions.

Ultimately, any principle of worship, even Pastor Schlissel's Informed Principle of Worship (IPW), will fall into one of these two categories.

Let's show why, using the proposed Informed Principle of Worship (IPW) lately set forth by Steve Schlissel:

IPW says "if it is not commanded it may be permissible if- Principle 1 is observed, Principle 2 is observed,...., and Principle n is observed."

Now with regards to Principles 1 through n they will take one of 3 possible forms-

1. They will be principles taught in scripture, excepting the Regulative Principle of Worship.

or

2. They will be principles taught in scripture, including the Regulative Principle of Worship.

or

3. They will not be principles taught in scripture but only in human reason.

If Principles 1 through n fall into form #3 then the principles are mere humanism, unworthy of the name Christian. If Principles 1 through n fall into form #2 then IPW concedes what it is trying to disprove, namely the Regulative Principle of Worship. So this leaves form #1. But if IPW's principles are principles taught in scripture, then to go contrary to these principles is to do what is implicitly forbidden in scripture. But if his additional principles are implicitly only principles of what is forbidden in scripture, then IPW really follows the worship principle "whatever is not forbidden is

permissible". (It perhaps is just a more or less comprehensive explanation of what is forbidden in scripture.)

Therefore, the IPW essentially agrees with the Roman Catholic and Lutheran theory of worship. The only difference between Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and IPWites will be who "invents" worship rites and ordinances "better" than the others and insures that nothing is done which is forbidden in scripture.

With a Roman Catholic/Lutheran/IPW theory of worship one is hard pressed to show why there are only 2 sacraments, no arch-bishops, only Ten Commandments, no reverent puppet show in worship, no man-invented candle-lighting service, no holy pilgrimages, etc. If history is any guide it cannot be done. Only the Regulative Principle of Worship will keep them out of the worship.

## **CONGREGATIONAL AFFIRMATION OF THE APOSTLES' CREED IN PUBLIC WORSHIP: A PRACTICE TO BE KEPT OR DISCARDED?**

The Westminster Puritans distanced themselves from congregational affirmations of the Apostle's Creed in public worship in the Directory for Public Worship. They were correct in doing this.

Requiring the congregation to say in unison such man-invented statements as the Apostle's Creed is a violation of the Regulative Principle of Worship. It is analogous to the whole issue of singing man-invented hymns in public worship versus only God's inspired psalms. If it is all right for the congregation to say the Creed in unison in public worship, would it not be all right to sing it? But if it is all right to sing it, then why would it be wrong to sing other man-invented hymns?

Although it is called the Apostle's Creed, we know its origin is much later than the time of the Apostles. To sing it in public worship would most certainly be conceded to be the singing of a man-invented hymn. But there is no scriptural warrant for congregational singing or speaking such man-invented affirmations in the public worship.

Having said this, we should not think that those in history who have incorporated the Apostles' Creed in the liturgy thereby abandoned the Regulative Principle of Worship by inserting it. One can make arguments from scripture about the congregation making certain affirmations like this. These arguments are dubious, but there is a rational argument to be made for it while retaining the Regulative Principle of Worship.

May I suggest that especially earlier in the reformation that there were circumstantial reasons which pressured many reformed churches to incorporate it in public worship. The Roman Catholics were accusing reformers of being novel, whereas reformers argued they were being faithful to historic Christianity. One way to prove such faithfulness was by affirming the early church creeds in worship. By the time of the Westminster Puritans in the 1640s they felt far less need to do this, since the reformation was over 100 years old.

But just like during the time of the Westminster Puritans, there is no compelling reason today to incorporate the Apostle's Creed in the liturgy of the reformed churches.

## SOLA SCRIPTURA AND THE REGULATIVE PRINCIPLE

Too few Christians today understand the intimate link and connection of the doctrine of sola scriptura (scripture alone) and the Regulative Principle of Worship, in stark contrast to our reformed fore-fathers. Indeed, the Regulative Principle of Worship is really just a sub-class of the doctrine of sola scriptura. Let's briefly consider why.

First, let's define the terms Regulative Principle of Worship (RPW) and sola scriptura. The RPW is excellently defined in the Heidelberg Catechism q. 96 and Belgic Confession chapter 32 thus: we should not worship God "in any other way than He has commanded in His word" and we should "reject all human inventions, and all laws which man would introduce into the worship of God". In other words, the RPW says that scripture alone defines our ordinances and elements of worship. We must not invent new religious ordinances of worship not commanded in scripture. For example, man has no right to invent a religious ordinance of worship like observance of Lent nor an ordinance of worship like religious pilgrimages to so-called "holy" sites.

Sola scriptura is excellently defined in the Westminster Catechism q. 2 thus: "the Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him". In other words, sola scriptura tells us that scripture alone defines God's religious ordinances for us to glorify Him. We must not invent a new religious ordinance from a source outside scripture respecting what we must do to obey and glorify God. God has given us the Ten Commandments, and we have no right to invent an Eleventh Commandment and impose it upon the consciences of believers. So, for example, it is not permissible for someone to make up a new religious rule that alcohol must be totally abstained from or that we should color our hair blond to glorify God. Such a religious command is not already found in scripture, so we dare not add it.

Second, let's observe how the RPW is just a sub-class of sola scriptura. Sola scriptura says man cannot invent religious ordinances not found in scripture, and the RPW addresses the specific class of religious ordinances relating to worship and says man must not invent new religious ordinances of worship not found in scripture. So the RPW is just addressing a specific class of religious ordinance- namely, ordinances relating to worship. Man has no right to invent new religious ordinances, including new religious ordinances relating to worship.

In truth, an attack upon the Regulative Principle of Worship (RPW) is really an attack upon the doctrine of sola scriptura. If we should be persuaded that man has a right to invent new religious ordinances of worship not found in scripture, then we can surely say man has a right to invent new religious ordinances not found in scripture. But if man has a right to invent new religious ordinances, then the doctrine of sola scriptura is nullified. Put a dagger through the heart of the Regulative Principle, and you will kill the doctrine of sola scriptura.

"And in vain they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."- Mark 7:7

## CONTRADICTION IN THE DEFENSE OF HOLY DAYS

Holy days are religious days (excepting the Lord's Day)- like Christmas Day, Good Friday, and Pentecost Day- set apart by Christian churches annually to commemorate in worship certain events in redemptive history. The defense of holy days in Christian churches almost inevitably involves the advocacy of two contradictory positions:

Position #1: Holy days should be observed by Christian churches because...The reasons posited here are typically a variety of scriptural principles which they feel show 'holy days should be observed by Christian churches.' These principles often cited include the importance of the redemptive event, the duty to remember the redemptive event, the duty of Christian witness, as well as others. This position implies such holy day observance is commended or commanded by the Bible, albeit not explicitly. The logical conclusion of this position is that those who refuse to participate in holy day observance should be disciplined, exhorted, or at the least thought less spiritual than Christians that do participate. After all, if the holy day observance is implicitly commended by God's word, who is man to refuse them?

Position #2: Holy day observance is a mere 'circumstance of worship'. By 'circumstance of worship' is meant an aspect indifferent to the substance of worship which the churches may decide upon to carry out their overall mandate. An example of a 'circumstance of worship' is the setting of times by a church to gather for prayer during the course of the week. As a thing truly indifferent, an aspect may be altered without scriptural compromise. According to this position, those Christians who do not participate should not logically be disciplined, exhorted, or at the least thought less spiritual, because it is admitted that such holy day observance has not been commanded (either explicitly or implicitly) by scripture.

The advocacy of holy day observance resorts to Position #1 typically in order to defend having it faithfully every year, and having it on the same date every year. After all, Position #2 hardly provides a compelling basis faithfully to have observance of Christ's birth every year on December 25, any more than it provides a compelling basis always to meet for a prayer meeting at 7 PM on Wednesday rather than 7:30 PM as the occasion may warrant. Indeed, if anything Position #2 provides a reason not to ALWAYS have it the same date every year. If a minister is preaching through the book of Luke, must he make sure to time his sermons so that he is preaching on Luke 2 in late December and Luke 23 by Good Friday? Must he interrupt his series through the book of Genesis in order to make sure to preach on Christ's birth EVERY YEAR in late December? So Position #1 is resorted to make the case for the FAITHFUL annual observance of holy days.

However, Position #2 is typically resorted to by advocates of holy days when they are pressed. When pressed, advocates of holy day observance admit there is really no evidence the apostolic church observed these holy days. They must admit too their reasons are not sufficient to prove Christ's birth should necessarily be preached on December 25 rather than August 25. Furthermore, the churches generally do not want to enforce the holy day observance among their members like Position #1 would demand.

So what almost inevitably happens in the defense of holy days is a subtle but real vacillation between two contradictory positions. But clearly two contradictory positions cannot both be right! Nevertheless,

advocates of holy days are generally not even themselves aware of their subtle shifts in position as the situation requires.

The truth and reality is that neither Position #1 nor #2 is right. Position #1 is wrong because holy day observance is neither explicitly nor implicitly commanded in scripture. Position #2 is wrong because holy day observance is not a mere circumstance of worship. It was not an issue of mere indifference when holy days were observed in the church at Galatia which were not commanded for the New Testament church. (It was not treated like a decision by the elders at the church to hold their Sunday morning services at 9 AM.) As the Apostle Paul exhorts: "...how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years" (Galatians 4:9-10). God does not want non-commanded holy days to be imposed upon his people.

## **AGE-SEGREGATED SUNDAY SCHOOL: AN ‘F’ GRADE**

Christian churches should reject age-segregated Sunday Schools for the following reasons:

1. Age-segregated Sunday School is a human innovation of the early 19th century. 18 centuries of church history bring into question if it is really a necessary feature of a Christian church.
2. Age-segregated Sunday School is not commanded in scripture (but is instead a human innovation) and is therefore a violation of the Regulative Principle of Worship. If it is argued that it is not worship, then what is it? The Westminster Standards rightly suggest that on the Lord’s Day our time should be taken up by worship, rest, and works of mercy and necessity. Now if Sunday School is not worship, then is it really plausible to call it a work of mercy or necessity? Besides its time, its location at church also suggests that it should be considered an exercise of worship. Since it is worship, and it is certainly not a circumstance of worship, then unless it can be shown to be commanded, it should be rejected. There is simply no Biblical evidence for the church separating children from their parents and then segregating them by age level.
3. Age-segregated Sunday School splits up the family along age levels and so undermines the cohesion of the covenant household.
4. Age-segregated Sunday School diminishes the role of parents, and especially fathers, in the training of children. What churches should be doing is equipping fathers to catechize and train their own children.
5. Age-segregated Sunday School has been an entrance point for many misguided practices in the church. What happens in the Sunday School often eventually seeps into the congregational worship. Examples include drama, puppet shows, and special children’s performances.
6. Age-segregated Sunday School puts together lots of generally unconverted children to engage in silliness (and often downright foolishness) in the midst of supposed worship but outside the eye of fathers to curtail this violation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment. A certain level of immaturity and silliness can be expected in children, but we should work diligently to keep them from forming the habit of mixing this silliness with their time of worship.

For all these reasons and probably more we must give age-segregated Sunday School a grade of ‘F’!

## REFORMING FORMS

Uninspired forms and form prayers should be abolished from the liturgy of the public worship. The Westminster Directory for Public Worship moved the reformed churches of Great Britain towards this direction. According to their own testimony, their motive was "not from any love to novelty, or intention to disparage our first reformers...but that we may in some measure answer the gracious providence of God, which at this time calleth upon us for further reformation... resolved to lay aside the former Liturgy, with the many rites and ceremonies formerly used in the worship of God."

Uninspired forms and form prayers are a violation of the regulative principle of worship taught in scripture. The regulative principle of worship teaches that we should only worship God as He has commanded in scripture, not inventing our own "rites and ceremonies". This principle is inherent to the Second Commandment (Exodus 20:4-6), and explained in such scriptural texts as Matthew 15:1-9 and Colossians 2:22-23. Its idea is perhaps best captured in the passage: "in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men." The Westminster divines set forth a directory for public worship in which "care has been to hold forth such things as are of divine institution in every ordinance; and other things we have endeavored to set forth according to the rules of Christian prudence". In other words, everything submitted for inclusion in the public worship had to pass the test of divine institution in the Bible, or good and necessary consequence guided by Christian prudence in order to implement the divine institution.

Uninspired forms and form prayers are neither commanded in scripture nor a good and necessary consequence to implement God's commands. The Bible provides a model for the content of prayer (as we find in the Lord's Prayer) and provides guidelines for the Lord's Supper (I Corinthians 11), but never does it stipulate the exact words to be used in all the church's prayers and sacraments. Nor does it encourage men to formulate prayers and words for sacraments to be used on all occasions.

There are many sound reasons that can be derived from the Westminster Directory for Public of Worship to warn us against adopting forms and form prayers. Here are some they note in the preface to the Directory:

1. Such ceremonies not commanded in scripture become a burden to the church.

"Long and sad experience hath made it manifest, that the Liturgy...hath proved an offence, not only to many of the godly at home, but also to the reformed Churches abroad. For, not to speak of urging the reading of all the prayers, which very greatly increased the burden of it, the many unprofitable and burdensome ceremonies contained in it have occasioned much mischief..."

2. Such ceremonies not commanded in scripture disquiet the consciences of many of God's people.

"By disquieting the consciences of many godly ministers and people, who could not yield unto them, as by depriving them of the ordinances of God, which they might not enjoy without conforming or subscribing to those ceremonies."



3. Such ceremonies have the effect of turning heart religion into vain ritual.

"Which was made no better than an idol by many ignorant and superstitious people, who, pleasing themselves in their presence at that service, and their lip-labor in bearing a part in it, have thereby hardened themselves in their ignorance and carelessness of saving knowledge and true piety."

4. Such ceremonies encourage those who want to see the regulative principle of worship rejected.

"Papists...were not a little confirmed in their superstition and idolatry, expecting rather our return to them, than endeavoring the reformation of themselves: in which expectation they were of late very much encouraged, when, upon the pretended warrant of imposing of the former ceremonies, new ones were daily obtruded upon the church."

5. Such forms engender a lack of exercise in spiritual gift by ministers.

"Add hereunto, (which was not foreseen, but since have come to pass,) that the Liturgy hath been a great means, as on the one hand to make and increase an idle and unedifying ministry, which contented itself with set forms made to their hands by others, without putting forth themselves to exercise the gift of prayer, with which our Lord Jesus Christ pleaseth to furnish all his servants whom he calls to that office."

6. Such forms engender church strife, because where the scripture mandate does not rule, human politics takes its place. And it is more difficult to attain universal church practice, when such human invention is admitted.

"It hath been (and ever would be, if continued) a matter of endless strife and contention in the Church."

With these sound reasons for discarding uninspired forms and form prayers in our public worship, let us encourage the Christian churches to abandon them, just as did our Puritan forefathers.

## **CHOIRS IN THE CHURCH'S PUBLIC WORSHIP: TO BE OR NOT TO BE?**

Many Christians today assume God must be pleased with choirs in church public worship. After all, they say, 'look at all the Christian churches which have them.' Furthermore, they say, 'choirs are even mentioned in the Bible, so they must be OK.' But this issue deserves a more thorough look at what the Bible teaches.

As with all questions of worship, we must start with the guiding principle of all God-pleasing worship: the so-called 'regulative principle of worship'. This principle is taught in the Second Commandment (Exodus 20:4-5), and says that the principles and elements of our worship to God should be what God has commanded alone, without addition or subtraction. God has commanded this principle of worship throughout scripture, and has warned against human invention of worship elements (Matthew 15:1-9, Colossians 2:22-23). We know what God has commanded for worship from the explicit and implicit evidence in the Bible alone.

In terms of interpreting God's commands for public worship in the Old Testament, we must distinguish between Temple worship and synagogue worship. In the Old Testament God instituted these two systems of worship: the Temple worship (Hebrews 7:5,11) and the synagogue worship (Leviticus 23:7, Acts 15:21). The Temple worship consisted of sacrifices, the Levitical priesthood, Levites playing musical instruments, and Levitical choirs. For example, we read in II Chronicles 29:25-28 about God's command concerning Levitical choirs and the playing of musical instruments in the Temple service:

"Then he [King Hezekiah] stationed the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, with stringed instruments, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, of Gad, the king's seer, and of Nathan the prophet; for thus was the commandment of the Lord by his prophets. The Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. Then Hezekiah commanded them to offer the burnt offering on the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord also began, with the trumpets and with the instruments of David king of Israel. So all the congregation worshiped, the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded; all this continued until the burnt offering was finished."

God's mandate for synagogue worship, however, was quite different. First of all, it was "open to the public". All of the Jewish community were to assemble and participate in all of its worship, not just the Levitical priests. In addition, its God-ordained worship elements were quite different. They consisted of scripture reading, preaching, prayer, etc., which we find for example in Nehemiah 9. There were no choirs or musical instruments commanded in the synagogue worship. But the very fact that God did mandate choirs and musical instruments in the Temple worship is evidence that they should not be regarded as mere 'circumstances of worship' but these features should be regarded as substantive elements of worship.

The Temple worship with its Levitical priesthood has expired in the New Testament (Hebrews 9), but synagogue worship was transformed into New Testament church worship (Acts 17:10-12), with some

modifications like the change in day of worship. Like in the synagogues, choirs and musical instruments were not mandated for the New Testament church worship, but congregational Psalm-singing has been (Colossians 3:16, Matthew 26:30). Rev. Brian Schwertley has rightly concluded: "Roman Catholics are simply being consistent when they incorporate all the abrogated 'shadows' into their system of worship. Girardeau writes: 'Those who have most urgently insisted upon it [musical instruments in public worship] have acted with logical consistency in importing priests into the New Testament church; and as priests suppose sacrifices, lo, the sacrifice of the Mass! Instrumental music may not seem to stand upon the same foot with that monstrous corruption, but the principle which underlies both is the same; and that whether we are content with a single instrument, the cornet, the bass-viol, the organ, or go on by a natural development to the orchestral art, the cathedral pomps, and all the spectacular agnificance of Rome. We are Christians, and we are untrue to Christ and to he Spirit of grace when we resort to the abrogated.'"

Choirs are not to be in God's public church worship, for he has not commanded them there. We dare not engage in will-worship, choosing for ourselves how God would be worshipped.

"And in vain they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."- Mark 7:7

***SECTION FOUR :***

***THE SACRAMENTS OF BAPTISM  
AND THE LORD'S SUPPER***

## IN RESPONSE TO OUR BAPTIST FRIENDS

**The principle of covenant headship, which entails imposing covenant claims and duties upon those under one's covenant leadership, is still in effect.**

The guiding principle of scriptural interpretation is that all of Old Testament commands and principles are still in effect unless they have been positively rescinded in the New Testament (Matthew 5:18, II Timothy 3:16). A principle does not have to be re-stated in the New Testament to still be in effect, as we see in the prohibition against bestiality, for example. The principle of covenant headship- exemplified by Joshua when he said, 'as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord'- has never been rescinded. Rather, Christian parents have always been required to place God's covenant sign on the children under their authority and rear them in the fear of God. Baptism in the New Testament economy, like circumcision in the Old Testament economy, is the visible mark of such service to the Lord (Colossians 2:11-12). Just as the visible people of God of all ages were symbolically baptized when they crossed the Red Sea (I Corinthians 10:2), so the people of all ages today are commanded to be baptized and serve the Lord (Matthew 28:19).

**Our Baptist friends wrongly assert that God would never put a sign of being born again and regenerated (which water baptism is) on someone who has not made profession of faith.**

Baptists are wrong because it is obvious in scripture that God did this very thing in the case of circumcision. Circumcision in the Old Testament economy was applied not only to believers but also to their infant children. This outward circumcision was a sign or picture of inward circumcision of the heart (Romans 2:28-29). But inward circumcision of the heart is but another way of expressing being born again and regenerated (Deuteronomy 30:6, Deuteronomy 10:16). Therefore, it is simply un-Biblical to assert God would never put a sign of being regenerated on someone unless they evidenced being regenerated by a profession of faith. Of course, we should never confuse the sign (whether circumcision or water baptism) with the thing signified (in this case, regeneration). Esau and Demas are but two of many scriptural examples who received the sign yet later evidenced by their lives that they had not really been born again. God in his sovereignty has determined to put his visible claim and mark of salvation on many who are not elect. We must follow his commands and guidelines regarding the administration of sacramental signs, and not our own faulty human logic.

**Our Baptist friends wrongly assert that God would never put a sign of faith (which water baptism is) on someone who has not made profession of faith.**

Baptists are wrong because it is obvious in scripture that God did this very thing in the case of circumcision. Circumcision in the Old Testament economy was applied not only to believers but also to their infant children. This outward circumcision was a sign not only of regeneration but also faith. Romans 4:11 calls circumcision a "seal of the righteousness of faith." By seal it

means an emblem or outward sign of faith. Thus God in his sovereignty determined to put this emblem or sign of faith on the visible covenant seed who had not yet professed faith, and on many like Esau and Absalom who never would have true saving faith.

**Our Baptist friends wrongly assert that profession of faith must in ALL cases precede water baptism because of passages like Mark 16:16 and Acts 2:38.**

It is true based upon passages like Mark 16:16 and Acts 2:38 ("he that believes and is baptized shall be saved" and "repent ye and be baptized") that all who profess faith in Christ should be baptized. But it is wrong to deduce from that proposition that in ALL cases baptism should be administered only to those who have already made profession of faith.

There are at least 5 reasons the Baptist conclusion is wrong. First, it involves a logical fallacy. For example, we cannot logically deduce from the proposition that "adults go to bed at night" that "NO children go to bed at night." So we cannot rightly deduce from passages like that "those who profess faith should be baptized" that "NO ONE can ever be baptized who has not professed faith." Second, it is contradicted by the example of Abraham and his descendants. Abraham was circumcised as a sign of the faith he had already professed (Romans 4:11), yet this SAME sign was also administered to infant children who had not already professed faith. Third, it is contradicted by the instances of New Testament household baptisms (I Corinthians 1:16, Acts 16:15, Acts 16:33). Fourth, it contradicts the Biblical principle of covenant headship whereby the members of the covenantal unit are set apart by God (albeit not necessarily saved) when the covenantal head is set apart (I Corinthians 7:14). Finally, it flies in the face of divine preparatory lessons regarding baptism. In order to teach and prepare the New Testament church for the sacrament of baptism, God chose the baptism of Israel in their crossing of the Red Sea (I Corinthians 10:2). This baptism included not only the adult Israelites who had faith to cross the Red Sea, but it also included their children and infants. This instance alone is enough to de-bunk the myth that there is no explicit incident of infant baptism in scripture.

**Our Baptist friends wrongly assert that God has used believers' baptism as his instrument to make a more holy people in the New Covenant administration.**

Baptists use passages like Hebrews 8:8-10 ("the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant...I will put my laws into their mind, and on their heart also will I write them...all shall know me...") to make this assertion. Baptists are right that Hebrews 8:8-10 is pointing to a change that has occurred from the Old Covenant economy to the New Covenant economy. But the problem for the Baptist assertion is that there is nothing in the verse that implies that believers' baptism is a means by which God brings this change about. What is suggested in Hebrews 8:8-10 as the factor leading to the change? It is the fact that God will write his law into their hearts. I Corinthians 3:3 suggests a similar idea, when it speaks of "the Spirit of the living God" writing his law on the "tables that are hearts of flesh." This would seem to point to the post-Pentecostal out

pouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2). Of course, the fullness of the New Covenant promise will not be realized until the New Heavens and New Earth, for there will always be tares among the wheat until the Day of Judgment. But the greater gift of the Holy Spirit is a seal and down payment of that complete fulfillment to come (Ephesians 1:13-14). The point is, there is nothing to suggest that passages like Hebrews 8:8-10 are proof of the Baptist position.

## **PAIDOCOMMUNION: ANTI-BIBLICAL AND ANTI-CONFESSIONAL by Dr. Francis Nigel Lee**

Let me state why I, with John Calvin, oppose paidocommunion. But first, to note age thresholds, it would be helpful if the reader would study the following passages preferably in the original Hebrew or Greek: Gen. 2:17-24; 14:13-24; 17:23-27; 22:2-19; Ex. 12:3-4, 8-11, 26-27,37, 43-48; Num. 9:2-13; Prov. 22:6; Lam. 2:12; 4:4; Luke 2:40-52; 22:1-20; John 6:2-4,10,53; Acts 22:3; I Cor. 5:7-13f; 10:1-22; 11:1-10,20-34; 13:11; 14:20-37; Phil. 3:5; I Tim. 2:8-15; 6:12f; Heb. 5:12 to 6:2; I John 2:12f; and Rev. 2:20f.

I oppose all attempts to reconstruct the clearly antipaidocommunionistic teaching of our Westminster Confession 28:1 & 29:3,8 & 31:4 and our Westminster Larger Catechism QQ. 169-177. True Presbyterians and other men of like persuasion respect Calvin's views in his Commentaries on Ex. 12:24-43; Lam. 2:12; John 6:53 & Heb. 6:2; in his Sermons on Deuteronomy 16:1-8 cf. vv. 16f; and his Institutes IV:13:6 & IV:16:30 & IV:19:4f.

In summary:

- 1, infant baptism signifies regeneration (but not conversion);
- 2, one's first communion at teenage signifies conversion (not regeneration);
- 3, Eucharist replaces the Passover (but not circumcision);
- 4, the 1st-century B.C. Hebrew Essenes (and even the Pharisees), like the Karaites till today, restricted their Passovers to their (post-)adolescent males after prior catechization terminating in their Bar Mitzvah not before age 13 (cf. Prov. 22:6's chanoch with Luke 2:40-47 and 22:1-20);
- 5, no females nor any pre-teenagers ever partook of the Passover till it was thus deformed by Post-Christian Liberal Judaism (+/- 200 A.D.);
- 6, there is absolutely no trace whatsoever of paidocommunionism in patristic writings but only in pagan sources prior to 250 A.D.;
- 7, novel paidocommunionism is a ritualistic heterodoxy of the "Eastern Orthodox" and kindred denominations quite opposed to truly-orthodox Reformed Theology;
- 8, the practice of paidocommunionism abolishes the need first of catechization and then of profession of one's faith before one's own very first manducation at the sacrament;
- 9, paidocommunionism ultimately leads to an uncatechized Church (which Calvin says cannot long continue without catechizing); and
- 10, Calvin in his Institutes (IV:16:30) accordingly concludes against the Anabaptists: "They object that there is not greater reason for admitting infants to Baptism than to the Lord's Supper to which, however, there are never admitted.... The Supper is intended for those of riper years, who, having passed...infancy, are fit to bear solid food.... They cannot partake worthily without being able duly to discern the sanctity of the Lord's body. Why should we stretch out poison instead of vivifying food to our young children? ... Circumcision, which as is well known corresponds to our Baptism, was intended for infants. But the Passover for which the Supper is substituted...was duly eaten only by those who were of an age sufficient to ask the meaning of it (Exod. 12:26). Had these men the least particle of soundness in their brain, would they thus be blind as to a matter so very clear and obvious?"



***SECTION FIVE :***

***PRESBYTERIANISM AND  
BIBLICAL CHURCH  
GOVERNMENT***

## WHAT IS HISTORIC PRESBYTERIANISM?

Many people today are familiar with modern varieties of Presbyterianism but are unacquainted with historic Presbyterianism. Modern Presbyterianism has rejected many aspects of historic Presbyterianism. In fact, some modern Presbyterians have even rejected the inerrancy and sufficiency of scripture, which stood at the very heart of historic Presbyterianism. It is important, therefore, that historic Presbyterianism be more fully explained.

### **Its History**

During the Protestant Reformation there were great efforts to restore Christianity to its apostolic roots. There had developed since the first centuries of Christianity many practices and doctrines which were contrary to Biblical principles and practices. Two central tenets of the reformation were that salvation is totally of God's free grace and that our doctrines and worship should be defined by scripture alone and not man's invention. This Christian perspective came to be called 'reformed', and some of its leading advocates were men like John Calvin, William Farel, Thomas Cartwright, and John Knox. The reformed faith found expression in many countries at the time. In the British Isles it found its fullest expression in what became known as 'Presbyterianism.' Thomas Cartwright and others proclaimed its message in England, and John Knox and others proclaimed its message in Scotland. So potent was its force that historic Presbyterianism became the established religion of Scotland. The whole of the United Kingdom subsequently covenanted with God to establish and maintain historic Presbyterianism throughout its realm (which at that time included the English colonies of North America), in the so called Solemn League and Covenant of 1643. The Westminster Standards, outlining the Biblical doctrines of historic Presbyterianism, were prepared to summarize the religious faith of a covenanted United Kingdom. However, opposition to the full implementation of historic Presbyterianism resulted in the "killing times" in which many historic Presbyterians were persecuted and killed. Once the "killing times" ceased, Presbyterianism was established as the official religion of Scotland, but a compromised form of the reformed faith was established in England. Since then, there has been a steady erosion of reformed principles in the United Kingdom as well as in the United States. Most of those who call themselves 'Presbyterians' really deny historic Presbyterianism as it was embodied in the Westminster Standards.

### **Its Principles**

Historic Presbyterianism shares with general evangelical Christianity many important doctrines like "scripture alone" and "faith alone". It proclaims the necessity of being born again to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, in various respects historic Presbyterianism is distinct from evangelicalism in its most common forms today. These distinctions include adherence to the following principles:

- The 'doctrines of grace'- Man by nature is enslaved to sin and depraved in his mind and will. Given this condition, man can only be saved by God's gracious act of applying Christ's righteousness to his account and converting his mind and will. Salvation is thus fully an act of God's free grace directed towards those whom he has chosen to save.

- The organic unity of all scripture- There has always been one basic method of salvation and one church of God saved through God's gracious covenant of grace. This covenant has progressively unfolded in history as revealed in scripture.
- Presbyterian church government (as contrasted with local church autonomy and prelacy)- The local churches of Christ are to be bound together in a visible unity of church courts (or assemblies) consisting of local church elders. Local churches are not to be independent of one another nor bound together under a hierarchical structure of prelates.
- The abiding principle of covenant headship- The principle of covenant headship- exemplified by Joshua when he said, 'as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord'- has never been rescinded. Rather, Christian parents have always been required to place God's covenant sign on the children under their authority and rear them in the fear of God.
- Biblical worship without human invention- Christians are to worship God as he has commanded in scripture, without addition of rites and elements invented by man and not found in his word (often called the 'regulative principle of worship').
- God's complete sovereignty- God has decreed all that comes to pass in time. This is often called predestination.
- The Ten Commandments as God's abiding moral law- Christians are to obey these commandments in gratitude for God's salvation. Even the fourth commandment is regarded as having continuing validity in the Lord's Day, which is the Christian's Sabbath.
- The duty of covenanted Christian nations- It is the duty of all peoples and nations to be professedly Christian nations, where rule is in accordance with Christ's laws, and Christ is recognized as Lord and Savior.
- Optimism about the future- God will build his church throughout the world and establish covenanted Christian nations before Christ's Second Coming.

### **An Invitation to Re-Consider Its Principles**

Although historic Presbyterianism witnessed years of decline, in recent decades there has been renewed interest and consideration of its principles. The books and tracts of its historical advocates have been read with renewed interest. The weaknesses and deficiencies of modern Christianity and culture have become ever more apparent, and the strengths of the historic Presbyterian vision and its insights into the Bible have become more valued. More churches have formed holding to its principles. We would invite you as well to consider historic Presbyterianism and investigate it with a Berean spirit. There is no better place to start than by reading the Westminster Standards themselves.

## **REFORMING ELDER SELECTION: GOD'S MEANS TO REFORMATION**

In presbyterian church government (which is to say Biblical church government) rule is by elders and courts of elders. It naturally follows that the quality of elders will in large measure determine whether Christian churches will experience spiritual reformation or declension. For this reason eldership selection can correctly be called the hinge in the reformation or declension of churches.

God has provided in his word both the methodology and the criteria for selecting elders. In terms of overall methodology, the format consists of a session (or presbytery in certain cases) selecting men who are then ratified by a particular congregation. In terms of overall criteria, the requirements of office can be summarized from passages like I Timothy 3 and Titus 1:5-9 as follows:

1. Desire for Christ, the church, and the office
2. Character (e.g., temperate, sensible, hospitable, etc.)
3. Aptitude (thorough knowledge of the scriptures and the reformed confessions and the ability to communicate and apply that knowledge)

These criteria are pertinent to the selection of the ruling as well as teaching elders. And from these criteria can be derived the appropriate measures to insure the criteria are met in the men selected for office.

The measures to insure that the criteria are satisfied should be sufficient to permit the session (or presbytery) to select and the congregation to ratify in good conscience. Clearly, just throwing a list of names for a perfunctory, multiple-choice "popularity contest" vote of the congregation is inadequate measure for informed selection and ratification. Rather, a thorough review process is called for. Such a review process must begin with well-informed voters. Those who are selecting and ratifying must know the criteria God has provided. They should not think they may vote based upon their own devised criteria. The session and congregation as a whole can be informed through the preaching and teaching on such texts as I Timothy 3 before selection and voting occurs.

Assuming well-informed voters, a variety of measures should be employed to insure God's commanded criteria for selection. To assess desire, questions should be directed to the man regarding his desires and motives for seeking office. To assess character, thorough reference checking should occur. This reference checking should include his wife, his work associates and his neighbors. It should include those inside and outside the church. The reference checking should have specifically in mind the character traits demanded by God in his word of the elders. To assess aptitude, he should be asked to answer questions in order to determine whether he knows the scriptures and reformed confessions he would be vowing to uphold and defend. He should be asked questions to assess whether he can refute gainsayers, defend and explain the distinctive doctrines of the church, and knowledgeably make decisions and speak at meetings

of session, presbytery and synod. He should be asked questions to ascertain his ability to provide Biblical counsel in the realm of pastoral visitation and shepherding the flock. Most importantly, the entire review process should be bathed in prayer, as it is God who gives gifts to His church.

God uses means to accomplish his ends, and a Biblical selection process for elders is certainly one important means for the reformation of his church for the glory of Christ.

## NO CHOICE BUT FULL SUBSCRIPTION

### Not A Choice

In vain does a Christian church suggest that it does not require full subscription of its officers and even its members to some confession or confessions. Every church requires that its officers and members agree to certain propositions and abide by certain rules of behavior. Is there any church where it is deemed acceptable to believe that one should murder the other members of the church? And is there any church which would tolerate if a member mauled and stole from its fellow members? Among the more conservative presbyterian churches in our land, is there any church which tolerates members to disbelieve in the existence of God, the Trinity, and the afterlife? So there are obviously some propositions and certain rules of behavior which each Christian church requires absolutely of their members to subscribe and adhere to, though the set of propositions and rules of behavior (i.e., its confessional standards) clearly differ from church to church.

### But A Choice

While there is no choice regarding whether a church requires full (or absolute with no exceptions) subscription to a confessional standard, there is a choice regarding the form that confession takes. Many churches leave their confessional standards largely unwritten. They may leave the written part of their confession confined to a few propositions like "no creed but the Bible", to which they add many unwritten, absolute requirements of officers and members like profession of faith in Jesus Christ, no drinking of alcohol, etc.

Most of the more conservative presbyterian churches in our land (OPC, ARP, RPCNA, etc.) employ a more subtle maneuver. Although they have an extensive written confession, this written confession is not the confession to which they effectively require officers and members to pledge and implement full subscription. There are a variety of propositions in these written confessions to which they allow officers and members to take exceptions. The specific exceptions allowed vary from denomination-to-denomination and even in time within a denomination. It can be the 6-day creation issue, the Sabbath issue, etc. But these presbyterian denominations in reality have an unwritten "confession within a confession" to which they require full subscription, typically on issues like the Trinity, the virgin birth of Christ, etc. Some fundamental flaws of this system of subscription include:

- The unwritten confession to which absolute subscription is effectively required can change over time without going through the scrutiny and examination that changing a written confession would.
- Because it is unwritten and can easily vary over time, the members do not know precisely what the confession of their full subscription is.
- Judicial decisions can more readily be subject to caprice and politics, since the real rules and doctrines of absolute governance are not clearly set forth.

This all results in a certain degree of lawlessness and independent spirit, which it would seem is exactly what many officers and members like. But it is hardly what God calls his visible church to embrace. Rather, the visible church is to embrace "one faith" clearly set forth. And the visible church is to be unified in mind in the Biblical doctrines and practices. An unwritten "confession within a confession" is diametrically opposed to Biblical, Presbyterian church government, but is instead consistent with un-Biblical, independent church government. It sets up a facade of written confessionalism, while the reality is different.

The proper method of subscription is that practiced by our presbyterian fore-fathers in the Church of Scotland. As J. Ligon Duncan successfully demonstrates in his article in "Premise" magazine entitled "Owning the Confession: Subscription in the Scottish Presbyterian Tradition", subscription to the written confession was marked by adherence without exception. Such subscription is a manifestation of walking in unity. And such subscription allows the elders of the church to faithfully keep their pledge to defend the church's confession. This choice meets the requirements of a sound, Biblical subscription.

### **Your Choice**

It should be apparent to all that every church will fully subscribe to some confession. The only question is whether the manner in which this occurs complies with the principles of scripture. Christians should not settle for a denomination which employs a method of subscription contrary to scriptural principles. Which will you choose?

## WHAT IS YOUR \*BOTTOM LINE\*?

Scripture differentiates those errors which are not excommunicable from those errors which are excommunicable. And it distinguishes those truths which all Christians ought to agree upon versus those which are not so essential that a failure to assent will cause harm to the sum of religion. The Apostle Paul speaks of those errors which are not excommunicable in terms of bearing with our weaker brethren who have fallen into various errors. As Calvin writes in his Institutes: "we have...shown that the errors which ought to be pardoned are those which do not harm the chief doctrine of religion, which do not destroy the articles of religion on which all believers ought to agree; and with regard to the sacraments, those which do not abolish or throw down the lawful institution of the Author." That which "all believers" ought to agree upon encompasses the truths all believers throughout Christian history should assent to, so that the "chief doctrine of religion" is a fixed standard throughout all this history. The visible church here on earth before Christ's return will never come to 100% agreement on 100% of the issues. As Calvin notes, "since all men are somewhat beclouded with ignorance, either we must leave no church remaining, or we must condone delusion in those matters which can go unknown without harm to the sum of religion and without loss of salvation." Christians in history who have a wrong-headed perfectionist vision of the church have unnecessarily caused schism within Christ's visible church in their efforts to move closer to perfection. It is one thing to preach and teach against such error and to exhort our fellow brethren, but it is another thing altogether to break communion and visible unity over issues which are not excommunicable and for which there is not scriptural warrant to separate. It is one thing to strive for perfection, but it is another thing altogether to divide Christ's visible church because it is not achieved or because it is not achieved as nearly as we personally might like. Calvin wisely remarked: "how dangerous-nay, how deadly- a temptation is it, when one is prompted to withdraw from that congregation wherein are seen the signs and tokens with which the Lord thought his church sufficiently marked?"

But although there are indeed issues over which Christians must allow difference without breaking communion, there are errors which are excommunicable and corresponding truths which cannot be compromised without separation. These truths are the bottom line below which the visible church cannot go. With regards to these issues, a person or group of persons or even a whole church or denomination which has unrepentantly embraced the error must be, so to speak, excommunicated. Such a separation from communion is meant to work repentance in those Christians so excommunicated. But regrettably, those whose beliefs or actions take them below the bottom line will have caused schism within Christ's body.

Let's consider six sample bottom line issues from scripture. First, in I Corinthians 5 we have the issue of which marriages are lawful in the sight of God. That man who violated the scriptural principles in his marrying was to be excommunicated until he repented, just as such were to be cut off from the Israelite covenant community (Leviticus 20). Second, we have the issue of refusal of a parent to have his child receive the sign of the covenant. It is required that all in the covenant community- including children- have this sign, lest they be cut off from the community (Genesis 17, Joshua 5). Third, we have the issue of recognizing the right and duty of the civil magistrate to enforce the Ten Commandments and covenanted reformation in his realm. For instance, all those in the covenant community under Nehemiah's leadership were required to acknowledge this (Nehemiah 10:28). They had to acknowledge that it was good when



Nehemiah took actions such as punishing the Sabbath desecrators. Fourth, we have the issue of justification through faith alone in the book of Galatians in opposition to the Judaistic heresy. Those who unrepentantly taught or embraced this were to be cut off from the covenant community (Galatians 1-3.) Fifth, we have the issue of those who would invent worship rites and impose them upon the church. According to Matthew 15:9 and Colossians 2:23 this will worship is not to be countenanced. Sixth, we have the issue of those who would not respect Presbyterian government and decisions. II Chronicles 19:8 and Acts 15 imply it was required that all the people, churches, and synagogues had to respect the decision of the synod of elders. It was a "necessary thing" to follow the decision of the synod in order to remain in communion (Acts 15:28).

It was the goal of our reformation fore-fathers to lay out what they believed scripture taught were the bottom line issues in their confessions such as the Westminster Standards, the Three Forms of Unity and the Helvetic Confession. To use Calvin's terminology, they were seeking to formulate "the chief doctrine of religion" and "the articles of religion on which all believers ought to agree." Believing that agreement on these bottom line issues spelled out in the Westminster Standards was necessary for visible church unity and God-honoring civil government in the United Kingdom, from which the United States came, the Solemn League and Covenant was adopted in the 17th century. As Christians in America today we need to ask ourselves: what is the bottom line for us? Did the original Westminster Standards get it right with what it defines as the bottom line issues and doctrines? I think so.

Our goal in America today (and the world tomorrow!) should be the formation of one visibly united church of all local churches which embrace the doctrines and principles of the original Westminster Standards. This visibly united church is the rightful established reformed church of the United States. Is that your bottom line as well?

## **THE DYING MAN'S TESTAMENT TO THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND: THE SCANDAL OF DIVISION AMONG THE GODLY** By James Durham

At a time when a Church lies under rents and divisions it is more difficult to speak particularly of what indeed is duty. For though the general be granted yet often it is difficult singly to follow the same...

By way of precept there is an absolute necessity of uniting laid upon the Church, so that it falleth not under debate as a principle, whether a Church should continue divided or united, more than it falleth under debate, whether there should be preaching, praying, keeping of the Sabbath, or any other commanded duty; seeing that union is both commanded as a duty, and commended, as eminently tending to the edification of the Church, and therefore is so frequently joined with edification. Nor is it to be asked by a Church, what is to be done for the Church's good, in a divided way, thereby supposing a dispensation, as it were, to be given to division, and a forbearing of the use of means for the attaining thereof; or rather supposing a stating or fixing of division, and yet notwithstanding thereof, thinking to carry on edification? It is true, where union cannot be attained amongst orthodox ministers that agree in all main things (for, of such only we speak), ministers are to make the best use of the opportunities they have, and during that to seek the edification of the Church. Yet, that men should by agreement state a division in the Church, or dispense therewith, and prefer the continuing of division, as fitter for edification than union, we suppose is altogether unwarrantable.

1. Because that is not the Lord's ordinance, and therefore cannot be gone about in faith, nor in it can the blessing be expected, which the Lord doth command to those that are in unity (Psalm 133).
2. Because Christ's Church is but one Body, and this were deliberately to alter the nature thereof: and although those who deny this truth, may admit of division; yea, they cannot have union, that is proper Church union, which is union in government, sacraments, and other ordinances, because union or communion in these, doth result from this principle; yet it is impossible for those that maintain that principle of the unity of the catholic visible Church, to own a divided way of administrating government or other ordinances, but it will infer either that one party hath no interest in the Church, or that one Church may be many; and so, that the unity thereof in its visible state is to no purpose...

As union is ever a duty, so, we conceive, if men interested will do their duty, there can be no division amongst orthodox divines or ministers, but it is possible also to compose it, and union is a thing attainable. For,

1. We are not speaking of composing divisions that are stated upon the fundamental things;
2. Nor, are we speaking of removing all differences, as if all men were to be one in judgment in every point of truth; there may be difference where there is no division, as hath been said.
3. Nor, when we speak of men doing their duty, do we mean a full up-coming of everything in knowledge and practice, and that in a sanctified manner, though that ought to be endeavored; but it

looketh principally to the doing of duty in reference to this particular (if it may be called so) of attaining union, a great part whereof consist in outward obvious things...

In endeavoring union and healing, men would not straiten it to a universal union in everything, in judgment and practice, but would resolve to have it with many things defective that need forbearance in persons that are united, which we may take up in these particulars.

1. There may be difference of judgment in many things, I mean in such things that are consistent with the foundation, and edification; and such forbearance would be resolved upon, and to do otherwise were to think that either men had no reason at all or that their understandings were perfect, or at least of equal reach.

2. There may be dissatisfaction with many persons, whether officers or members, and to defer Church union thereupon, is to expect the barn-floor shall be without chaff, and to frustrate the many commands whereby this duty is pressed; for so this command should be obligatory to no Church, but that that is triumphant; yet certainly the Lord Jesus gave this command to His disciples when Judas was amongst them; and Paul gave it and practiced it, when some preached out of envy (Phil. 1)...

An orthodox Church divided in itself in some circumstantial truths (to speak so) or contrary practices and actings, when still agreeing in the fundamentals of doctrine, worship, discipline and government, and having mutual esteem of the integrity one of another, what, I say, such are called to do for the healing of that breach? In reference to which, these things, or this method would be followed:

1. All, especially ministers, would walk under the impression of the dreadful and terrible of such a plague...
2. Men would also look upon it as a snare...
3. Ministers and others would soberly retire to take a view of their own spiritual condition, and see if they have kept their own vineyard...
4. When that is done, there would be repentance suitable to what is found, and extraordinary humiliation and secret prayer to God, not only for themselves and for their own particular condition, but for the public, and particularly for healing of that breach, and that thereby God would spare His people, and not suffer his inheritance to be a reproach...
5. Men would not persist in this, but as they have interest, and are led by their places, they would endeavor soberly, warily, and seriously, by speaking, writing, obtesting, and otherwise, to commend union...

***SECTION SIX :***  
***CHRISTIAN CIVIL GOVERNMENT***

## **ENFORCING BOTH TABLES OF THE LAW: ITS DEFENSE BY AUGUSTINE AND CALVIN**

Arguably the two greatest theologians in church history, Augustine and Calvin, upheld the scriptural principle that it is the duty of the government to enforce the commandments addressing man's duty to God as well as man's duty to man found in the Ten Commandments.

### **Augustine's Defense**

CHAP. 5.--19. But as to the argument of those men who are unwilling that their impious deeds should be checked by the enactment of righteous laws, when they say that the apostles never sought such measures from the kings of the earth, they do not consider the different character of that age, and that everything comes in its own season. For what emperor had as yet believed in Christ, so as to serve Him in the cause of piety by enacting laws against impiety, when as yet the declaration of the prophet was only in the course of its fulfillment, "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and their rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His Anointed;" and there was as yet no sign of that which is spoken a little later in the same psalm: "Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling."

(1) How then are kings to serve the Lord with fear, except by preventing and chastising with religious severity all those acts which are done in opposition to the commandments of the Lord? For a man serves God in one way in that he is man, in another way in that he is also king. In that he is man, he serves Him by living faithfully; but in that he is also king, he serves Him by enforcing with suitable rigor such laws as ordain what is righteous, and punish what is the reverse. Even as Hezekiah served Him, by destroying the groves and the temples of the idols, and the high places which had been built in violation of the commandments of God;(2) or even as Josiah served Him, by doing the same things in his turn;(3) or as the king of the Ninevites served Him, by compelling all the men of his city to make satisfaction to the Lord;(4) or as Darius served Him, by giving the idol into the power of Daniel to be broken, and by casting his enemies into the den of lions;(5) or as Nebuchadnezzar served Him, of whom I have spoken before, by issuing a terrible law to prevent any of his subjects from blaspheming God.(6) In this way, therefore, kings can serve the Lord, even in so far as they are kings, when they do in His service what they could not do were they not kings. 20. Seeing, then, that the kings of the earth were not yet serving the Lord in the time of the apostles, but were still imagining vain things against the Lord and against His Anointed, that all might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, it must be granted that at that time acts of impiety could not possibly be prevented by the laws, but were rather performed under their sanction. For the order of events was then so rolling on, that even the Jews were killing those who preached Christ, thinking that they did God service in so doing, just as Christ had foretold,(7) and the heathen were raging against the Christians, and the patience of the martyrs was overcoming them all. But so soon as the fulfillment began of what is written in a later psalm, "All kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him,"(8) what sober-minded man could say to the kings, "Let not any thought trouble you within your kingdom as to who restrains or attacks the Church of your Lord; deem it not a matter in which you should be concerned, which of your subjects may choose to be religious or sacrilegious," seeing that you

cannot say to them, "Deem it no concern of yours which of your subjects may choose to be chaste, or which unchaste?" For why, when free-will is given by God to man, should adulteries be punished by the laws, and sacrilege allowed? Is it a lighter matter that a soul should not keep faith with God, than that a woman should be faithless to her husband? Or if those faults which are committed not in contempt but in ignorance of religious truth are to be visited with lighter punishment, are they therefore to be neglected altogether? - From Aurelius Augustine's A Treatise Concerning The Correction Of The Donatist; Or Epistle CLXXXV A Letter Of Augustine To Boniface.

## Calvin's Defense

The duty of magistrates, its nature, as described by the word of God, and the things in which it consists, ... extends to both tables of the law, did Scripture not teach, we might learn from profane writers; for no man has discoursed of the duty of magistrates, the enacting of laws, and the common weal, without beginning with religion and divine worship. Thus all have confessed that no polity can be successfully established unless piety be its first care, and that those laws are absurd which disregard the rights of God, and consult only for men. Seeing then that among philosophers religion holds the first place, and that the same thing has always been observed with the universal consent of nations, Christian princes and magistrates may be ashamed of their heartlessness if they make it not their care. We have already shown that this office is specially assigned them by God, and indeed it is right that they exert themselves in asserting and defending the honor of him whose vicegerents they are, and by whose favor they rule. Hence in Scripture holy kings are especially praised for restoring the worship of God when corrupted or overthrown, or for taking care that religion flourished under them in purity and safety. On the other hand, the

sacred history sets down anarchy among the vices, when it states that there was no king in Israel, and, therefore, every one did as he pleased (Judges 21:25). This rebukes the folly of those who would neglect the care of divine things, and devote themselves merely to the administration of justice among men; as if God had appointed rulers in his own name to decide earthly controversies, and omitted what was of far greater moment, his own pure worship as prescribed by his law. Such views are adopted by turbulent men, who, in their eagerness to make all kinds of innovations with impunity, would fain get rid of all the vindicators of violated piety. In regard to the second table of the law, Jeremiah addresses rulers, "Thus says the Lord, Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood" (Jer. 22:3)...

In here explaining the duties of magistrates, my exposition is intended not so much for the instruction of magistrates themselves, as to teach others why there are magistrates, and to what end they have been appointed by God. We say, therefore, that they are the ordained guardians and vindicators of public innocence, modesty, honor, and tranquility, so that it should be their only study to provide for the common peace and safety. Of these things David declares that he will set an example when he shall have ascended the throne. "A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person. Whoso privily slanders his neighbor, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer. Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walks in a perfect way, he shall serve me" (Psalm 101:4ñ6). But as rulers cannot do this unless they protect the

good against the injuries of the bad, and give aid and protection to the oppressed, they are armed with power to curb manifest evil-doers and criminals, by whose misconduct the public tranquility is disturbed or harassed. For we have full experience of the truth of Solon's saying, that all public matters depend on reward and punishment; that where these are wanting, the whole discipline of states totters and falls to pieces. For in the minds of many the love of equity and justice grows cold, if due honor be not paid to virtue, and the licentiousness of the wicked cannot be restrained, without strict discipline and the infliction of punishment. The two things are comprehended by the prophet when he enjoins kings and other rulers to execute "judgment and righteousness" (Jer. 21:12; 22:3). It is righteousness (justice) to take charge of the innocent, to defend and avenge them, and set them free: it is judgment to withstand the audacity of the wicked, to repress their violence, and punish their faults. - From Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion Book IV.

## CHRISTIAN NATIONS

One condition of peaceful residence in almost any nation is a willingness to respect and submit to the authority of the human magistrate and government. If this magistrate makes a law, the people are expected to obey it, or face the legal consequences and punishments. So it is strange indeed that so many today have a controversy with the requirement to submit to the divine magistrate, the God of the Bible, who has a claim over every nation and people. If people are willing to submit to mere men- who are far more capricious and far less just than Christ- why do they think it so strange that they must as residents of a country submit to the Sovereign of the Universe?

The moral standard by which Christ rules nations (just as it is the moral standard by which He rules churches) through civil magistrates is His Ten Commandments. The civil magistrate must enforce these Ten Commandments, for he has been charged with the duty and power to punish evil doers (Romans 13:4). He is a servant of God for the task of punishing evil, which is defined as a violation of the moral law summarized in the Ten Commandments (Romans 13:9). The first of these Commandments teach that man should have no other god than the God of the Bible (which is Christ). It is the duty of the civil magistrate to see that at least outwardly every citizen in his realm respects the authority of Christ. Not only this, each has a duty not to set up heathen idols, desecrate the Sabbath, commit murder, etc. Violations of any of these standards should be discouraged or suppressed by the civil magistrate.

This power of the civil magistrate does not necessitate that the State rules the Church or the Church rules the State, any more than it would be correct to say that the current executive branch of federal government rules over the judicial branch or the judicial branch rules over the executive branch. Each branch is separate and distinct, with its own given powers. The judicial branch explains and interprets the law, whereas the executive branch executes the law. The judicial branch hears cases; the executive branch supervises the armed forces. So the Church has powers such as preaching and explaining the Bible, administration of the sacraments, and excommunication; and the State has powers such executing corporal and capital punishment for crimes and supervising the police and military. Neither should assume the powers of the other, but ideally each should work together to promote righteousness as it is defined in the Ten Commandments.

An illustration will perhaps help show the rationale for Christian nations. Suppose a resident of a nation decided that he did not want to throw away his household garbage in an orderly manner. He did not want to place it in the trash can to be picked up by the waste management services. Instead, he decided to throw this garbage in the middle of the street. If the civil magistrate did not suppress such behavior then others as well would quite likely be emboldened to dump their garbage in the middle of the street. Soon such garbage would pose a serious health and safety risk for the community. So it is with moral garbage that is not discouraged and suppressed. If a citizen is allowed to desecrate the Sabbath, then over time others will be emboldened to do the same. Over time huge crowds will desecrate the Sabbath by engaging in spectator sports on Sunday. And what is true of the Sabbath is true of the other Commandments.



The myth which has caused so many to reject the idea of Christian nations is the notion that there can somehow be a neutral nation and civil magistrate. But this notion is a myth indeed. Every nation must be governed according to certain principles and standards. If those principles are not the Ten Commandments, then they will be the principles of some other world view- whether Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, secular humanism, deism, etc. There simply is no neutrality. Laws must be enforced (lest there be anarchy), and those laws must be derived from some over-arching world view.

One objection to Christian nations is the argument that to impose Christianity upon people is cruel and inhumane. This objection must be rejected because God himself will cause every knee to bow to Christ. Unless we are prepared to charge God with sin, then we must realize it is not cruel. Indeed, it is not only not cruel, it is merciful to impose Christ's law, for it is a law of liberty (James 2:12).

Another objection to Christian nations is the argument that the Covenant of Grace is not with all people in a given territory. It is indeed the case that in its spiritual essence God's covenant of grace is only with His elect. But in terms of its visible administration it comprises all who outwardly name the name of Christ and are outwardly under the authority of Christ's Ten Commandments.

Blessed indeed is the nation whose God is the Lord!

## A CHARGE FOR CHRISTIAN COUNCILS OF JUDGMENT

### I Corinthians 6:1-8

"Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things pertaining to this life? If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. I speak to your shame. Is it that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you..."

### John Calvin's Commentary on this Scripture

"If any one has a controversy with a brother, it ought to be decided before godly judges, and that it ought not to be before those that are ungodly... But here it may be objected: "As it belongs to the office of the magistrate, and as it is peculiarly his province to administer justice to all, and to decide upon matters in dispute, why should not even unbelievers, who are in the office of magistrate, have this authority, and, if they have it, why are we prevented from maintaining our rights before their tribunals?" I answer, that Paul does not here condemn those who from necessity have a cause before unbelieving judges, as when a person is summoned to a court; but those who, of their own accord, bring their brethren into this situation, and harass them, as it were, through means of unbelievers, while it is in their power to employ another remedy. It is wrong, therefore, to institute of one's own accord a law-suit against brethren before unbelieving judges. If, on the other hand, you are summoned to a court, there is no harm in appearing there and maintaining your cause... Here we have an argument from the less to the greater; for Paul, being desirous to show that injury is done to the Church of God when judgments on matters of dispute connected with earthly things are carried before unbelievers, as if there were no one in the society of the godly that was qualified to judge, reasons in this strain: "Since God has reckoned the saints worthy of such honor, as to have appointed them to be judges of the whole world, it is unreasonable that they should be shut out from judging as to small matters, as persons not qualified for it." Hence it follows, that the Corinthians inflict injury upon themselves, in resigning into the hands of unbelievers the honor that has been conferred upon them by God... What he finds fault with in the Corinthians is simply this, that they carry their disputes before unbelieving judges, as if they had none in the Church that were qualified to pass judgment, and farther, he shows how much superior is the judgment that God has assigned to his believing people... As, then, we do not detract in any degree from the authority of the magistrate by having recourse to arbitration, it is not without good reason that the Apostle enjoins it upon Christians to refrain from resorting to profane, that is, unbelieving judges. And lest they should allege that they were deprived of a better remedy, he directs them to choose out of the Church arbiters, who may settle causes agreeably and equitably. Farther, lest they should allege that they have not a sufficient number of qualified persons, he says that the meanest is competent to discharge this office... I think I have faithfully brought out the Apostle's intention -- that the lowest among believers was preferred by him to unbelievers, as to capacity of judging... it appears [from early Christian literature]

that the bishops were accustomed to sit at certain hours to settle disputes, as if the Apostle had been referring to them here. As, however, matters always become worse, there sprang from this error, in process of time, that jurisdiction which the officials of the bishops assume to themselves in money matters. In that ancient custom there are two things that are deserving of reproof -- that the bishops were involved in matters that were foreign to their office; and that they wronged God in making his authority and command a pretext for turning aside from their proper calling. "

## **The Historical Context**

The Apostle Paul wrote his directives in an historical context in which Jews maintained national and local Sanhedrins for the adjudication of legal and religious questions. Such councils date back at least as far as Moses (Exodus 18:25, Numbers 11:17, Deuteronomy 16:18). The Columbia Encyclopedia describes the Sanhedrins at the time of the Apostle Paul thus: "Sanhedrin, ancient Jewish legal and religious institution in Jerusalem that appears to have exercised the functions of a court between c.63 B.C. and c.A.D. 68. .. Some scholars maintain that there probably were two Sanhedrins-one political and civil, and the Great Sanhedrin, purely religious." Alfred Edersheim describes the local Sanhedrins as follows: Jews "would avail themselves of the opportunity for bringing any case that might require legal decision before the local Sanhedrin". The Encyclopedia Britannica describes them this way: "any of several official Jewish councils in Palestine under Roman rule, to which various political, religious, and judicial functions have been attributed. Taken from the Greek word for council (synedrion), the term was apparently applied to various bodies but became especially the designation for the supreme Jewish legislative and judicial court—the Great Sanhedrin, or simply the Sanhedrin, in Jerusalem. There were also local or provincial sanhedrins of lesser jurisdiction and authority."

## **A Charge to Keep**

God commands Christians to seek Christian judges, and this implies the duty of the Christian community to establish appropriate councils for judgment. Ideally, such Christian judges and rulers handling non-religious questions would be the civil magistrates. As we read in Psalm 2:8-11, "I shall give [thee] the heathen [for] thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth [for] thy possession. .. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear..." It is to our shame that today our civil judges and rulers predominantly consist of unbelievers and heretics who do not base their judgments upon the laws of God. But even in circumstances where God has providentially placed unbelievers or heretics as our civil judges and rulers, Christians are charged with seeking Christian judges to adjudicate their disputes, especially with other professing Christians. As Calvin notes, we should "choose out of the Church arbiters". Such Christian councils of judges prepare the Christian community for the time when God hands the civil magistracy over to us.

## **A Specific Proposal**

In light of our charge to keep, reformed Christians should establish a council of judges for the US and Canada. The requirement for voting for council members or holding council office would be adherence to the reformed, Biblical doctrines summarized in such confessions as the original Westminster Standards and Three Forms of Unity. Both voting and holding office would be limited to male communicant members of churches with such a doctrinal subscription. Such a council would adjudicate non-religious disputes, similar to the manner a Presbyterian synod or presbytery would adjudicate religious disputes. As circumstances permit, it would establish local or regional councils to be the courts of first resort. It would serve as the political wing of the reformed Christian movement, just as the church serves as its ecclesiastical wing. Therefore, it would be inappropriate for ministers to serve on its councils, even though the church synod or presbytery could advise it when appropriate. Council members could choose among themselves a council president (or moderator) and clerk, but all council members would have an equal vote on matters before it.

We can well learn from God's instruction to Ezra during a time when the heathen controlled the civil magistracy of the Persian Empire: "And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that [is] in thine hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that [are] beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know [them] not." (Ezra 7:25)

***SECTION SEVEN :***  
***THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH***

## **THE LORD'S DAY : THE CHRISTIAN'S SABBATH**

### **There is a Lord's Day in the New Covenant**

In the New Covenant there is a Lord's Day (Revelations 1:10), or day dedicated to the worship of the Lord every week, just as there is a Lord's Supper (I Corinthians 11:20), or supper dedicated to the remembrance of the Lord every week. However we understand Paul's statement in Romans 14:5, we must interpret it in light of such passages as Revelations 1:10 and I Corinthians 16:2, in which the Lord's Day is treated special. Scripture does not contradict scripture, and Paul does not contradict Paul. The most reasonable interpretation of passages like Romans 14:5 is that the Apostle Paul is combating Judaizers who were seeking to force all the Jewish ceremonial days upon Christians, as well as the seventh day Sabbath.

### **The Lord's Day is the Christian's Sabbath**

The Lord's Day is what in New Testament Greek is *mia sabbaton* [literally, "first sabbath] (I Corinthians 16:2, Acts 20:7, John 20:1, John 20:19), or first day of the week sabbath. It replaced the seventh day of the week Sabbath of the Old Testament (Colossians 2:16), while retaining its basic substance. There has always been, and always will be, a sabbath for God's people, inasmuch as sabbatizing is an attribute of God (Genesis 2:2), just like love, holiness and justice. In the words of Hebrews 4:9, "there remains therefore a sabbatismos (or Sabbath rest) to the people of God." Jesus Himself assumed there would remain a Sabbath for His people after His ascension (Matthew 24:20 ).

### **The Sabbath Commemorates God's Creations for All Mankind, Not Just the Jews**

Jesus said "the Sabbath was made for man" (Mark 2:27). It should be noticed He did not say it was made just for the Jews. This is because it was inaugurated for the purpose of commemorating an event that benefited all mankind, not just one particular ethnic group: God's Original Creation. God established the Sabbath in Genesis 2:3, and thus it became a Creation Ordinance. Like all Creation Ordinances, the Sabbath Ordinance applies to all mankind, now just the Jews. For example, Jesus assumed the universal and continuing validity of marital union in Matthew 19:4-6, based upon the fact it was an ordinance established at Creation (Mark 10:6). The rationale for Jesus' teaching on divorce should not be denied relating to the issue of the Sabbath.

Just as the seventh day of the week Sabbath commemorated the Original Creation, the first day of the week Sabbath primarily commemorates the New Creation referred to in II Corinthians 5:17. This New Creation was inaugurated by Jesus' resurrection on the first day of the week (Matthew 28:1, Mark 16:2, Luke 24:1, John 20:1), and the gift of the His Spirit on Pentecost Sunday (Acts 2:1). Men from every race, tribe, and tongue that have been saved by the Lord Jesus Christ have great reason to commemorate His work on our behalf.

## **The Sabbath is Commanded in the Ten Commandments, God's Eternal Moral Law**

The Sabbath command is one of the Ten Commandments, God's eternal moral law for all mankind. For the Jews in the first covenant these commands were written on tables of stone, but in the New Covenant they are written on the hearts of believers (Hebrews 8:10, II Corinthians 3:3).

### **The Day of Delight**

Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28), taught extensively on how the sabbath should be kept. It should not be regulated by an array of Pharisaical do's and don'ts not found in the Bible (Luke 6:7-10). Rather it should be dedicated to worship, rest from normal week's labors, and acts of mercy and necessity (Mark 1:21, Matthew 24:20, Matthew 12:12, Matthew 12:1-2). In the words of the prophet Isaiah, "if thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord: and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." (Isaiah 58:13-14)

***SECTION EIGHT :***  
***ESCHATOLOGY***

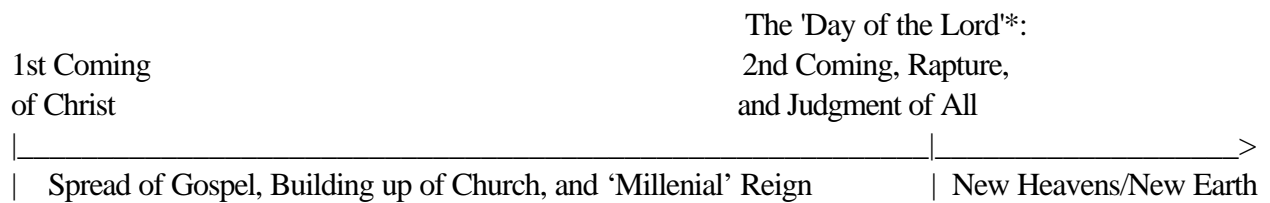


## TWO VIEWS OF HUMAN HISTORY: PRE-MILLENIAL VERSUS POST-MILLENIAL

**The Pre-Millennial View teaches that the Second Coming of Christ and Rapture will be followed by a literal thousand year reign of Christ physically present on earth. At the end of this millennium there will be the Day of Judgment followed by the eternal New Heavens and New Earth:**



**The Post-Millennial View teaches that the Second Coming of Christ, Rapture, and Day of Judgment will all occur on ONE day and as part of one united series of events, not interrupted by 1,000 years. It teaches that the Millennial Kingdom represents the time between the 1st and 2nd Coming when Christ reigns over His church and the gospel spreads over all the earth. The Day of Judgment will be followed by the eternal New Heavens and New Earth:**



\*Sometimes referred to as the 'Day of Judgment'

**Are the 2nd Coming and Day of Judgment separated by 1,000 years? No, they are all treated in scripture as occurring on the same 'Day of the Lord's Appearing'.**

II Thessalonians 1:7-10, I Corinthians 15:23-25,50-54, I Thessalonians 5:1-4,9-10, Matthew 25:31-46

**What is the nature of the Millennial Kingdom- Christ physically present on earth reigning here or in heaven reigning spiritually from the right hand of God the Father? Reigning in heaven with the saints who have died.**

Ephesians 1:20-21, Revelations 20 (it speaks of 'souls' not bodies, which is the condition of Christians when they die but before the Day of Judgment)

**What is the 'first resurrection' and 'second resurrection' spoken of in Revelations? The 'first resurrection' is the new birth (being born again) and the 'second resurrection' is the bodily resurrection which will occur on the 2nd Coming of Christ.**

Ephesians 2:5-6 , I Corinthians 15

***SECTION NINE :***

***THE INERRANCY AND  
SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE***

# IS THERE CONTINUING VERBAL REVELATION FROM GOD?

## Cessation of the Apostolic Office and Its Implication

The word ‘apostle’ literally means ‘one who is sent.’ In its broad sense, apostles in the scripture refer to those men who were sent by God to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to men. More often than not in scripture, however, the word ‘apostle’ is used in a much more restricted sense. In this more restricted sense it refers to a particular office and those who occupied the office. The office of Apostle was quite limited in the extent of those who qualified. Apostles in this more limited sense were the so-called ‘founding fathers’ of the Christian faith (Ephesians 2:20). In other words, their teachings and writings served as the foundational precepts of the Christian faith, just as the founding fathers’ of our country wrote the foundational Constitution of the U.S. Among the qualifications to occupy this office, Apostles had to witness the resurrected Christ ( Acts 1:22), to live during the time of Christ’s ministry on earth (Acts 1:21), and to be divinely appointed for this office (Acts 1:24).

I Corinthians 15:1-11 becomes very crucial when we consider the very strict requirements of Apostolic office. I Corinthians 15:1-11 outlines those who witnessed the resurrected Christ. Since this is one of the unique requirements of Apostolic office, what we are in fact reading in I Corinthians 15 is a list of those who are potentially eligible for the office. This is why in verses 8-9 the Apostle Paul links his witnessing of the resurrected Christ to his apostleship: "...He was seen of me also... for I am the least of the Apostles..." Since witnessing the resurrected Christ is a requisite qualification of apostleship, it is quite significant that in I Corinthians 15:8 the Apostle Paul writes: "And last of all He was seen of me..." If the Apostle Paul was really the last man to witness the resurrected Christ as he testifies, then he is the last man to be eligible for apostleship. Yea, he is the last appointed Apostle in human history! Indeed, this is precisely what the Apostle Paul believed and taught under divine, infallible inspiration.

The implication of the cessation of the Apostolic office, with its concomitant apostolic gifts, is not small. The cessation of the Apostolic office means we cannot assume that because certain offices and gifts existed in the New Testament, they necessarily exist in today’s church life. Often this is the underlying assumption of those advocating continuing revelation (Roman Catholics, Pentecostals, etc.). In order to determine whether there is still divinely-inspired, verbal revelation through Apostles, prophets, tongue-speakers, etc., we must rely on Biblical testimony, not on the false assumption that ‘if it existed in the New Testament, it must exist today.’

## Sola Scriptura

One of the battle cries of the Protestant Reformation was sola scriptura, or scripture alone. The Roman Catholic Church advocated continuing revelation through the pronouncements of certain officials of the Church. However, the Protestants denied such continuing revelation, arguing that the Bible was sufficient and complete. In other words, direct, verbal, and infallible

revelation from God had ceased with completion in New Testament times of the Bible. It is not our purpose here to provide an extensive proof of sola scriptura, but to reveal simply three Biblical passages which indicate its correctness.

Jude 3 testifies to "...contend for the faith which was once (for all) delivered unto the saints." This passage indicates that the Christian faith, or body of divinely-revealed truths, is not being periodically released over human history, but was pronounced during the time of Christ for all time. Hebrews 1:2 and 2:3-4 confirm this testimony. It indicates that the gospel has been revealed through the Son of God, and those who witnessed Him on earth. The implication of the Hebrews passages is simply this: no one can possibly utter revelation greater than the Son of God Himself. Who is needed to add to what He said, both personally and through His Apostles? We must heed the New Testament message because it is the final word to man from God Incarnate. (It should also be noted in Hebrews 1:4 that the purpose of the signs and miracles in the New Testament was to confirm the authority of the Apostolic message.) Finally, in the last book of the Bible, written by probably the last living Apostle at the time, Revelations 22:18 emphasizes the danger of adding to God's word.

We would be wise to heed well one of the closing admonitions of Revelations before we fall into the error of joining those who advocate continuing, divinely-inspired, verbal revelation: "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book..."

## ORAL TRADITION VERSUS SCRIPTURE ALONE

The Protestant battle cry was scripture alone, or sola scriptura. This doctrine implied that we can look to the Bible as our sufficient source to know God's will on how we should religiously serve him. The Bible, it teaches, provides us with our complete religious code of service. Entailed within this doctrine of sola scriptura is the doctrine of the 'regulative principle of worship.' This principle focuses on that religious service we offer to God in worship. The regulative principle states that the Bible dictates how we should worship God- we should neither add nor subtract from its worship principles and elements.

Sola scriptura, however, has competed against the traditions of men, often called oral tradition. Oral tradition offers a whole set of guidelines for religious service and worship on top of scripture, and sometimes even contradicting scripture. It says we should keep a certain day holy, even though we do not find such a command in scripture. It says we should perform some ritual, even though we do not find it in scripture either. It says we must behave in a certain way, even though such is not stated in the Bible. Permitting oral tradition as a source of authority opens the door to adding commandments on top of the Ten Commandments and adding sacraments to the two sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

It is a fundamental principle of scripture itself that our only guidebook and code for religious service and worship to God is the divinely revealed word of God. This is the heart of the Second Commandment, which teaches that it is idolatry to add to or subtract from God's commands for religious service. It prohibits such invention for religious service. It discards with human contrived service like the high places and ritual hand washing. It informs us that God is jealous that no other source of authority supplement or contradict his divinely revealed will. It sets forth the warning against adding to or subtracting from God's word.

Of course, the divinely revealed word of God has been administered in different ways in different ages. In our own age when the Bible is complete and there are no more apostles and prophets adding divine revelation, God's divinely revealed word to us is fully incorporated in scripture. Thus in our age we have the doctrine of sola scriptura. But during the ages when there were prophets and scripture was not yet complete, God's revealed will came in the form of both the prophecies of the divinely ordained prophets, as well as scripture written up to that time. But even in these ages God demanded as we find in the Second Commandment that the only source of authority was his divinely revealed will. This divinely revealed will was quite distinct from oral tradition, because oral tradition did not pass the scriptural test of divine revelation.

There are two ways we may in our age ascertain God's divinely revealed will for religious service and worship: that which is explicitly commanded in scripture and that which is implicitly commanded in scripture. By explicitly commanded we mean that we can read in the Bible the express command. Examples of this would be the command not to take the Lord's name in vain and not to murder. By implicitly commanded we mean that we can deduce the command from scripture based upon the practice we read there. A New Testament example of this is sabbath worship on the first day of the week. We read of multiple instances that the apostolic church worshipped on the first day of the week, this being the changed day of sabbath. We can deduce that Christ, the Apostles, and the New Testament prophets must have expressly commanded this in order for the practice to occur, even if we do not read the explicit

command itself in scripture. (If it occurred otherwise it would be in contradiction to the clear and fundamental principle taught in the Second Commandment of the 'regulative principle of worship'.) An Old Testament example would be the elements of religious worship outside of the Temple worship. God's revealed will for non-Temple worship (in other words, synagogue worship) can be found in such passages as Exodus 24:3, Exodus 34:32, Exodus 35:1 and Nehemiah 9. There we read of the worship elements of scripture reading, expository teaching, prayer, etc. The divine warrant for synagogue worship itself can be found in Leviticus 23:3. This worship of the entire Jewish assembly was non-Temple worship, for Temple worship consisted of the Levites alone, and not the assembly worship of all the Jews.

There is a great gulf of distinction between oral tradition and the commands of God explicitly and implicitly found in scripture. We must reject the 'traditions of men', and we must embrace scripture alone.

"And in vain they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."- Mark 7:7