

# THE BLUE BANNER

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**Adger: A Denial Of Divine Right For Organs In Public Worship** ❀  
**Lewis: Thinking Inside the Box: An Old Perspective on the New Perspective on Paul** ❀ **Bacon: Confessions in Scripture . Part One**

*by Richard Bacon*



In this issue, *The Blue Banner* again takes up the subject of the use of musical instruments in public worship, by republishing an article by John B. Adger. Previously, we have published Robert Dabney's review of John L. Girardeau's *Instrumental Music in the Public Worship of the Church* (Girardeau's book, a standard work on the topic, is available free at <http://www.fpcr.org/FreeEbooks.htm>) together with a series of letters to the editor of *The Watchman and Observer*, a Presbyterian paper published in 1849 (see the January/February 1994 issue). The position taken by Dabney, Girardeau and Adger, was once fairly commonly held among the different branches of Presbyterianism. Thus public debates in journals such as the *Southern Presbyterian Review* were not rare 150 years ago, as some began pressing and using instruments in public worship. The problem, as it was debated, was not whether a few old curmudgeons simply did not care for modern (today we would say "contemporary") worship styles. Rather, they viewed the use of musical instruments to accompany singing in public worship as a return to shadows and beggarly elements of Old Testament worship. They were of the opinion that the church, as well as the synagogue, must infer its worship practices from the moral instructions of the first four commandments of the law of God, and **not** from the positive commandments that belonged specifically to the temple worship. Among those positive commandments that God gave to the temple worship was the **required** use of musical instruments in certain prescribed circumstances.

The balance of this issue is taken up by two articles. In one, Jerrold Lewis deals partially with a subject that has begun to bother some of the conservative reformed denominations. The question that he attempts to answer, in a nutshell, is what the Reformed churches have meant historically by the phrase *sola fide* (faith alone). The other consists of a chapter "lifted" from a dissertation I wrote for the degree of Th.D. The article hopefully begins a series that will extend through 2004 explaining the place and use of confessions of faith in constitutional churches. ❀

# A Denial Of Divine Right For Organs In Public Worship.

This text is edited from the original article as it appeared in *The Southern Presbyterian Review* (SPR, 20.1 [January 1869] 69-104). The unedited text was kindly provided by Wayne Sparkman of the PCA Historical Center, which is undertaking the task of transcribing the entire SPR. The reader is directed to the following address to find out more about the Center and the project in particular: <http://www.pcanet.org/history>

By John B. Adger (1810-1899)

n article in favor of organs, as instruments to praise God with, appeared in the last number of this REVIEW,<sup>1</sup> from the pen of one of our most learned and eminent ministers. It may be fairly considered, therefore (especially as it is well known that he has given years of meditation and research to the subject), the embodiment of all that can be said on that side of the question. We propose to give the essay a candid and fair examination.

## DR. SMYTH'S ARGUMENT FOR THE ORGAN IN PUBLIC WORSHIP

Dr. Smyth begins his argument for the use of machines in God's worship, with this statement: "It is by no means improbable that the mystic words attributed to Jubal," [*Lamech?*] (see Gen. 4:23), "*may be* [his own Italics] a penitential song to which he was led to adapt the pensive tones of the harp and the ORGAN by the guiding providence of God's redeeming mercy." And he refers, apparently as authority for this conjecture, to "Smith's Dictionary of the Bible – Art. Jubal." That article says nothing like this. The article "Lamech" also, amongst various explanations of this poem, makes no suggestion such as Dr. Smyth has allowed himself to ascribe to this work. The article concludes thus: "Herder regards it as Lamech's song of exultation on the invention of the sword by his son, Tubal Cain, in the possession of which he foresaw a great advantage to himself and his family over any enemies. This interpretation

appears, on the whole, to be the best that has been suggested. ... This much is certain, that they are vaunting words, in which Lamech seems from Cain's indemnity to encourage himself in violence and wickedness."

From this altogether unsupported conjecture about Lamech's adapting his "penitential song" to one of Jubal's organs, our author immediately draws the weighty conclusion: "From the beginning, therefore, instrumental music, both mechanical and vocal, has been consecrated to God's worship in the aid of penitence and piety."

Waxing rapidly stronger as he advances, his very next sentence is: "Certain it is, that such instruments as the harp and organ have been always regarded as sacredly associated with God's worship and the praises of his redeemed people, *under every economy* [the italics his own] of the church militant," etc. He even pretends to identify Jubal's organ with ours, declaring this to be "the most ancient of all" instruments. It is named, he says, in Job 21:12; we will not dispute it—that is an account of the music of the wicked. It is named, he says, in Daniel 3:5; suppose it be so—what of it? That is a description of Nebuchadnezzar's idol-instruments of music. Again, he says it is named in Psalms 57:8; but *our* Hebrew Bible does not read so. He says, once more, it is named in Psalms 150: 4; but that is not exactly the same word. He may find it named in Job 30:31. But no where else in the Hebrew Scriptures, as we believe, except in these three or four places, is this instrument mentioned. In truth, we know little, and Dr. Smyth also knows little (and that little not very good), about Jubal's *huggab*; but one thing is to be remarked—

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<sup>1</sup> [Ed. Thomas Smyth (1808-1873). *The Scriptural and Divine Right for Using Mechanical as well as Vocal Instruments in the Worship of God*, SPR, 19.4 (October 1868) 517-556. Also, *Works*, vol. 6.

Lightfoot, in his elaborate description of the instruments of music in the temple,<sup>2</sup> does not mention it at all; so that, even if it were identical with our organ, it does not seem to have got access to the house of God. It may serve to moderate Dr. Smyth's confidence in his opinion of the organ's being undoubtedly a development of Jubal's instrument, if we add that Smith's Dictionary gives reasons for identifying the *huggab* with "Pan's pipe;" also with the Italian *viola de gamba*, which is in the form of a fiddle, and is played on with a bow of horse hair; and also, thirdly, with the psaltery; and, fourthly, with the dulcimer, which last two are perhaps something like the modern guitar.

Recurring to our author's introductory statement respecting instrumental music, we would observe, that in the sequel and throughout the whole article, there is absolutely no evidence whatever furnished for his extraordinary theory. Building it on a "by no means improbable *may be*," he leaves it to stand alone, without any attempt at proof to keep it from falling. Some few irrelevant quotations from authorities of little weight in this discussion (such as Prof. Bush, the poet James Montgomery and the pagan author Plutarch) are brought in, with frequent poetical extracts, the whole filling up six pages: but not a particle of evidence is offered to substantiate that opening conjecture nor the bold assertions founded thereupon!

The next eight or ten pages of this article contain nothing upon which it is necessary for us to make any comment, except that we cordially agree with the greater part of the distinguished author's sentiments as therein expressed. We join with him in urging upon every individual his duty, if possible, to take part in the praise of God publicly by joining in the singing. We reiterate what he says (p. 528), that "in our Presbyterian churches this is the only portion of worship in which the people generally can take an active and audible part;" and we add, that this is now one great objection to the organ and the choir, that they do tend, both of them and either of them, to rob the people of this, their ancient privilege, and that like complaints were made in the Church of old (See Bingham's *Christian Antiquities*, Book III, chap. vii, sec. ii, and Book XIV, chap. i, sec. xiii; and also Kurtz's *Text Book of Church History*, vol. i, p.

234). We particularly like what Dr. Smyth says of the relation in which the praises of God stand to "the responsible direction and the supervision of the spiritual officers of the Church." We join with him in protesting that "it must therefore be considered as a most serious and fatal mistake when the whole order and arrangement and control" of this matter "is left so entirely; as it is in many of our congregations, to the choir or the corporation, instead of the spiritual government of the Church" (P. 529). In the Presbyterian Church, it is not the business of the *congregation, directly*, or of any fraction of the congregation, to regulate the praise of God. As well might they undertake to direct what instructions should issue from the pulpit, or what decisions the session must make upon matters of church discipline. Independency commits these affairs to the people directly, but our church government does not. The idea of the congregation's meeting together and deciding to introduce or to exclude instrumental music; of their assembling to appoint a performer on the instrument, whether of good or of bad principles and morals; and the idea of a few members of the congregation, whether young or old, male or female, professors or non-professors of religion, assuming without a call from the rulers of God's house to direct and control the methods of his awful praise, are quite subversive of Presbyterianism. Dr. Smyth would render a good service to the Church, if he would exert himself to procure a deliverance on this particular point, agreeable to his views, from our church courts, and to have it enforced.

#### **DR. SMYTH'S ARGUMENT FOR THE DIVINE RIGHT OF THE ORGAN IN PUBIC WORSHIP.**

We come at length to perceive clearly the use which our author designed to make of his introductory conjecture. On page 530, we read: "And if, therefore, the use of instrumental music can be shown to have existed in religious services from the beginning, the impropriety of its continued use can only be established by a plain and positive enactment of Christ, the great lawgiver of his Church, prohibiting its further use." Is he about to furnish the needful proof of his first assertion, as might now be expected? Not at all. He is only repeating his original assertion, for the sake of the impression he hopes to make by it upon the mind, expecting the reader to be satisfied with his repetition of the assertion; and

<sup>2</sup> Lightfoot on the Temple Service, chap. 7, sec. 2. [Works, vol. 9]

designing to draw from it the inference that mechanical praise once established by divine authority, an express prohibition of it from God is necessary to its abrogation. Again and again, therefore, we find this mere empty assertion repeated, and the baseless inference again and again made, that the Christian Church is not to be restricted to praise with the human voice alone, without positive injunction in the Scripture to that effect. And thus we are brought to Part II of the essay: THE DIVINE RIGHT ESTABLISHED AND OBJECTIONS MET.

The author's *first argument* in favor of a divine right for using mechanical instruments in God's worship, is its accordance with the feelings and the practice of men, which he chooses to characterize as "the best feelings and most sacred and holy practice of men in all ages."

Dr. Smyth refers upon this point to the admissions of "*The London Ministers.*"<sup>3</sup> Now, we are willing to accept what the authors of that celebrated treatise did really say on this subject; but it appears to us that our author has not exactly apprehended their meaning. They properly represent the light of nature as mere "relics," "fragments," and "glimmerings" of the original light; and they say truly, "So far as this light of nature, after the fall, is a true relic of the light of nature before the fall, that which is according to this light may be counted of divine right in matters of religion." It is not "the light of nature," but "the *true* light of nature" they value; just as we always distinguish between reason and *right* reason. Our author himself had told us (p. 259) "that man is by nature carnal, worldly, formal, and ritualistic in his spirit and taste." It is not, therefore, what this carnal and ritualistic taste approves in worship that can be said to be in accordance with the "true" light of nature. The London ministers say rightly (Part I, chap. ii, p. 23): "All human inventions herein (that is, in doctrine, worship, or government), whether devised of our own hearts or derived as traditions from others, are incompatible and inconsistent herewith [that is, with divine right]; vain in themselves and to all that use them, and

condemned of God." Surely Dr. Smyth does not need to be informed that every religious doctrine and every religious institute which man's heart devises has always been and must always be abominable before God.

The *second argument* of our author is from Scripture examples. But most of these are from the Old Testament, and so we pass them by in silence. He comes at length to the New Testament argument, and we look now to see him put forth his strength. We expect at least several pages of solid Scripture reasoning. We are put off with only two pages (pp. 543, 545), not very solid, nor very scriptural. First and foremost, the introductory *conjecture* about Jubal, that had no proof, is appealed to. Instruments have been lawful under all former dispensations, and a prohibition is now requisite before they can be condemned. What a pity the author had not taken more pains with the foundation work of his edifice! Evidently he himself is not satisfied with it; but he proceeds to adduce his examples from the Gospels. These are of course very few, and the proof they furnish rather slender. Let us examine them.

The first is from our Savior's "uttering no reproof" to the minstrels in the ruler's house: as though he must be understood to approve all which he did not in words reprove, and as though we could argue from his tolerating the hiring of minstrels for mourning in private houses to his sanction of the use of instruments in God's house. In point of fact, however, Dr. Smyth cannot say that our Lord uttered no reproof whatever; for Mark, narrating this same event, tells us that Jesus saw the tumult made by those noisy minstrels, and said to them, "Why make ye this ado?" and then put them all out of the house (Mark 5:38-39). His first example, therefore, breaks down completely under the weight he requires it to carry.

The second example is where Jesus "does not hesitate to *liken himself* unto children calling to their fellows and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced," etc. Dr. Smyth says, in Italics, that Jesus likened *himself* to these children; but Matthew says he likened *that generation* to those children. Surely, however, this example, even if Christ's comparison had been of himself, furnishes but slender proof for the use of machines in God's worship. It proves too much for Dr. Smyth; for it makes out, on his principle of

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<sup>3</sup> [A reference to the book, *Jus Divinum Regiminis Ecclesiastici: or The Divine Right of Church Government*, by sundry ministers of London (1646; 1654; American edition, 1844). A new edition was published by Naphtali Press, edited by David Hall. *Jus Divinum*, etc (Dallas TX: Naphtali Press, 1995).

interpretation, the divine right of dancing as well as organs in the house of God.

The third example is from the use of music on the return of the prodigal son; as though we could reason from such private customs of the Jews to the public worship of God. But we may say of this example, also, that it proves too much for Dr. Smyth. It warrants dancing as much as instruments in the house of God, for they are mentioned in the parable together.

Now, after searching the New Testament diligently for "Scripture examples which are made obligatory by the will and appointment of Jesus Christ, by whose Spirit those examples were recorded in Scripture for the imitation of believers," (p. 537), these three are all which our author is able to adduce. Let the reader consider them attentively, for they constitute the whole argument, from New Testament examples, for the divine right of machines in the worship of the New Testament Church. The noisy minstrels, whom Jesus did reprove, used instruments of music; the children in the market places piped and danced; and the prodigal's father rejoiced with music and dancing; and therefore the organ is of divine right in the Church! ! Would not Dr. Smyth's argument have been a little better, if he had not made any appeal to New Testament examples at all?

Our author next refers to the symbolical representations in the Book of Revelation: "John saw and heard harpers in heaven." We need only remark, that if the Lord shall actually give his saints real harps to harp his praises on when they reach the upper sanctuary, they will, of course, have the highest divine right to be *there* used. All that is lacking in the divine right *here* is the commandment of the Lord by his apostles, either perceptively or by example. But with reference to the harps mentioned in this symbolical book, let it not be forgotten, that as truly as John saw *harpers*, so truly he saw *a lamb* in the midst of them, and that a lamb *as it had been slain*. Manifestly, it will not do to press any argument from these symbols, or it might be proved that the redeemed in heaven worship a lamb in its blood, and also that we might introduce such an object of worship into our churches now. So also it might be proved that we should all be clothed in white robes and have branches of palm in our hands whenever we assemble in the house of God.

Dr. Smyth attempts only one more proof from the New Testament. It is founded upon Eph. 5:19 and Col.3:16, where "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs and melody in the heart to the Lord, and singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord," are enjoined. He argues that psalms were anciently sung with musical instruments, and must, therefore, "to be sung with perfect propriety, be still united with instrumental music" (P. 544). But the apostles did not sing them with instrumental accompaniments, and was their singing therefore not "with perfect propriety?" And our Lord sang one of them with his disciples just before he was crucified, with no instrument accompanying; and was his singing, too, therefore not "with perfect propriety?"

But our author argues from the etymological derivation of ψάλλοντες (which is the touching or striking of the chords of a stringed instrument), that we must praise God with machines. The difficulty with his argument is this: the word ψάλλοντες here is not used alone, but the apostle connects with it τῆ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν τῷ Κυρίῳ. And thus it is a *striking of the chords in our hearts to the Lord* which he commands; or, as our translators write it, "making melody in our hearts to the Lord." Indeed, the language of the apostle entirely excludes instruments, and authorizes only praise with the voice; for he plainly tells us to *speak* to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, and to *sing* and to strike the chords (not of harps, but) *of our hearts* to the Lord. We may well say, therefore: "*Non vox sed cotum; non musica chordula, sed cor; non clamans sed amans psallit in aure Dei.*"

But the Doctor brings in Poole's name, and would have us believe his views are sanctioned by that high authority. He will necessarily be understood by the reader as signifying that Poole asserts the word ψάλλοντες to allude to an instrumental accompaniment of the human voice in the apostolic Church! As sometimes happens, however, when a writer is given to quoting, the very authority he appeals to is against him here. Upon this very passage (Eph. 5:19), Poole remarks as follows: "Psalms are songs, as those choice verses of David and others, which in the temple were accustomed to be fitted to harps and psalteries. In those are many things which Christians may profitably recite amongst Christians. But the Response to the Orthodox No. 107, by Justin (or whoever the author may be),

teaches that the primitive Christians sang with the voice alone, not with any instruments accustomed to be added.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> In the *Corpus Confessionum*, we have the *Orthodoxus Consensus* made up of testimonies from the fathers, and amongst them of Justin Martyr, who lived from A. D. 114 to A. D. 165. In Articulus 10, p. 214, this sentence is attributed to him: *Ecclesia non canit instrumentis inanimatis, sed cantu simplici*. The Church does not sing with inanimate instruments, but with simple singing.

Referring to the book from which this is taken, viz, to the *Questiones et Responsiones ad Orthodoxos* (published amongst his writings, though considered as not from Justin’s pen), we find the sentiment thus expressed in fullness: *Non canere simpliciter parvulis convenit, sed cum inanimatis instrumentis canere et cum saltatione et crotalis: quare in ecclesiis resecatur ex canticis usus ejusmodi instrumentorum atque aliorum parvulis convenientium, ac simplex relictus est cantus*. Simple singing does not suit little children, but they must sing with inanimate instruments, and with dancing and clapping of hands; wherefore in our churches the use of that sort of instruments and of the other things which befit little children, is cut off, and simple singing is left. The allusion evidently is to the puerile estate of the Jewish people, for whom, as children, instruments of music and things of that sort were provided. In the same way, Calvin speaks of instrumental music as “childish elements provided for the Jews as under age.” See Comment. on Psalm 92:4. He adds: “Now that Christ has appeared and the Church has reached full age, it were only to bury the light of the gospel, should we introduce the shadows of a departed dispensation.”

The “learned Joseph Bingham” himself, of the Church of England, gives a full account of the service of God’s praise in the early Church. “From the first and apostolic age,” he says, “singing was always a part of divine service in which the whole body of the Church joined together.” “The whole assembly joined together; men, women, and children united with one mouth and one mind in singing psalms and praises to God. This was the most ancient and general practice till the way of alternate psalmody was brought into the Church. Thus Christ and his apostles sung the hymn at the last supper, and thus Paul and Silas at midnight sung praises unto God.” The reader can find in Bingham’s *Antiquities* a full account of that antiphonal singing which Dr. Smyth appears somehow in his argument to mix up so strangely with instrumental music. But he will also find, with this, the invectives of the fathers, quoted by Bingham, against the introduction of “secular music into the grave and solemn devotions of the Church;” of “theatrical noise and gestures,” and of “singing after the fashion of the theatre in the Church.” “Let the servant of Christ,” says Jerome, “so order his singing that the words which are read may please more than the voice of the singer,” — an admonition which at once rebukes the levity of our choirs oftentimes, and condemns the very principle of any attempt, under a purely spiritual dispensation like the present, at praising God with solemn sounds which have no sense — mere wind. See Bingham’s *Antiquities*, Book III, chapter vii, and book XIV, chapter i. See also, for many interesting details of the history of psalmody and hymnology, and what subsequently becomes ecclesiastical music aided by instruments, Kurtz’s *Text Book of Church History*, Vol. 1, pp. 70, 124, 125, 233, 443, 481. [Ed. Joseph Bingham, *Origines ecclesiasticæ: or, the Antiquities of the Christian Church* (Many editions). Johann Heinrich Kurtz, *Text-Book of Church History*, translated by J. H. A. Bomberger (Philadelphia, 1870).]

We have now considered the whole argument of Dr. Smyth, and we submit that he has not made a single point. Founding his edifice upon a mere conjecture, which will not bear the slightest examination, he argues all the way through from misconceptions and misapplications of Scripture. To show a divine warrant for using instruments in God’s house under the Christian dispensation, he reasons, first, from what he conjectures may have occurred amongst the seed of the accursed Cain in their separation from the believing line of Seth; next, he builds on the feelings and tastes of our fallen nature; then he appeals to a variety of examples from the Old Testament—many irrelevant and not one of any force in the present discussion; coming after this to the New Testament, and professing thence to *establish* the divine right of instrumental music, it is the hired minstrels mourning and wailing, for show and for hire, in the ruler’s house; and the children piping and dancing in the market place and the mercenary musicians and dancers in the house of the prodigal’s father, whom he would have our New Testament Church imitate, although we have inspired apostles to set us a different pattern of worship. Finally, the appeal is to some passages in the epistles of Paul, from which is wrung out a meaning which they will not bear, and to a symbolic representation in the Revelation. And is our erudite divine forced to acknowledge that this is the whole of what can be said for the divine right of machinery in the praise of God?

## OBJECTIONS TO MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS IN PUBLIC WORSHIP

We proceed now to set forth briefly the grounds upon which we object to instrumental music in the public worship of God. We say the public worship of God, because the question, as we discuss it, concerns nothing less and nothing else. In the language of John Owen, “it is of the instituted worship of his public assemblies that we treat.”<sup>5</sup> In the private worship of the individual, there may be more liberty, because there is less rule. And we are commanded to stand fast in our liberty wherewith Christ has made us free (Gal. 5:1). Easy indeed is it for us to be “entangled again with the yoke of bondage,” and dangerous to be volunteering the sacrifice of any portion of our freedom. Calvin says: “We are not forbidden

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<sup>5</sup> Discourse Concerning Liturgies, chap. 2, Works vol. [15], p. 405.

indeed to employ musical instruments in private life, but they are banished out of the churches by the plain command of the Holy Spirit, when Paul, in 1 Cor. 14:13, lays it down as an invariable rule that we must praise God and pray to him only in a known tongue.”<sup>6</sup> The same distinction he points out elsewhere, in these words: “Paul allows us to bless God in the public assembly of the saints only in a known tongue.”<sup>7</sup>

To the following statement of principles we suppose true Presbyterians in general will cordially agree:

1. God is a jealous God; not less so now than he was under the former dispensation. God is also most holy, and cannot behold evil. Having violated law and become a fallen and polluted creature, man naturally could offer no greater insult to God than to draw nigh to him with institutes and forms of worship. Such presumption must provoke God to consume the insolent offender. The offering of such worship at all to God by a fallen creature must, therefore, necessarily be a commanded thing, or else it will be insulting and wicked. In the very nature of the case, worship must originate not with man, but with God. It must not be a thing of man’s invention, but of God’s permission—nay, command; although, of course, the command might be general, and in many particulars the individual be left to the use of liberty.

But if God should condescend to set up his house on the earth, and to invite sinners into it for his worship; if he should take in hand to erect a Church in this world, which should be his chosen abode, where his people should enjoy the special manifestations of his presence; then might we expect to find him peculiarly jealous respecting all his own appointments in and for that house. Such an institute might be expected to be from beginning to end and in all its parts a positive one, having for its most essential feature and its most fundamental requisite a *Jus Divinum*. It follows that it would necessarily be a matter of pure revelation, and must always be practiced precisely as revealed. Not earth-born, but descended from heaven, it would be not the offspring of our will, but of God’s will made known. Our place would therefore be not to

volunteer any additions to it, nor any improvements of it, but carefully to follow his directions concerning it. A most awful thing, this public worship of God would have to be paid by us in reverence and godly fear; not in a slavish but filial spirit. Now, God has done this very thing, and it becomes us to be afraid lest, by any corruption of his holy, revealed, public worship, we should prove to be offensive in his sight. He requires of us a docile spirit respecting the methods of our worship in his house. The reason why will-worship is so abominable is that it is essentially the offspring of irreverence and pride. Hence, the very thought of our undertaking to improve this institute of God ought to be dreadful to our minds. In vain could we hope to worship him acceptably according to the commandments or the devices of men. Such things have always been abominable with God, and he has repeatedly resented any intermeddling with his most sacred institutes.

The Scriptures furnish many signal instances of God’s severity against those who, by ignorance or carelessness or willful neglect, have (to make use of John Owen’s expression) “miscarried in not observing exactly his will and appointment in and about his worship.” Such was the case of Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron (Levit. 10:1-2); of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (Numbers 16:3, 9, 32-33); of Eli and his house, the iniquity of which was not to be purged with sacrifice nor offering forever (1 Sam. 2:28-30, and 3:14); of Uzza, in putting the ark into a cart when he should have borne it upon his shoulders,<sup>8</sup> (or perhaps for his rashness in touching it when shaken by the oxen), referred to by the prophet David under the expressive phrase, “For that we sought him not after *the due order*” (1 Chron. 15:13); of Uzziah the King, in venturing to volunteer the service of the priesthood in the very temple (2 Chron. 26:16). In the revelation made by God to Moses respecting the tabernacle, and to David respecting the temple, God was very exact in the pattern each was to follow (See Exodus 25:40, Numbers 8:4, and 1 Chron. 28:11, 19). Indeed, throughout the whole history of God’s Church on the earth, the acceptable worship of God has been always that which himself ordained. Man, having the breath of God in his nostrils and made in God’s image, has

<sup>6</sup> Comment on Psalm 71:22. [Ed. See Calvin’s Commentaries].

<sup>7</sup> Comment on Psalm 33:2. [Ed. See Calvin’s Commentaries].

<sup>8</sup> See Owen’s Short Catechism [i.e. *A Brief Instruction in the Worship of God*, etc.]. *Works*, Vol. [15], p. 501. [See *Works*, Good edition].

the Sabbath given to him, and is placed in Eden with a specific revelation of God's will, and his own duty. When he sins, God teaches him how to worship by sacrifice. He manifests himself continually to those who, in faith, approach him thus with the sacrifice of blood. Thus to Adam, to Abel, to Seth, to Enoch, and to Noah (but not to Cain nor to his immediate descendants, so far as we are informed, whether to Lamech or to Jubal). God constantly reveals his will; and these and such as these constitute his Church upon the earth, calling on the name of the Lord and separated from unbelievers. In the matter of Noah's salvation by the ark, very specific directions were given, and he did "according unto all that the Lord commanded him" (Gen. 7:5). The religion practiced by Abraham and his sons was a revealed one. It is by faith he leaves his country, dwells in tents, offers sacrifices, and practices circumcision. When we come down to Moses' time, God very expressly says to him: "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it" (Deut. 4:2, and 12:32). Of Jeroboam it is recorded that he made calves and made a house of high places and made priests, which were not of the sons of Levi, and ordained a feast like unto the feast in Judah, and appointed a month for it, which he "had *devised of his own heart*" (1 Kings 12:28, 31). Of Israel it is said, they provoked God to anger with their own inventions (Ps. 106:29, 39). Jehovah denounces wrath and woe upon the people, because "their *fear* (that is, their worship) toward me is taught by the precept of men" (Isaiah 29:13). Coming down to the times of our Lord, we hear him saying almost in the same words: "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9, and Mark 7:7). Paul to the Colossians condemns all "will-worship," where the very idea he communicates is precisely this: that whatever in worship is volunteered, that is not commanded, is forbidden (Col. 2:18, 23). Moreover, he proves that the tribe of Judah had nothing to do with Aaron's priesthood, from the *silence* of Moses: "of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning the priesthood" (Heb. 7:14). So that, in the words of an old divine, "we may use this apostolical argument against Popish inventions (and Protestant inventions, too): Neither Moses nor any other penman of Scripture spake any thing of worshipping God in such and such a manner; therefore these human appointments are no more

acceptable to God than Uzziah's offering of incense.

2. In this aspect, God's worship appears to be just as far above the domination and control of man as are those other two divine institutes, viz, the doctrine and discipline of his house. These three are equally of divine right; and alterations of either are equally dishonoring to God. All three are perfect, and we insult him, who reveals them whenever we pretend that either one of them needs improving, or that we are capable of mending it.

But God, who is the author of these three institutes, exercises his sovereign right of developing and completing the doctrine and of altering at pleasure the forms and methods of the discipline and worship of his house. At first, every father of a family was the priest of it; then Aaron and his sons were called; now every Christian is a priest unto God. At first, sacrifices with blood were the most special and acceptable mode of worship to Jehovah; now they would be sins of the very deepest dye. Moreover, at first, these sacrifices were as acceptable to God in one place as in another; afterwards they were acceptable only when offered at the tabernacle, and after that again only at the temple; and to offer them elsewhere was extremely offensive to the august majesty of heaven. So, also, once there was a temple and a temple service divinely ordained, with its altars of sacrifice and incense, its priests of different grades, its holy and most holy places, with their different appurtenances; its purifications and its festivals; its choirs, its instruments of music, and all its gorgeous as well as complicated and burdensome ceremonial. But all these things were only for a time and a purpose. They were to be a schoolmaster to point to Christ and to train the Church, then childish and ignorant, for his coming. Then, when he came, it was abolished, and no part of it now remains. The Abrahamic covenant with its promises, and the government of the Church by elders and the simple forms of worship of the synagogue, continue and shall continue to the end, for so the New Testament teaches us. But we may not go back to the use of any part or parcel of what belonged to the temple. All of it might as well be introduced amongst us of the Christian Church, as any part of it. Once lawful, all of it, because commanded; now no part of it is lawful,

because not commanded by the inspired apostles, either perceptively or in their example.

3. The only question open to us, then, respecting the divinely revealed doctrine, government, and worship, is, What did the apostles establish? Until they discharged their commission, all three of these institutes of God were yet incomplete; but it was their office to perfect and finish them. They were filled with the Holy Ghost, in order to complete the canon of Scripture; leaving then in our hands the whole word of God, unto which nothing is ever to be added. They were also inspired to organize the Christian Church and establish it in the world. They did so. Christ himself had ordained the Lord's supper and baptism. It was for the apostles to declare that these were to supplant circumcision and the Passover. It was for them to declare the abolition of the ceremonial law and the confirmation of the moral. It was for them to make known the severance now and forever of Church and State, and that the Church was now to embrace Gentiles as well as Jews, and being no longer shut up in Judea, was to spread over the whole earth. It was for them to identify the Church of their day and of the whole future with the Church in Abraham; to proclaim the universal priesthood of believers and the sole eternal high-priesthood of Jesus; to make known a government by presbyters to be the only lawful rule in God's house, then and now, as of old; and to legalize for us and for the Church to the end—what forms of worship? the temple forms, or any portion of them? No! but the forms of another divine pattern lying far back of that. They gave us a copy of an ancient institute for the social and continual assembling of Israel every Sabbath and oftener, all over the land, in places convenient to them, and not, as in the distant temple at Jerusalem, only three times a year. They gave us for our model the synagogue worship (as they did the synagogue government), with its reading and preaching of the word, and its singing with the voice, without any instruments accompanying,<sup>9</sup> and its praying, and

<sup>9</sup> Lightfoot says: "Every synagogue had its trumpet to publish the coming in of the New Year and the Sabbath day, and also the excommunication of any." Vitringa adds to these, the use of it for their "fast days." Lightfoot finds in no Jewish writer any account of the trumpet in the synagogue at almsgiving, and suggests that the Savior spoke (Matt. 6:2) metaphorically. In the worship of the synagogue of old, there appears to have been no use of instruments whatsoever, and it is inadmissible amongst the modern Jews, except where they forsake the strict rule of their ancient religion. But in the synagogue,

its fellowship in collections for the poor, and its discipline of charity and faithful love.

Now, if it had been the pleasure of God that we should make use of machinery in his praise, why did he not so instruct these apostles? He has ever manifested his interest in all that concerns the worship of his sanctuary; nay, declares himself jealous about it. It was, of course, not ignorance on the part of the apostles which led them to adopt the simpler praise of the synagogue, instead of the instruments of the temple with which they were so familiar. Was it poverty? How easily, with the liberality of the churches in those days, could instruments of some sort—a harp or the psaltery, or some cymbals at least—have been provided in every congregation! Was it thoughtlessness or forgetfulness which caused their negligence and their silence? Impossible! They were the amanuenses of the Spirit! And yet they never commanded, either by precept or example, the use of any other instrument in praise but the human voice. Such is the teaching of men, sent by God, "in these last times," to make known his sovereign pleasure respecting the worship of his sanctuary. There shall come no other teachers divinely inspired. The canon of Scripture is complete; the government and worship is established. And it is a solemn responsibility which any man assumes who ventures to add anything to the heavenly structure.

4. All which has been now said is agreeable to the doctrine of our fathers on the other side of the flood, that in the worship of God's house, "whatever is not commanded is forbidden." This doctrine flows necessarily out of the principle that God is the originator of worship and has himself

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Vitringa tells us, they made use of all "the moral worship of the temple, and sang God's praises with the voice; and that "from the synagogue this practice was transferred to the oratories of the Christians." Lightfoot also tells us that in the temple itself none but Levites were allowed "to join voices with the vocal music, which was the proper song and the proper service, but only to join with the instrumental;" a private person, if he had skill, might "put in with his instrument among the instruments," but "among the voices he might not join, for that belonged only to the Levites" (See Lightfoot's *Exercitationes upon St. Matthew*, chap. 6:2, and on the Temple Service, chap. 7. sec. 2. [Works, vols. 11 & 9] See also Vitringa, *De Synagoga Vetere*, Lib. I, Par. I, cap. 10, and the *Prolegomena*, cap. 5 and cap. 6). [Campegii Vitringa, *De synagoga vetere libri tres: quibus tum de nominibus, structurâ, origine, præfectis, ministris, & sacris synagogarum, agitur; tum præcipue, formam regiminis & ministerii earum in Ecclesiam Christianam translata esse, demonstratur: cum prolegomenis* (Franequerae: Gyselaar Hans, 1696)].

revealed it to man. Nay, we must go further and apply this maxim to everything in religion, for religion is altogether devised and revealed by God. He is and must be its sole author; or else it is false and vain. Man had no part in originating it; nay, he has never of himself done any thing with it but corrupt it. And what is very remarkable, perhaps every one of the human corruptions of worship began in some apparently good way, and had its origin in the idea of improvement. To recommend Christianity to Jews and to Gentiles who considered it too bald and naked in its divine simplicity, “the Christian doctors (says Dr. Mosheim on the second century) thought they must introduce some external rites which would strike the senses of the people” (Vol. I, p. 133). Pliny and Justin Martyr and Tertullian all describe the simplicity of Christian worship in the first two centuries: yet the temptation to mend it and improve it was already felt. What an excellent end, supposing the almighty could consent to be assisted in his plans! Hence, “in order [we use Mosheim’s words] to impart dignity to their religion,” the mysteries of the Greeks and Orientals were imitated in the exclusion of all but the initiated from beholding baptism or the Lord’s supper. In the third century, the passion for Platonic philosophy amongst the Christian teachers leads to exorcising the evil spirit out of the baptized. Early in the fourth century, Constantine adopts Christianity and undertakes to improve the worship as well as the government of the Church. Then is witnessed a great tendency to adorn church buildings with images of the saints, all intended to excite devotion, though operating really to bring in idolatry. By the time we get down to the period of Augustine and Ambrose (which Dr. Smyth refers to with so much satisfaction, p. 546), there is such a vast increase of rites and ceremonies springing out of this excellent desire to attract the Greeks and the Romans and the other nations to Christianity, that Mosheim tells us: “The observation of Augustine is well known, That the yoke once laid upon the Jews was more supportable than that laid on many Christians in his age.” He adds: “There was of course little difference, in these times, between the public worship of the Christians and that of the Greeks and Romans. In both alike, there were splendid robes, mitres, tiaras, wax tapers, crosiers, processions, lustrations, images, golden and silver vases and numberless other things;” also, “that they

supposed God, Christ, and the inhabitants of heaven, equally with us wretched mortals, to be delighted and captivated with external signs” (Vol. I, pp. 276, 7). In his account of the fifth century, we read: “In some places, it was appointed that the praises of God should be sung continually, day and night, the singers succeeding each other without interruption; as if the Supreme Being took pleasure in clamor and noise and in the flatteries of men. The magnificence of the temples had no bounds” (Vol. I, pp. 351). Of the sixth century, we read: “In proportion as true religion and piety, from various causes, declined in this century, the external signs of religion and piety—that is, rites and ceremonies—increased.” And he speaks of “the new mode of administering the Lord’s supper magnificently:” also of baptism now being only to be administered “on the greatest festivals” (Vol. I, pp. 413, 14). So marched on the profane and wicked though “pious” attempts of well-meaning men to improve the institutes of God: culminating, at length, in the complete prostration of what the Almighty had set up, and the substitution for it, in his house, of a pagan system baptized into the Christian name! And yet, be it observed, so far down as we have traced the progress of these human improvements, there yet appears no sign of machinery to praise God with. That is the fruit of a later, and of course a grosser, development.

5. The doctrine of our forefathers, that whatever in religion is not commanded is forbidden, answers to the good old Protestant maxim, that the Scriptures are the sole and the sufficient rule of faith and practice. They are the sufficient rule—that is, they furnish every needful direction concerning either faith or practice. They are the sole rule—that is, no other rule is admissible. Not any thing is lawful for which you cannot produce a “Thus saith the Lord.”

This doctrine is set forth in the Westminster Confession, which is ours, in these words: “The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture; unto which nothing, at any time, is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men” (Chap. I.6). All that concerns God’s glory, which of course includes his *worship*, is in the Bible, and for us, in the New Testament; and unto what is

there written, or thence deducible, nothing may be added. The Almighty has a definitive will or counsel respecting his worship, and he has revealed that counsel to us in the New Testament; and therefore we must not venture to attempt any improvements of it.

In like manner, our Larger Catechism<sup>10</sup> sets down among the sins forbidden under the second commandment, “all devising, counseling, commanding, using and any wise approving any religious worship not instituted by God himself.”

This doctrine was very fully held and taught by Owen, and was applied by him, specifically, in more than one of his works, to the matter of human inventions in worship. We are confident that we have not, in this article, put forth one sentiment for which we could not produce Owen’s authority as an interpreter of God’s word. Speaking of the “outward worship of God,” he says its “sole foundation was in his will and pleasure.”<sup>11</sup> Quoting sundry scriptures, he says:<sup>12</sup>

That which these and the like testimonies unanimously speak to us is this, that the will of God is the sole rule of his worship; ... and consequently that he never did, nor ever will, allow that the will of his creatures should be the rule or measure of his honor or worship. ... It is enough to discard any thing from a relation to the worship of God, to manifest that the appointees of it were men and not God. Nor can any man prove that God hath delegated unto man his power in this matter. Nor did he ever do so to the sons of men—namely, that they should have authority to appoint any thing in his worship, or about it, that seemeth meet unto their wisdom. With some, indeed, in former days he entrusted the work of revealing unto his Church and people what he himself would have observed; which dispensation he closed in the person of Christ and his apostles. But to entrust men with authority, not to declare what he revealed, but to appoint what seemeth good unto them, he never did it; the testimonies produced lie evidently against it. Now, surely God’s asserting his own will and authority, as the only rule and cause of his worship, should make men cautious how they suppose themselves like or equal unto him herein. ... But such is the corrupt nature of man, that there is scarce any thing whereabouts men have been more apt to contend with God, from the foundation of the world. That their will and wisdom may have a share (some at least) in the ordering of his worship, is that which of all things they seem to desire. ... The prohibition is

plain—‘Thou shalt not add to what I have commanded.’ Add not to his words, that is, in his worship, to the things which by his word he hath appointed to be observed; neither to the word of his institution nor to the things instituted. Indeed, adding *things* adds to *the word*; for the word that adds is made of a like authority with him. All *making to ourselves* is forbidden, though what we so make may seem unto us to the furtherance of the worship of God.

Owen thus continues: “It is said that the intention of these rules and prohibitions is only to prevent the addition of what is contrary to what God hath appointed, and not of that which may tend to the furtherance and better discharge of his appointments.” His answer is, that “whatever is added is contrary to the command that nothing be added.” He proceeds to reason from our Lord’s direction to the apostles to teach his disciples “to do and observe whatever he commanded them.” And the conclusion which Owen draws is, that “the whole duty of the Church, as unto the worship of God, seems to lie in the precise observation of what is appointed and commanded by him.”<sup>13</sup> Elsewhere he says:<sup>14</sup>

A principal part of the duty of the Church in this matter is to take care that nothing be admitted or practiced in the worship of God, or as belonging thereunto, which is not instituted and appointed by the Lord Christ. In its care, faithfulness, and watchfulness herein, consists the principal part of its loyalty unto the Lord Jesus as the head, king, and lawgiver of his Church, and which to stir us up to, he hath left so many severe interdictions and prohibitions in his word against all additions to his commands upon any pretence whatever.

Again, in the work last quoted from, Owen says: “The ways and means of the worship of God are made known to us in and by the written word alone, which contains a full and perfect revelation of the will of God as to his whole worship and the concernments of it. He quotes, to prove this, many passages of the word; and he proceeds to say that the Scripture every where “supposeth and declareth that of ourselves we are ignorant how God is, how he ought to be, worshipped. Moreover, it manifests him to be a jealous God, exercising that holy property of his nature in an especial manner about his worship; rejecting and despising every thing that is not according to his will, that is not of his institution.” He proceeds to

<sup>10</sup> [Ed. WLC Q&A 109].

<sup>11</sup> Discourse concerning Liturgies, Owen’s *Works*, Vol [15], p. 405.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 441-4.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 445.

<sup>14</sup> Owen’s Short Catechism on Worship and Discipline — *Works*, Vol. [15], p. 487.

set forth, from the Scriptures, how God hath frequently altered and changed the ways and means of his worship at his sovereign pleasure; particularly that “fabric of his outward worship” established in the temple; and still further to show that no other alteration by him is to be expected, for he has made his last and complete revelation in his Son, the Lord of all.<sup>15</sup>

Further on, we find Owen, in the same work, discussing the question whether the Church may not appoint what may “further the devotion of the worshippers, or render the worship itself in its performance more decent, beautiful, and orderly?” His answer is: “No devotion is acceptable to God but what proceedeth from and is an effect of faith; for without faith it is impossible to please him, and faith in all things respects the commands and authority of God. ... To say that any thing will effectually stir up devotion (that is, excite strengthen, or increase grace in the heart towards God), that is not of his own appointment, is, on the one hand, to reflect on his wisdom and care towards the Church, as if he had been wanting towards it in things so necessary (which he declares against in Isaiah 5:4—‘What,’ saith he, ‘could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done unto it?’); so, on the other, it extols the wisdom of men above what is meet to ascribe to it. Shall men find out that which God would not or could not, in matters of so great importance unto his glory and the souls of them that obey him?”<sup>16</sup>

We quote another passage, wherein Owen says it is evident that “the suitableness of anything to right reason or the light of nature is no ground for a church observation of it, unless it be also appointed and commanded in especial by Jesus Christ.”<sup>17</sup> Thus is the principle plainly and broadly stated, that whatever in religion is not commanded is forbidden.

Similar to Owen’s is the testimony of Cartwright, the distinguished opponent of Whitgift and Hooker. He goes so far as to say that “Scripture is, in such sort, the rule of human actions that simply whatever we do, and are not by it directed thereunto, the same is sin.” “I say,” says he, “that the word of God containeth ... whatsoever things

can fall into any part of man’s life. For so Solomon saith in the second chapter of the Proverbs: ‘My son, if thou wilt receive my words, etc, then shalt thou understand justice, and judgment, and equity, and every good way.’” Again we quote: “St. Paul saith, ‘That whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we must do it to the glory of God.’” But no man can glorify God in any thing but by obedience, and there is no obedience but in respect of the commandment and word of God: therefore it followeth that the word of God directeth a man in all his actions.” Again, Cartwright argues: “That which St. Paul said of meats and drinks, that they are sanctified unto us by the word of God, the same is to be understood of all things else we have the use of.” Once more, he says that place of St. Paul “is of all other most clear, where, speaking of those things which are called indifferent, in the end he concludeth, that ‘whatsoever is not of faith is sin;’ but faith is not but in respect of the word of God; therefore, whatever is not done by the word of God is sin.”

Replying to this last named point made by Cartwright, his skillful opponent, Hooker, insists that Paul means nothing else by faith in this place except “only a full persuasion that that which we do is well done.”<sup>18</sup> But Cartwright rejoins: “Whence can that spring but from faith? And how can we persuade and assure ourselves that we do well, but whereas we have the word of God for our warrant?”

Whitgift, in replying to Cartwright, said: “It is *not* true that whatsoever can not be proved in the word of God is not of faith; for then *to take up a STRAW*, to observe many civil orders, and to do a number of particular actions, were against faith, and so deadly sin; because it is not in the word of God that we should do them. The which doctrine must needs bring a great servitude and bondage to the conscience; restrain, or rather utterly overthrow, that part of Christian liberty which consisteth in the free use of indifferent things, neither commanded nor forbidden in the word of God; and throw men into desparation.”<sup>19</sup> But Cartwright answers:

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<sup>18</sup> *Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book 1, section 4. [Ed. *The works of Mr. Richard Hooker, ... vindicating the Church of England, as truly Christian, and duly reformed: in eight books of ecclesiastical polity* (London, 1662; Many editions).]

<sup>19</sup> See note to *Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book 1, introductory paragraph.

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<sup>15</sup> Short Catechism — *Works*. Vol. [15], pp. 468-71.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* p. 494.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* p. 505.

Even those things that are indifferent and may be done have their freedom grounded in the word of God. So that unless the word of the Lord, either in general or especial words, had determined of the free use of them, there could have been no lawful use of them at all. And when he (Dr. Whitgift) saith that St. Paul speaketh here of civil, private, and indifferent actions, as of eating this or that kind of meat (than the which there can be nothing more indifferent), he might easily have seen that the sentence of the apostle reacheth even to his case of *taking up a straw*. For if this rule be of indifferent things, and not of all, I would gladly know of him what indifferent things it is given of, and of what not? And the same, also, I require of him in the other general rule of doing all things to the glory of God. For if that reach unto all indifferent things, it must needs comprise also this action of his; which, if it do, then as no man can glorify God but by obedience, and there is no obedience but where there is a word, it must follow that there is a word. And seemeth it so strange a thing to him that a man should not take a *straw* but for some purpose, and for some good purpose? And will he not give the Lord leave to require of a Christian man endued with the Spirit of God as much as the heathen require of one who is only endued with reason, that he should do nothing whereof he hath not some good end; and that in all his doings, whether public or private, at home or abroad, whether with himself or with another, he ought to have regard whether that which he doth be in duty or no?

Such was the ground maintained so ably by Cartwright. On the contrary, Hooker, his able but unsound opponent cautiously questions whether “all things necessary unto salvation be necessarily set down in the Holy Scriptures or no?” “How can this be,” he demands, “when of things necessary the very chiefest is to know what books we are bound to esteem holy, which point is confest impossible for the Scripture itself to teach?”<sup>20</sup> Advancing still further in this semi-Popish strain, he more boldly avers: “It sufficeth, therefore, that nature and Scripture do serve in such full sort that they both jointly, and not severally, either of them, be so complete that, unto everlasting felicity, we need not the knowledge of any thing more than these two may easily furnish our minds with on all sides.”<sup>21</sup> And so his ground (resembling too much that of our brother who now argues for the divine right of organs) is, that God “approveth much more than he doth command;” that “his very commandments in some kind, as namely his precepts in the law of nature, may be otherwise

known than only by Scripture;” and “that it cannot stand with reason to make the bare mandate of Sacred Scripture the only rule of all good and evil in the actions of mortal men.”<sup>22</sup> Still further on, this eminent and eloquent defender of the prelacy lays down four propositions, which have too much the same sound with a large part of what has been just written by our brother. The first is: That since the public duties of religion excel in dignity all other things in the world, and since the best things have the perfectest and best operations, therefore they should have a *sensible* excellency correspondent to the majesty of him whom we worship; and the external form of religion should be such as appears to beseem the dignity of religion. The second is: That we may not, in this case, lightly esteem what hath been allowed as fit in the judgment of antiquity. The third is: That the Church hath power no less to ordain that which never was, than to ratify what hath been before. The fourth is: That some divine and apostolic ordinances and constitutions the Church has the right and power to dispense with.<sup>23</sup> These four propositions, as they will easily bring in the use of instruments by the Church, so they will also as easily bring in the vestments, the liturgy, the Apocrypha, and every other exercise of illegitimate Church power, and every other kind of will-worship ordained by the Church of England; for not submitting to which, as imposed on them, our fathers of old did grievously suffer.

We have thus brought forward, in support of our Confession of Faith,<sup>24</sup> (as the interpreter of God’s word), some high authorities against Dr. Smyth’s position—Owen and Cartwright, as holding forth to us the testimony of that grand body of theologians whom they may be said to represent. Let us ascend the stream a little higher, and consult that prince among the teachers of God’s Israel, John Calvin. First, let us hear him, in the *Institutes*, tell how God declares in Isaiah that he

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, Book 2, section 8.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, Book 5, section 6, 7, 8, 9.

<sup>24</sup> The Cambridge Platform (adopted by the New England churches in 1648, in the days of their early purity of doctrine), sets forth with great distinctness the very same views respecting the substantials and the circumstantials of church government which our Confession of Faith exhibits (Chap. I.6). It declares that “the parts of church government are all of them exactly described in the word of God;” while the “circumstances, as time and place, etc, belonging unto order and decency, are not so left to men as that, under pretence of them, they may thrust their own inventions upon the churches.”

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<sup>20</sup> *Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book 1, section 14.

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem.

is our only lawgiver, so that none may “take it on them to order any thing in the Church without authority from the word of God.” Again, he says Paul declares it (Col. 2:20) to be “a thing intolerable that the legitimate worship of God should be subjected to the will of men.” Again, he says that “when once religion begins to be composed of such vain fictions, there is no stopping till the commandment of God is made void through their traditions.” He refers to the well known fact that the pretended improvements of God’s worship which are found in the Romish Church, “took their model partly from the dreams of Gentiles and partly from the ancient rites of the Mosaic law, with which we have nothing more to do than with the sacrifices of animals, etc.” He quotes Augustine upon the simplicity of the rites in which “our Lord Christ bound together the society of his new people;” and he contrasts with this gospel simplicity, the mass of childish ceremonies and all the external show which had been brought into the Christian Church, insisting that we are no longer children under tutors, and have no more need of these puerile rudiments. He declares that God “denounces this curse in all ages” uniformly: that he will “strike with stupor and blindness those who worship him after the doctrines of men.” He insists that it is nothing but “rash human license, which can not confine itself within the boundaries prescribed by the word of God, but petulantly breaks out, and has recourse to its own inventions.” “The Lord cannot forget himself, and it is long since he declared that nothing is so offensive to him as to be worshipped by human inventions.” He demands if it can be “a small matter that the Lord is deprived of his kingdom, which he so strictly claims for himself? Now, he is deprived of it as often as he is worshipped with laws of human invention, since his will is to be the sole legislator of his worship.”<sup>25</sup>

Elsewhere we hear Calvin saying: “No worship is legitimate unless it be so founded as to have for its only rule the will of him to whom it is performed.” He adds (what Owen, as we have seen, says also): “The wantonness of our minds is notorious which breaks forth, especially in this quarter, where nothing ought to have been dared. Men allow themselves to devise all modes of worship, and change and rechange them at

pleasure. Nor is this the fault of our age. Even from the beginning of the world, the world sported thus licentiously with God.”<sup>26</sup>

Let us take a witness from amongst the very prelates, and he no other than Jeremy Taylor, Lord Bishop of Down, Connor, and Dromore. In his *Ductor Dubitantium*, we meet this question: “Whether in matters of religion we have that liberty as in matters of common life? Or whether is not every thing of religion determined by the laws of Jesus Christ, or may we choose something to worship God withal, concerning which he has

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<sup>26</sup> Calvin on “the true method of giving peace and reforming the Church.” “Irenæus,” (Rev. Dr. Prime), of the New York Observer, a high authority in such questions on the one side, recently writes: “In Russia, the bell is an instrument of music for the worship of God as truly and really as the organ in any other country. ... It appears to be stupid to cast bells so large as to be next to impossible for convenient use, in danger always of falling and dragging others to ruin in their fall. But when the bell is a medium of communication with the Infinite, and the worship of a people and an empire finds expression in the mystic tones of a bell, it ceases to be a wonder that a bell should have a tongue which it requires twenty-four men to move, and whose music should send a thrill of praise into every house in the city and float away beyond the river into the plains afar.” Whether this “praise” with bells found its way acceptably into the ear of the Lord of hosts, of course the writer does not pretend to say. That was, of course, a secondary question altogether. The idea seems to be a thrill of delight in every house floating afar into the plains beyond the Moskva River! Like the organ’s, this music of bells pleases the people’s ears, and that is the main point, whether God is pleased or not. This writer describes in glowing terms one particular occasion thus: “And all the churches and towers over the whole city, four hundred bells and more in concert, in harmony, ‘with notes almost divine,’ lift up their voices in an anthem of praise, such as I never thought to hear with mortal ears — waves of melody, an ocean of music, deep, rolling, heaving, changing, swelling, sinking, rising, sounding, overwhelming, exalting. I had heard the great organs of Europe, but they were tame and trifling compared with this. The anthem of nature at Niagara is familiar to every ear, but its thunder is one great monotone. The music of Moscow’s bells is above and beyond them all. It is the voice of the people. It utters the emotions of millions of loving, believing, longing hearts, not enlightened perhaps like yours, but all crying out to the Great Father, in these solemn and inspiring tones, as if their tongues had voices, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty, heaven and earth are full of thy glory!’” This, of course, is very fine writing after the New England style, such as our untutored Southern ears are not prepared to appreciate; and, of course, these bells of the Greek Church can utter the emotions of believing hearts just as well as the organs in Protestant churches; but the difficulty is to know what either bell or organ ever does utter—whether truth or lies—and to whom it speaks its praise—whether to the true God or a false one. Certainly it is no Christian way to depend on bells to jingle or organs to blow the heart’s emotions, while we have human tongues in our heads to speak God’s praise. We once read of a machine used by a Hindoo to pray with, and surely praise by machines is no better than prayer by machines. Both are, as Calvin says, a “licentious sporting with God.”

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<sup>25</sup> *Institutes*, Book IV, chap. 10, sections 7, 9, 10, 12, 14, 16, 17, 23.

neither given us commandment or intimation of his pleasure.” He lays down this principle in reply:<sup>27</sup>

Since, therefore, that God accepts any thing from us is not at all depending upon the merit of the work or the natural proportion of it to God, or that it can add any moments of felicity to him, it must be so wholly depending upon the will of God that it must have its being and abiding only from thence. He, that shall appoint with what God shall be worshipped, must appoint what that is by which he shall be pleased; which because it is unreasonable to suppose, it must follow that all the integral constituent parts of religion, all the fundamentals and essentials of the divine worship, can not be warranted to us by nature, but are primarily communicated to us by revelation. *‘Deum sic colere oportet, quomodo ipse se colendum præcepit,’* said St. Austin. Who can tell what can please God but God himself? For to be pleased is to have something that is agreeable to our wills and our desires; now, of God’s will there can be no signification but God’s word or declaration, and therefore by nothing can he be worshipped but by what himself hath declared that he is well pleased with. ... To worship God is an act of obedience and of duty, and therefore must suppose commandment, and is not of our choice, only that we must choose to obey. Of this God forewarned his people; he gave them a law and commanded them to obey that entirely, without addition or diminution, neither more nor less than it: ‘Whatsoever I command you observe to do it, thou shalt not add thereto nor diminish from it.’ ... So that in the Old Testament there is an express prohibition of any worship of their own choosing; all is unlawful but what God hath chosen and declared. In the New Testament, we are still under the same charge; and ἐθελοθρησκεία, or ‘will-worship,’ is a word of an ill sound amongst Christians most generally. ... So that thus far we are certain: (1). That nothing is necessary but what is commanded by God (2). Nothing is pleasing to God in religion that is merely of human invention (3). That the commandments of men can not become the doctrines of God; that is, no direct parts of the religion, no rule or measures of conscience.”

Let us go to the Church of Scotland for two witnesses. Thomas Boston says: “The Scriptures are a perfect rule, and also it is the only rule. Every doctrine taught any manner of way in religion must be brought to this rule.” He adds that this doctrine may give us “a just abhorrence of the superstition and ceremonies of the Church

<sup>27</sup> *Ductor Dubitantium*, Book 2, chapter 3, Rule 13: 7, 8, 9. [The whole works of the Right Rev. Jeremy Taylor, containing books I-IV. *Ductor dubitantium* (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1851-52)].

of England, whereby they have corrupted the worship of God, rejecting the simplicity of gospel worship and regulating their worship in many things, not by the Scripture, but the dregs of antichrist. ... As if they were ashamed of simple Scripture worship, but they must deck it up in the whorish garments made by their own brains.” Elsewhere he says: “The command says: *‘Thou shalt not make,* etc.’—that is, ‘but thou shalt receive’ the worship and ordinances as God hath appointed them, and not add to them of men’s inventions. Deut. 4:2.” Again: “What we call for is divine warrant: Who hath required this at your hands?”<sup>28</sup>

Hear also what the great Presbyterian teacher, Gillespie, says: “The Jewish Church, not as it was a church, but as it was Jewish, had an high priest, typifying our great High Priest, Jesus Christ. As it was Jewish, it had musicians to play upon harp, psalteries, cymbals, and other musical instruments in the temple (1 Chron. 25:1), concerning which hear Bellarmine’s confession (*De Bon. Oper*, lib. i, cap. 17): ‘Justinus saith that the use of instruments was granted to the Jews for their imperfection, and that therefore such instruments have no place in the Church. We confess, indeed, that the use of musical instruments agreeth not alike with the perfect and with the imperfect, and that therefore they began but of late to be admitted in the Church.’”<sup>29</sup>

Let us take a witness from the Reformed Church of France, the famous John Claude, born in 1618. He says: “Religion is called a *commandment* (1 Tim. 1:5), because in all its parts it ought to proceed from God. For, as he hath not left it to the choice of man to have or not to have a religion, so neither has he left it to his fancy to invent such a worship as he chooses; therefore St. Paul calls superstitions ἐθελοθρησκεία, will-worship. ... Whatever does not bear the divine impress can never be acceptable to God.”<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Boston’s *Body of Divinity*, Vol. 1, pp. 35, 36, 37, and Vol. 2, p. 427.

<sup>29</sup> Gillespie’s *Assertion of the Government of the Church of Scotland*. Part 1, chapter 3. [Ed. *Assertion, etc* (Edinburgh, 1641; *Works* (Presbyterian’s Armoury vols 1-2) (Edinburgh: Robert Ogle and Oliver and Boyd, 1844-46)].

<sup>30</sup> *Essay on Preaching, with notes by Robinson*, London, 1788, Vol. 1, pp. 215, 16. [Ed. Jean Claude, *An essay on the composition of a sermon: or, the beauties and defects of preaching*, translated by Robert Robinson (London, 1788; Third edition)].

Let us close this argument with a testimony from another of the non-conformists of the Church of England. The Rev. John Wesley, Senior (grandfather to the founder of Methodism), said to Gilbert Ironside, Bishop of Bristol: "May it please your lordship, we believe that *cultus non institutes est ineditus*—worship not instituted is not due. ... Bishop Andrews, taking notice of *non facies tibi*,—'Thou shalt not make to thyself,'—satisfied me that we may not worship God but as commanded."<sup>31</sup>

## ANSWERS TO OBJECTIONS

In answer to our argument, we anticipate a twofold reply. 1. In the first place, it will be said that the necessary circumstances of worship are not specifically commanded and yet are not forbidden; and that instrumental music is a mere circumstance of the praise of God, and as such is lawful. Now, we freely admit the necessity of the limitation upon its own doctrine, that all things necessary for God's glory, man's salvation, truth, and life, are revealed in Scripture, which the Confession places, viz, that "there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God and government of the Church common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the word, which are always to be observed" (Chap. I.6). This limitation, "so cautiously and exactly stated," is, as Dr. Cunningham says, a "necessary" one. "Common sense requires this limitation and Scripture itself sanctions it. And it is the more necessary to attend to it, in stating and discussing this question, because it is very easy to misrepresent and caricature the Presbyterian doctrine upon this subject, as is done even by Hooker in his *Ecclesiastical Polity*; and because it is chiefly by means of this limitation, ... that the unwarrantableness and unfairness of the common

misrepresentations of it [our doctrine] by Episcopalians are exposed."<sup>32</sup>

But what is the meaning of the doctrine of our Confession with this limitation appended? It is tantamount, we suppose, to the London Ministers' statement of the true doctrine as applied to church government, in these words: "All the substantials of the government under the New Testament are laid down in the word in particular rules, whether they be touching officers, ordinances, censures, assemblies, and the compass of their power, as after will appear; and all the circumstantials are laid down in the word, under general rules of order, decency, and edification."<sup>33</sup>

The "circumstances" and the "circumstantials" are, of course, the same.<sup>34</sup> Owen explains the term. "Circumstances (he says) are either such as follow actions, as actions, or such as are arbitrarily superadded, and adjoined by command unto actions." He gives an example of the first sort: "Prayer is a part of God's worship. Public prayer is so appointed by him. This, as it is an action to be performed by man, cannot be done without the assignment of time and place and sundry other things, if order and conveniency be attended to. These are circumstances that attend all actions of that nature to be performed by a community, whether they relate to the worship of God or no. These may men, according as they see good, regulate and change as there is occasion; I mean, they may do so who are acknowledged to have power in such things." But he proceeds: "There are also some things which some men call circumstances also, that no way belong, of themselves, to the actions whereof they are said to be the circumstances, but are imposed on them, or annexed unto them, by the arbitrary authority of those who take upon them to give order and rule in such cases. ... These

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<sup>31</sup> Wesley's *Works*, Vol. 4, p. 207, and Palmer's *Non-conformist's Memorial*, Vol. 2, p. 169. [Ed. *The Works of John Wesley* (Rpt of Third edition: Baker Book House, 1970). Author: Edmund Calamy, D.D. *The Nonconformist's Memorial; being an account of the ministers who were ejected or silenced after the Restoration, particularly by the Act of Uniformity ... 1662 ... Originally written by ... E. Calamy, D.D. Now abridged and corrected ... by Samuel Palmer* (London, 1802; Button & Son; T. Hurst, 1803.)

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<sup>32</sup> See Cunningham's admirable remarks on human inventions in worship, in his *Discussions on Church Principles*, pp. 249-256. [Ed. William Cunningham, *Discussions on church principles: Popish, Erastian, and Presbyterian* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1863)].

<sup>33</sup> *Divine Right of Church Government*. Part 2, chap. 4.

<sup>34</sup> The London Ministers prepared their work on the Divine Right in 1646, during the meetings of the Westminster Assembly. The statement concerning "circumstances," as now found in our Form of Government, occurs nearly word for word in the "First Paper of Proposals" offered by the Presbyterians to Charles II, in 1660, preparatory to the Savoy Conference.

are not circumstances attending the nature of thing itself, but are arbitrarily superadded to the things that they are appointed to accompany.”<sup>35</sup>

Now, our Confession, of course, speaks only of the former of these two classes of circumstances—of circumstances belonging to God’s worship, as it is an action by a society, just such as attend all actions of all societies; circumstances which are so essential that without them the actions cannot be done. All such circumstances are really commanded in the commanding of the action; for if men are commanded to come together to pray, they are commanded to agree upon a time and place of coming together.

Certainly it cannot be maintained that the organ is a circumstance, in this sense. Clearly, it is something *annexed* to the worship. Under the law, such things were a necessary part of the divine worship, as Owen says.<sup>36</sup> Who will pretend that they came in then as mere circumstances, or by human authority, and not by special divine authority given to inspired David? But if, confessedly, they came not in then as mere circumstances nor by decree of man, no more may they now find entrance in this way.

As to the tuning fork, if it be a necessary circumstance of rightly pitching the voice, without which God’s ordinance of singing cannot be properly carried into execution, then it must be held to be one of the things commanded; and so the question of its use must be left to Christian liberty and prudence.

This plea of the organ’s being a mere circumstance of worship, whilst it may be offered by others, is not and could not be employed by Dr. Smyth. With characteristic frankness he boldly defends the organ as a competent part of the worship of God under the New Testament. This is the only manly and fair position its advocates can take. But whenever they do take it, they have to encounter the condemnation which awaits those who presume to add to God’s commands respecting his worship.

2. The other reply which we anticipate to our argument affirms this principle, that whatever was appointed of old, and was acceptable to God

under a former dispensation, and has not been specifically abolished by name, may now be employed by us in the public worship of God, provided it seem good and proper to ourselves; because the Church has liberty. Sacrifices and all other typical things having been fulfilled in Christ, have, it is said, passed away, of course; but the instruments of music had no typical meaning, and so they may stand firm in the New Testament worship, provided we think proper. It is further urged in this reply, that instrumental music having been acceptable to God formerly, it may be presumed that it cannot now be unacceptable to him, since he has not specifically forbidden it.

Now, 1. Has the Church any liberty beyond the mere circumstances which belong necessarily to God’s appointments? So does not our Confession teach. So did not our forefathers in England and Scotland teach. So do not the Scriptures teach. The Church has not liberty to appoint rites. Worship of her will is not acceptable. In vain do we worship after the commandments of men. It is for God only to determine how he is to be approached.

2. Are we authorized to say that the instruments used in public worship of old had no typical meaning? Fairbairn tells us that the tabernacle or temple, “*as a whole*, is affirmed in the Epistles to the Hebrews and the Colossians to have been of a typical nature.”<sup>37</sup> Nor can this statement be disputed. But if the whole be represented in Scripture as typical, which of us shall venture to say of any part that it is not typical? Fairbairn goes on to say (p. 60), that “while New Testament Scripture speaks thus of the whole, it deals very sparingly in particular examples; ... it no where tells us what was either immediately symbolized or prophetically shadowed forth by the holy place in the tabernacle, or the shewbread, or the golden candlestick, or the ark of the covenant, or indeed by any thing connected with the tabernacle, excepting its more prominent offices and ministrations.” Even the Epistle to the Hebrews, he says, “which is most express in ascribing a typical value to all that belonged to the tabernacle, can yet scarcely be said to give any detailed explanation of its furniture and services beyond the rite of expiatory sacrifice. ... So that

<sup>35</sup> Owen’s Discourse concerning Liturgies. *Works*, Vol. [15], p. 437.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 439.

<sup>37</sup> Fairbairn’s *Typology*, Vol 1, p. 29. [Ed. *The Typology of Scripture: viewed in connection with the whole series of the divine dispensations* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1864; fourth edition)].

those who insist on explicit warrant and direction from Scripture in regard to each particular type, will find their principle conducts them but a short way, even through that department which they are obliged to admit possesses throughout a typical character." It would seem to be enough for us to know that worship by instruments was a part of the public worship of the temple,<sup>38</sup> to satisfy us that it was abolished with the whole of that temporary and peculiar institute of God. Clearly, this was one of the "carnal ordinances imposed on them until the time of reformation" (Heb. 9:10), to pass away with the other "elements or rudiments of the world," to which the Church in her juvenile estate was "in bondage" and under pupilage "as to a schoolmaster." Fairbairn dwells (p. 59) on this idea of the Church being prepared for higher, simpler, more spiritual methods of instruction and worship by the use of these merely animal, fleshly, sensuous, material, temporal things; and describes her passing with intelligence and delight "from rudimental tutelage under the shadows of good things into the free use and enjoyment of the things themselves." It must accordingly be worse than childishness in her now to go back to a delight in using any part of this antiquated and therefore abolished system. We follow in the track of Paul when we reason that what is decayed and waxen old should vanish from use in the New Testament Church (Heb. 8:13).

3. Is it to be taken for granted always that a mode of worship once acceptable to God is always acceptable? It is not. God claims the sovereign right to alter and to abolish his own institutes. It is indeed "a fallacy that whatever is appointed by God can never become obsolete."<sup>39</sup> Circumcision is obsolete. Once imperatively necessary to secure God's friendship, now, "if ye be circumcised,

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<sup>38</sup> We are by no means prepared to admit that the use of instruments in the temple belonged to the stated or ordinary worship there. Upon some extraordinary occasions, it did undoubtedly make a part of the temple worship, however, and that by divine command. It is amusing to see how delighted Dr. Smyth is when he can quote one of the references to "a commandment of the Lord" to this effect (see p. 541), as appears from the capital letters he employs. That is all which the use of organs in the New Testament Church lacks — the command of the Lord by the apostles, either perceptively or by example; either expressly or constructively by good and necessary consequence.

<sup>39</sup> Killeen's *Ancient Church*, p. 78. [Ed. Note. W. D. Killeen, *The ancient church : its history, doctrine, worship, and constitution, traced for the first three hundred years* (London: J. Nisbet, 1859)]

Christ shall profit you nothing," and you shall be lost. Before Moses, it was right and acceptable to offer sacrifices to God on high places. Afterwards they were abominable if offered any where but at the tabernacle. Still later, the tabernacle gives way to the temple. Shiloh and Gibeon are profane, and "in Jerusalem is the place where we ought to worship;" but now it would be wicked to insist on any such rule. Once, incense in clouds arose acceptably before God. Now, we may not dare to borrow any such thing from an abolished ritual. The Church could not plead that this was once acceptable to God; has not been specifically abolished; would be a very seemly and beautiful appendage to public prayer; and must therefore, of course, be lawful to us and pleasing to God. No! the Christian Church had inspired apostles to set up her doctrine, government, and worship. This was one especial part of their apostolic work. They were not capable of forgetting any thing required of us by the Lord, for they had the Spirit to guide them. And now we may not impute imperfection to their work, by essaying any improvements upon it whatsoever. ❀

**For more information on this topic, see:**

*Organ Grinding Circa 1849.* (The Blue Banner, January-February 1994) A debate over the use of the organ in the public worship of God, which took place in 1849, wherein Robert L. Dabney, the famous Southern Presbyterian theologian, took a prominent part. The full text is available at the fpcr.org website.

*Instrumental Music in the Public Worship of the Church,* by John L. Girardeau. Even after 100 years, this is the standard work taking the negative view, by the famous American Southern Presbyterian theologian. See whole text at fpcr.org.

*Interpretation of Psalm 150.* Richard Bacon. The Blue Banner, v11#4. Also at fpcr.org

*Instrumental Music in Religious Worship.* By Rev. John M'Donald. A brief tract summarizing the position against having musical instruments in public worship services. Available as a tract from Blue Banner ministries. One copy for \$.50. Five for \$1.50. Ten copies for \$2.50. Twenty-Five copies for \$3.25. A hundred copies for \$14.50. Add 10% or \$3.50 minimum for postage, whichever is greater. ❀

# Thinking Inside the Box: An Old Perspective on the New Perspective on Paul.

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*By Jerrold Lewis.*

## Introduction



Between 1712-1717 a struggle ensued in the Church of Scotland concerning a young man and his presbyterial exam for license. William Craig was asked by the presbytery of Auchterarder if he would subscribe to the following, "It is not sound and orthodox to teach, that we must forsake sin, in order to our coming to Christ, and instating us in covenant with God" (Boston 317). In the years that followed (1717-1722), a great debate emerged in that country between a small evangelical minority known as the Marrow Men, and the vast majority of the Church of Scotland known as "neonomians." The question surrounding the debate was one of eternal consequence; how is one eternally justified, and what is the relationship between the law and the gospel?

History has vindicated that small band of earnest contenders, and the Church universal has immeasurably benefited from their timely defense of forensic justification by imputed righteousness.

Two hundred and eighty years later it appears another small band of earnest contenders has emerged to take up the cause of the Marrow Controversy. Unfortunately this small but vociferous group has found itself on the opposite side of the debate, touting the torch of the neonomians contending that the question, "*What must I do to be saved*" (Acts 16:30), is the wrong question; the right question being, "*What does the Lord require*" (Micah 6:8) (Schlissel 5). At the 2002 Auburn Avenue Pastors Conference, Steve Schlissel, Doug Wilson, Steve Wilkins, and John Barach dropped the theological gauntlet with what appears to be a sideways attack on the Reformed doctrine of imputed righteousness and

forensic justification (among other doctrines). In the New Southern Presbyterian Review, Dr. Joe Morecraft asserts that the source of this assault stems from that group's "own readjustment of a movement that is over thirty years old called by its representatives 'The New Perspective on Paul'" (Morecraft 15). The New Perspective on Paul movement is a denial and revamping of forensic justification, and should be avoided because it subverts the biblical doctrine of imputed righteousness.

## A SUMMARY OF THE NEW PERSPECTIVE ON PAUL

The New Perspective on Paul movement began with E.P. Sanders in 1977 when he wrote a book titled *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion*. In it, he taught that Paul essentially agreed with the Jew's 1<sup>st</sup> Century understanding of the law of God, and justification. According to the New Perspective, the Jews of Paul's day were not works righteousness based, but were simply mistaken as to who the Messiah was. A heavy emphasis is placed on an intertestamental Jewish idea which taught that Adam was a "type" of Israel, and that *covenant acceptance* would one day be found by an Adamic representative (Wright 18). According to the New Perspective architects, the "Last Adam" (Jesus) represented Israel as the *collective Adam*, standing in the place of unfaithful national Israel. N.T Wright insists, "Adamic theology, where it occurs in the Old Testament and intertestamental writings, fulfils a specific purpose" (Wright 21). The purpose being that *collective Adam* (Israel), "is, or is to become, God's true humanity" (21). Consequently, Christ as the *Last Adam* stands in place of the "whole eschatological people of God" (21) and

inaugurates a new and broader Israel, which includes converted Gentiles. Christ's propitiation then is first a national (covenantal) representation, and then an individual one (personal election). The subtlety here is almost unnoticeable, until we remind ourselves that Christ in his death was not primarily representing a nation that would maintain their status of covenant people, but rather the elect throughout all time who would become spiritual Israel. "*For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel*" (Romans 9:6). Here then in the New Perspective, the idea of *Covenant* has superseded the doctrine of *election*.

Furthermore, the New Perspective teaches that both 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jews and Christians understood that salvation is by grace through faith, and that good works are merely the outworking of loving obedience toward God. The difference between the two groups is found in their approach to Jesus Christ. The 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jew rejected Jesus as the Messiah and claimed an exclusively Jewish covenant, furnished with the badges of circumcision, the Sabbath, and the moral/ceremonial law. The Christian, on the other hand, believed Jesus was the Messiah who (as the collective Adamic symbol) brings the promised vindication of God's people to fruition by establishing the one sacrifice, and rendering the old covenant requirements unnecessary. Justification therefore was not believed to be a forensic imputation, but rather a declaration pertaining to someone who has already *received mercy*, and who is already a member of the improved-covenant community. In other words, if you are in the covenant by baptism, salvation belongs to you as much as the saint in heaven. Subsequently, obedience to the law is then required to maintain that state of justification. Neither the New Testament Jew nor Gentile thought that the law brought about salvation, but *maintained the salvation already given graciously in the Covenant*. The only problem with the Jew then, in Paul's mind, is their rejection of Christ. The two views were very similar in that they both believed that justification was inherent in the covenant and mere maintenance was required to be finally justified.

This is a summary of the New Perspective doctrine.

## THE TROJAN

Since 1977 men such as, Daniel Fuller, and Norman Shepherd have picked up this new teaching. Shepherd, who held the chair of Systematic Theology at Westminster Seminary (East), was released from his professorship in 1982 for teaching doctrines that, in some minds in the Seminary community and constituency, taught a justification that, "contradict or contravene, either directly or impliedly, some element in that system of doctrine taught by the Standards" (Approved by the Executive Committee of the Board February 26, 1982). Shepherd left the Orthodox Presbyterian Church for the CRC before the charges against him could be brought to Presbytery. Shepherd's full-bodied embrace of the New Perspective movement appears to have led to the wayward teachings of the Auburn Avenue men and their evident hypercovenantalism (Morecraft 16).

Essentially, the New Perspective on Paul theology believes that "...one's place in God's plan is established on the basis of the covenant and that the covenant requires as the proper response of man his obedience to its commandments, while providing means of atonement for transgression" (Sanders 75). If you look closely at Sanders' words you can see that he is teaching that justification is not forensic, but covenantal. Norman Shepherd echoes Sanders when he says,

Because faith which is not obedient faith is dead faith, and because repentance is necessary for the pardon of sin included in justification, **and because abiding in Christ by keeping his commandments are all necessary for continuing in the state of justification**, good works, works done from true faith, according to the law of God are nevertheless **necessary for salvation from eternal condemnation and therefore for justification**. (Presented to the Presbytery of Philadelphia of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. November 18, 1978)

How contrary is Shepherd to our own subordinate standards which say,

Those whom God effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth: not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous; not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone; nor by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their

righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness, by faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God. (Westminster Confession of Faith 56-57)

Notice that our forefathers affirm that we are justified by imputed righteousness, not “good works, done from true faith” as Shepherd claims. Granted, Shepherd does say in his *Thirty-four Theses on Justification in Relation to Faith, Repentance, and Good Works*, that justification is forensic and imputed, but he fails to adequately define these ideas in terms of The New Perspective, and later contradicts himself by saying that the believer’s works are “necessary to his continuing in a state of justification” (Shepherd). Justifying faith and works are mutually exclusive when we speak of the legal nature of the act. Justification is not organic, but static. Sanctification is organic. Works done after justification are *reward-based* in that we store up for ourselves “treasures in heaven” (Matthew 6:20), but they are never considered meritorious in getting to heaven. “*Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law*” (Romans 3:28). John Murray says regarding justification and reward based works,

In reference to these two doctrines it is important to observe the following: (i) This future reward is not justification and contributes nothing to that which constitutes justification. (ii) This future reward is not salvation. Salvation is by grace and it is not a reward for works that we are saved. (iii) The reward has reference to the station a person is to occupy in glory and does not have reference to the gift of glory itself. While the reward is of grace yet the standard or criterion of judgment by which the degree of reward is to be determined is good works. (iv) This reward is not administered because good works earn or merit reward, but because God is graciously pleased to reward them. That is to say it is a reward of grace. (Murray 221-222)

Shepherd however, wants a *forensic* justification in reference to Christ’s cross-work, and then he wants an *eschatological justification* (that is, a future justification) which progresses like sanctification. “The righteousness of Jesus Christ ever remains the exclusive ground of the believer’s justification, but the personal godliness of the believer is also necessary for **his justification in the judgment of the last day...**” (Emphasis mine) (Shepherd).

Others within the Reformed community have taken up the cause of Norman Shepherd, and have clarified its implications. To these men, justification is tied to your covenant baptism and not individual election.

But how do you know that God chose you? - The answer is that you’ve had the special experience. You’ve been baptized. All God’s salvation—from election to glorification—is found in Christ. And when you were baptized, God promised to unite you to Jesus Christ” (Barach).

This is not true. The Westminster Confession teaches that the covenant seal belongs “to such (whether of age or infants) **as that grace belongeth unto**, according to the counsel of God’s own will, in his appointed time (Emphasis mine) (115). We must not tie justification into our baptism, but rather the seal of our baptism to divine election.

Yet to others, because they believe justification is tied to baptism and the covenant, justification can be taken away depending on one’s obedience to the moral law. Witness Doug Wilson:

Membership in the covenant is objective. It can be photographed. - All this [John 15] means that a man **can be genuinely attached** to Christ and yet bear no fruit. **He is as attached as the fruit-bearing branch is.** They both partake of the root and fatness of the tree. Sap flows to both branches. The fruitless branch tastes the heavenly gift. He has been enlightened (Heb. 6:4). (Emphasis mine) (Wilson 16)

John Owen, in his commentary on this passage, does not agree with Wilson that the apostate professor “is as attached as the fruit-bearing branch is.” Wilson alludes to the words “enlightened” and “tasted” in Hebrews 6, as support for his argument that “man can be genuinely attached to Christ and yet bear no fruit.” Here, Wilson has misunderstood the relationship between *apparent union* and *actual union* in Christ. The difference between tasting and drinking, or what Owen refers to as the difference between *spiritual operations*, and *personal inhabitation*, of which, there is a great quality of difference. One is salvation; the other is not (Owen 80). But it is precisely this kind of new interpretation that has generated so much interest from the wider Reformed body. It appears that Wilson is quite willing to challenge the *status quo* and redefine several core doctrines.

During the Auburn Avenue Pastors Conference (2002), Doug Wilson pushed the envelope a bit further by stating,

The church today has adopted a number of assumptions that are **diametrically opposed to what the word of God teaches...** This means that in Christian circles, in evangelical circles and **particularly in reformed circles**, we have to stop confessing our sins and start confessing our virtues. The things that we thought were our strengths are the things that have been dogging us for a long, long time, for a number of centuries. **For 350 years in this country, we have been getting some of the fundamental issues with regard to the word of God, and the covenant, and the gospel, and what is a Christian, we have been getting them wrong**". (Emphasis Mine) (page 20, line 23-28. Doug Wilson: Visible and Invisible Church Revisited Tape 2)

Wilson, in this quote, sets the stage to challenge 350 years of Reformed teaching in the USA (from John Cotton onward) regarding some of the fundamental issues surrounding:

1. The Word of God.
2. The Covenant.
3. What is a Christian?

He sets the stage by claiming that there are a number of assumptions that the evangelical church holds to (particularly in reformed circles) that are not *merely slightly off*, or *partially incorrect*, but are nothing less than "diametrically opposed to what the word of God teaches" (Wilson 20). He goes on to say that for 350 years, the Reformed church has "been getting them wrong" (20). Wilson, in this lecture, is not asking for a readjustment of the Reformed doctrines mentioned (which include justification), but is insistent on a reconstruction of the doctrines.

This is only magnified by his opening remarks,

In order to understand this, we have to **work through all of the baggage that we have picked up**. And we have been **some centuries picking it up** and here I want to qualify some of what I am going to be saying and I will have to qualify a couple of times. I just want you to know, depending on your background, depending on where you are coming from, depending on what sorts of things you are trying to shake off, you might think at several times in this talk that I am out there on the skinny branches and getting farther out. And to reassure yourself, whenever that happens, just tell yourself at that time, he is holding back. (Emphasis Mine) (page 19, line 25-

31. Doug Wilson: Visible and Invisible Church Revisited Tape 2.)

Likewise Steve Schlissel, pastor of the independent Messiah's Congregation in Brooklyn New York, also uses strong language in attempt to reorient the Church's current understanding on justification. He says, "If we do not retool our churches to turn around from *What must I do to be saved?* to *What does the Lord require?* we are going to die" (Schlissel 5). He then goes on to attack the Reformed understanding of *sola fide* insisting that its current outworking is too introspective by repeatedly qualifying the characteristic of a person's faith. "Before you know it everybody thinks that he or she is not saved. 'How can I truly be saved?' To find out, come back next week and the preacher will make you feel guilty, but godly." (Schlissel 5)

The consequences of this branch of theology has serious methodological implications. A subtle form of *presumptive regeneration* tiptoes into the church rearranging the core question of the gospel. Schlissel concludes that it is wrong to start with reprobation and move to regeneration when dealing with the idea of the covenant. He believes that we must leapfrog over the fundamental question "*What must I do to be saved,*" and land squarely on "*What does the Lord require.*" This kind of unfortunate language appears to contravene the Scriptures which say, "*Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart*" (Psalms 26:2), "*work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*" (Philippians 2:12), and "*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reborn?*" (2 Corinthians 13:5). To Schlissel then, if you are born into the covenant, you are *ipso facto* assumed to be justified. Now you are commanded to observe covenantal maintenance by law keeping, thus *preserving* your *inherent justification*.

This then is the crux of the debate: **Is justifying faith an obedient faith as Schlissel, Shepherd and company assert? Or is justifying faith an alien (Christ) imputed faith that is followed by a sanctifying work of the Spirit, which produces obedience?** This is not a trivial question. It is of eternal consequence. According to Luther, justification by faith is "the basic and chief article of faith with which the church stands

or falls, and on which its entire doctrine depends” (Althaus 224).

### THE BIBLICAL USE OF THE WORD “JUSTIFY”

In the Reformed Church it is universally believed that the word “justification” is the key to Paul’s Epistle to the Romans. The English verb “justify” comes directly from the Latin word *justifico*, which is a verb that belonged to the Roman law system. The noun *justificatio* from which we transliterated the English word “justification” means that an accused person is pronounced free of blame and retribution. It is an essential part of the catholic doctrine of the atonement, and justification by faith alone became the rallying cry of the Reformation. But was Luther right in his conclusion that justification was forensic?

We do not need to probe too deeply into the psychology of Paul to find the answer to this question. Besides, an overuse of one hermeneutical tool (History) can and does lead to doctrines of imbalance. While we do need to take into account the personality of the author of any inspired book, it should not be to the neglect of other equally important tools of discovery. Paul’s life and experience with the 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestinian Jew might come into play at times, but it hardly overrides the perspicuity of Scripture or the direct imposition of Divine inspiration. This is one of the great problems of the New Perspective theology - an over analysis of Paul (and what may or may not have been his understanding of 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jews) to the neglect of the other books of the Bible and to perspicuity itself. The Holy Spirit in the pages of Holy Writ is the key to understanding the doctrine of justification (comparing spiritual things with spiritual), not 1<sup>st</sup> Century Palestinian Jewish thought. So we must go to the Holy Canon to discover whether there is a biblical case for forensic justification and rest our doctrine on the findings.

Exodus 23:7. “Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked.”

Here is the first instance of the word justify being used in the Word of God. It is hard to avoid the clear legal context of the verse. The overriding theme of this text is one of law and order. Dr.

White in his excellent book *The God Who Justifies* comments,

In the first phrase God’s law says that the innocent or the righteous are not to be killed. Obviously, this does not mean “those who are sinlessly perfect” but rather those who are innocent or righteous in the eyes of the law. This is a legal, not a moral description. (White 77)

Likewise in Deuteronomy 25:1 says, “If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked.” Here we are informed (by context) of a legal situation. The words “controversy,” “come to judgment,” “judges may judge them;” “righteous,” and “condemnation” are only properly understood in the context of a legal situation. Similarly in Proverbs 17:15 the words “justifieth” and “condemneth” are placed in contrast to each other. “He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD.” Clearly we are dealing with terms surrounding legal activity. The basis of the ideal of a legal justification is immersing from the pages of Scripture, not by imposition of Greek thinking into the text. John Murray elaborates on this idea in his *Collective Writings*, Volume 2:

Justification means to declare to be righteous-it is a judgment based upon the recognition that a person stands in right relation to law and justice...How can God justify the ungodly? ... God’s justification of the ungodly presupposes or comprises within itself-that is to say the action of God denoted by justification of the ungodly-another action besides that which is expressed by our English word “declare righteous” ... This action is one in which he actually causes to be the relation which in justification is declared to be. He effects a right relation as well as declares that relation to be. In other words he constitutes the state which is declared to be. Hence the justifying act either includes or presupposes the constitutive act. (Murray 206)

Isaiah 53:11-12. “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.”

This great text holds out the substitutionary work of Christ on the cross and the use of the word justify in relation to Christ’s work on the cross. Here the word justify is used in reference to many, not just one. In every other instance we

have come across thus far, there is a one to one correlation between the innocent party and his justification. But here we have Jesus who is truly innocent, relinquishing His declared, intrinsic righteousness, and forwarding it to stand in the place of the guilty. White interjects,

This is the very basis of the Protestant doctrine of justification: Sinners are declared righteous before God solely because of the sin-bearing work of the Messiah in their place. The act of justifying them is seen to be consistent with what has come before; it is a declaration, based upon the work of another. (White 81)

The Old Testament clearly teaches a forensic justification.

### PAUL'S USE OF JUSTIFY AND JUSTIFIED IN ROMANS

Dr. White maintains that Paul's use of the word *justify* in the book of Romans would have been rooted in the Greek Septuagint simply because it was the standard translation of the Old Testament Scriptures at that time (81). The Septuagint's use of the verb "to justify" is also used in a legal, forensic context. This can be illustrated in a few ways.

First, Genesis 15:6 is quoted no less than four times in the New Testament, and each time it is used in proving that the justification was based on faith, and not works. It was not because of Abraham's works that God justified him but because of the faith forensically imputed to Abraham. Expounding this thought, Theodore Beza comments:

Abraham was not justified, and made the father of the faithful, by any of his own works, either preceding or following his faith in Christ, as promised to him; but merely by faith in Christ, or the merit of Christ by faith imputed to him for righteousness. Therefore all his children become his children and are justified, not by their works, either preceding or following their faith; but by faith alone in the same Christ. (qtd. in Plumer 244)

Romans 8:30-34, "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he

not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth."

This passage clearly settles the issue of the meaning of justification. Without any hesitation the reader can see that the idea of legal/forensic justification as represented in the Old Testament passages (Exodus 23:7; Deuteronomy 25:1; Proverbs 17:15, Isaiah 53) is revisited here with boldness and bravado. Without a doubt the court of law setting found in this passage points to an imputed/forensic meaning to the word justify. "*Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect,*" is only understood as a law term, and must be recognized as such. Dr. White says regarding this passage,

... the term for "charge" has been widely documented in secular Greek texts regarding the bringing the accusations in legal proceedings. Any person sitting in the congregation in Rome, hearing this letter read would immediately think of the Roman legal system and formal charges in a court. (White 85)

This understanding of "to justify" has had a far-reaching effect, and it was on this idea of forensic justification by imputed righteousness that James Buchanan said,

If we seek to ascertain the reasons which rendered it (Christ's death) necessary ... we are taught by Scripture to ascribe it to the sins of men—and the justice of God—viewed in connection with His purpose of saving sinners, in a way consistent with the honour of His law, and the interests of His righteous government, through a Divine Redeemer. If this be the correct view of the reason of His death ... then we cannot fail to regard all the sufferings, which constituted so important a part of Christ's Mediatorial work, as strictly penal. They were the punishment, not of personal, but of imputed, guilt. They were inflicted on Him as the Substitute of sinners. He was "made a curse" for them, but only because He had been "made sin for them." In this view, His sufferings were penal, because they were judicially imposed on Him as the legal representative of those who had come under "the curse," according to the rule of that law which proclaimed that "the wages of sin is death," and that "the soul which sinneth it shall die." (Buchanan 305-306)

Norman Shepherd wants to teach that justification is a state, or a condition, "abiding in Christ by keeping his commandments are all necessary for continuing in the **state of justification**" (Emphasis mine). This is contrary

to the usage of the word “to justify.” Professor Murray says on this word, “Examination of its instances will show rather clearly that *dikaion* never has a stative force in the active voice; it is a verb of action and does not denote a state (Murray 348). There appears to be a mixing of the doctrine of justification with the doctrine of sanctification—faith and works, or faith plus works on the part of the New Perspective proponents. The law is never an aid in our justification (unless we speak in terms of Christ’s active and passive obedience to the law in our stead), and therefore to make law keeping a condition of maintaining the state of justification as Shepherd asserts is simply false. Robert Traill comments,

But if men will teach that the law and obedience to it, whether perfect or sincere, is the righteousness we must be found and stand in, in our pleading for justification, they neither understand what they say nor whereof they affirm .... They become debtors to the law, and Christ profits them nothing. (Traill 61)

#### **THE PLACE OF WORKS: BELIEVE AND BEHAVE.**

While the Reformers believed that justification was by faith alone (*sola fide*) and without the works of the law, they were not renouncing works in general. The Reformers collectively insisted on the essential need for the works of sanctification. John states, “*By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments ... no one who is born of God practices sin, for His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin because he is born of God.*” (1 John. 2:3; 3:9). Notice the past tense of the phrase “come to know.” The established relationship between God and the child of God is firm, based on Jesus Christ and his imputed righteousness. Now, after we have come to know Him, we are to walk in a way that will evidence our union with Him. We walk in the way of the law. A righteous life is the evidence of the work of salvation, but not the grounds. There is a direct correlation between faith and works that is inseparable. You cannot separate faith from good works. But ontologically, that is relating to the essence or nature of its being, there is a succession of works following saving faith.

Thomas Cranmer, expresses it well:

There is one faith which in Scripture is called a dead faith, which bringeth forth no good works,

but is idle, barren, and unfruitful. And this faith by the holy apostle St. James is compared to the faith of devils, which believe God to be true and just, and tremble for fear, yet they do nothing well, but all evil. And such manner of faith have the wicked and naughty Christian people; “which confess God,” as St. Paul saith, “in their mouth, but deny him in their deeds, being abominable and without the right faith and in all good works reprobable ...” This dead faith therefore is not that sure and substantial faith which saveth sinners ... The true, lively, and unfeigned Christian faith ... is not in the mouth and outward profession only, but it liveth, and stirreth inwardly in the heart. And this faith is not without hope and trust in God, nor without the love of God and of our neighbours, nor without the fear of God, nor without the desire to hear God’s word, and to follow the same in eschewing evil and doing gladly all good works. (Cranmer 272-273)

John Murray furthers the thought,

While it makes void the gospel to introduce works in connection with justification, nevertheless works done in faith, from the motive of love to God, in obedience to the revealed will of God and to the end of his glory are intrinsically good and acceptable to God. As such they will be the criterion of reward in the life to come. This is apparent from such passages as Matthew 10:41; 1 Corinthians 3:8-9, 11-15; 4:5; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Timothy 4:7. We must maintain therefore, justification complete and irrevocable by grace through faith and apart from works, and at the same time, future reward according to works. (Murray 221)

It is only the believer that can proclaim with David, “*O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day*” (Psalms 119:97).

#### **LET’S NOT MINIMIZE**

We can rightly say about forensic justification what Dabney says about Christ’s substitutionary death, “Many other heads of doctrine which are cardinal in the bible system are vitiated or impugned when that doctrine is rejected” (Dabney 89). The importance of this doctrine must not be diminished. The temptation will be to open the door on this subject on the grounds of brotherly love, scholasticism, and even plain old polemics. But the New Perspective on Paul movement is not just another interpretation of justification, rather a complete revamping of the Reformed and Protestant view. Their view of Covenant has obstructed justification and redefined salvation. As Luther put it, this doctrine is *Articulus stantis, et cadentis Ecclesiae* (the article of a standing and a falling

church). We must react in truth and in thoughtful haste.

Last year, malicious forces that wanted to bring down the symbols of American and Western power attacked the World Trade Center. The world stood by and could only watch the two towers crumble. We have two towers that are standing before us in the Reformed church today which symbolize who *we* are—the towers of Justification and Sanctification. Let’s not stand by and watch them fall. *“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints”* (Jude 1:3).

Roman Catholicism	New Perspective on Paul Proponents
Baptism is the instrumental cause of justification.	“But how do you know that God chose you? - The answer is that you’ve had the special experience. You’ve been baptized.” <b>John Barach</b>
Faith is necessary for justification but not sufficient for it.	“The righteousness of Jesus Christ ever remains the exclusive ground of the believer’s justification, but the personal godliness of the believer <b>is also necessary</b> for his justification in the judgment of the last day.” <b>Norman Shepherd</b>
A person is justified by faith plus works.	“... good works, works done from true faith, according to the law of God are nevertheless necessary for salvation from eternal condemnation and therefore for justification.” <b>Norman Shepherd.</b>
<i>Sola fide</i> is rejected and anathematized as a false gospel.	“Do not trust in deceptive words and say, ‘The <i>solas</i> of the Reformation, The <i>solas</i> of the Reformation, The <i>solas</i> of the Reformation.’” <b>Steve Schlissel</b>

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# Confessions in Scripture. Part One.

The following is a fuller treatment of the subject than that covered in Dr. Bacon's *Pattern in the Heavens, volume 2*.

By Dr. Richard Bacon.

elly<sup>1</sup> and Neufeld<sup>2</sup> both point out in their respective works on early creeds and confessions in the church that the apostles were still alive when short single proposition and multi-proposition creeds began to be constructed for use by the Christian community. The simplest confessions contained in Scripture are little more than ejaculations; but just as an ejaculatory prayer is still prayer, so is an ejaculatory confession still a confession. The simplest confessions that we can find in Scripture, then, consist of single-member or single-proposition statements about Christ. The first is that Jesus is "Lord" or Jesus is "the Lord." It is upon the supposition that one rightly confesses and believes that Jesus is Lord that he evidences his salvation.

### Κύριος Ἰησοῦς

The only means by which one can truthfully say, or faithfully say that "Jesus is the Lord," is if he has been regenerated by the Holy Ghost. So certain is this, that Paul allows only two possibilities: the first by the Jews, that "Jesus is anathema" and the second by the regenerated Christian, that "Jesus is the Lord."<sup>3</sup> Thus, also, Paul affirmed that one must both confess and believe that Jesus is Lord, i.e. that God raised Jesus from the dead.<sup>4</sup>

Some have claimed to see an early Christian "hymn" in portions of Scripture that are basically Christological confessions or, if we prefer the

term, Christological kerygmas.<sup>5</sup> There is actually no evidence of these portions having been used liturgically prior to their inclusion in Scripture. Yet there is in the very terminology of the passages an evidence of creedal use in the church. Thus, for example, in 1 Corinthians 15:3ff. there is first the idea of "delivering and receiving." There is a specific apostolic paradosis that is received and then passed along. And the confession or creed in the passage, though short, is quite to the point:

Christ	Died for our sins	According to Scriptures
He (Christ)	Was buried	
He (Christ)	Rose again	According to Scriptures
He (Christ)	Was seen	

Rudimentary though this particular Christological kerygma may at first seem, it is nevertheless a significant confession of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. As we shall see below, though the Jews clearly had a different idea of the Messiah than what Jesus' actual mission was in coming to earth, when Peter confessed that Jesus was the Christ, Jesus was prompt to invest proper death/burial/resurrection content into the term. Another Pauline passage is also set forth quite often as being a "hymn fragment." Whether or not the passage is a hymn fragment, it is clearly a confessional or creedal "fragment." It seems that Paul either was composing a Christological statement under immediately inspiration of the Spirit or else was, by inspiration, copying the words of an existing

1. Kelly, *Creeds*, 15-16.

2. Neufeld, *Confessions, passim*.

3. 1 Corinthians 12:3, "Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

4. Romans 10:9, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

5. Kelly refers to "Christological Kerygmas" at 1 Cor. 15:3ff.; Rom. 1:3-4; 8:34; 2 Tim. 2:8; Gal. 1:4; 1 Thes. 4:14; 5:9; 1 Pet. 3:18ff.; Phil. 2:6-11; and 1 Tim. 3:16; *op. cit.*, 19-21.

ecclesiastical confession when he wrote Philippians 2:5-11.<sup>6</sup>

In this more elaborated Christological confession, both the preexistence and the deity of Christ served as Paul's starting points. Paul then proceeded to show a sort of "downward progression," as he confesses Christ's humiliation, ending with his death upon the cross. Then Paul proceeded with an "upward progression" by which Christ was exalted by God and given a name (identity) that is and will be above all else, save God himself. Finally, Paul asserted that every tongue would *confess* that Jesus Christ is the Lord.<sup>7</sup>

Paul also claimed that our Christian walk, or the progress of our sanctification, should be in line with our confession or the reception of the proposition that Christ Jesus is the Lord.<sup>8</sup> The line of thinking is that if Jesus Christ is Lord or master, then it is contradictory to believe on him as such and then not do or live as he commands. While one may, of course, profess or confess Jesus Christ to be Lord hypocritically; nevertheless, considered as a true confession, when one receives Jesus Christ as the Lord, it directly and certainly impacts the manner of his life.

Finally, throughout the book of Acts, the apostles called upon their auditors to confess that Jesus was the Lord. Further, when they professed to believe that Jesus is Lord the apostles regarded that fact alone to be sufficient demonstration that a conversion had taken place

and baptism was in order.<sup>9</sup> Wherever the apostles went in the book of Acts, they consistently preached the message that "Jesus is Lord." Of course, it is admitted freely that this may well be an abbreviated confession, just as the reports of the preaching in Acts generally do not give us the entire text of a sermon, but simply the gist of it. So, too, the statement "Jesus is Lord" may be a simple ejaculatory confession; or it may be the gist of a much longer confession such as those we viewed previously in 1 Corinthians and Philippians.<sup>10</sup>

### Χρίστος Ἰησοῦς

Another important, though brief, confession from apostolic days is that Jesus is the Christ. The earliest recorded confession of Jesus as the Christ is Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi.<sup>11</sup> Subsequently, however, this confession of Jesus as the Christ became an important test of whether one's confession of Christianity was genuine or not. This is likely in line with Christ's statement that "flesh and blood" did not reveal this important confessional truth to Peter, but that it came about as the result of supernatural revelation (perhaps later understood to mean regeneration). By the time that "elder John" wrote his epistles, denial of this basic confession was tantamount to an *antichristian* confession.<sup>12</sup>

Not only did Matthew in his gospel let us know that Peter was the first to confess that Jesus was the Christ. As his gospel moved more and more toward the work that Jesus came to do *as the Christ* the importance of this confession came more and more to the fore.<sup>13</sup> Matthew 16:21ff.

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6. Philippians 2:5ff., "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth; And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

7. Note, first, that Paul referred to a *confession*. But it is also the case that the Greek ὅτι in this passage is demonstrative of indirect discourse, showing what the content of the confession will be (aorist subjunctive treated as future).

8. Colossians 2:6, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:"

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9. Acts 11:17, "Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as *he did* unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?"

10. Acts 2:36, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." Acts 16:31, "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Acts 11:20, "And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus."

11. Matthew 16:16, "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Mark 8:29, "And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ."

12. 1 John 2:22, "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son."

13. Matthew 26:63, "But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that

clarifies that though Peter was quick to confess that Jesus was the Christ, he was not so quick to understand that this fact involved the very cross-work that Jesus came to do.<sup>14</sup>

Thus it was that believing Jesus is the Christ is fundamental to the gospel of John,<sup>15</sup> and to the apostolic preaching in general.<sup>16</sup> Nor were the apostles slow to admit that. It was not only a part of their preaching, but Paul went so far as to maintain that preaching Jesus to be Christ was the lynchpin of his preaching.<sup>17</sup> Not Paul only, but John as well, claimed that the preaching of Jesus as the Christ is the *sine qua non* of

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thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God." Matthew 27:17, "Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?" Matthew 27:22, "Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? *They* all say unto him, Let him be crucified."

14. Matthew 16:21, "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day."

15. John 20:31, "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

16. Acts 2:36, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." Acts 5:42, "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." Acts 10:36, "The word which *God* sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:)" Acts 17:3, "Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ." Acts 18:5, "And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews *that* Jesus *was* Christ." Acts 18:28, "For he mightily convinced the Jews, *and that* publickly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ."

17. 1 Corinthians 2:2, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." 2 Corinthians 4:5, "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." 2 Corinthians 1:19, "For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, *even* by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea." 2 Corinthians 5:18-19, "And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." 1 Timothy 1:15, "This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." 1 Timothy 2:5, "For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;" 2 Timothy 2:8 "Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel:"

Christian confession.<sup>18</sup> Thus one who denies that Jesus is the Christ is a liar and antichrist, while the one who (truly) confesses his faith that Jesus is the Christ is born of God (regenerate).

#### υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ

Not only did the primitive church (the apostolic church) confess its faith in Jesus as Lord and Christ; the church also confessed its faith in Jesus as the Son of God. In fact, it is the case that quite often, the terms are found together in such a way that for one to confess that Jesus is Christ is tantamount to confessing that he is the Son of God. Though the text is not without some difficulties,<sup>19</sup> yet one of the earliest confessions of Jesus Christ as the Son of God as a prerequisite for baptism is found in the book of Acts as Philip evangelized and then baptized the Ethiopian Eunuch as the Eunuch returned through the Gaza desert to his home in Ethiopia.<sup>20</sup> But just as the confession of faith that Jesus is the Christ subsequently became a necessary confession to demonstrate regeneration, so also did the confession of faith that Jesus is the Son of God.<sup>21</sup>

#### ἐρχόμενος ἐν σάρκῳ

The Messiah was anticipated throughout the Old Testament as the one who was to come.<sup>22</sup> By the time of John Baptist, the people anticipated the coming of Messiah and both John and the

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18. 1 John 2:22, "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son." 1 John 5:1, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him."

19. Acts 8:37 is a western reading. Though it may not be a part of the text as originally written by Luke, it does nevertheless reflect the very early (probably even Apostolic) practice of requiring such a confession from those who presented themselves for baptism.

20. Acts 8:36-38, "And as they went on *their* way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him."

21. 1 John 4:15, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." 1 John 5:5, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

22. Genesis 49:10, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him *shall* the gathering of the people *be*." Deuteronomy 18:15, "The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;" Etc.

people referred to him in such terms.<sup>23</sup> The idea is that the one who was anticipated throughout Old Testament history finally was come to earth to do his work. Christ even spoke of himself as having come into the world, and thus the earliest confessions regarded that the world was divided into those who confessed that the Son of God had come in the person of Jesus and those who did not so confess him.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, the terminology of “the kingdom is come” is used by Jesus and his disciples.<sup>25</sup> By the close of the apostolic period, however, the confession that Jesus Christ was come in the flesh was another confession that indicated that the one making the confession was a true disciple.<sup>26</sup>

### BIPARTITE CONFESSIONS

Even during the lifetime of the apostles, however, the confessions became more elaborate. Not only were certain Christological statements made regarding Jesus, the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Father were often made. Sometimes these confessions spoke of “Christ,” and at others of “Jesus” or of “Jesus Christ.” But in the bipartite formulas, both persons of the Godhead are mentioned or implied. There is a sense, of course, in which the confession of Jesus as “the Son of God” is already a bipartite formula in that a son implies a father and the father in the confession is God himself. Thus in 1

23. Matthew 3:11, “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with fire*.” John 1:25, “And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?” Etc.

24. Matthew 18:11, “For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.” Luke 7:34, “The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!” John 11:27, “She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.” 1 John 4:2-3, “Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that *spirit* of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.”

25. Luke 11:20, “But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.” Luke 10:11, “Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.” Etc.

26. 1 John 4:2, “Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.”

Corinthians 8:5-6, Paul confessionally contrasted the Christian faith with the faith confessions of the world.<sup>27</sup> This he did by a series of contrasts: one God vs. many gods; one Lord Jesus Christ vs. many lords; the God who created all things vs. the gods of the heathen as part of the creation; and finally, even the Father as contrasted with the Son seems to be a sort of bipartite confession.

Romans 8:34 makes an almost chiasmic statement regarding Christ and God the Father. Thus none can condemn us because of the work Christ has done for us. Further, the confessional character of the statement regarding Christ’s work is definitive for nearly all Christological confessions that have followed, for in Romans 8:34 we read, “Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” Thus the elements of Christ’s work are set forth in contrast to the condemner as 1) Christ died; 2) Christ rose again from the dead; 3) Christ is at the right hand of God; 4) Christ continually makes intercession for us. This is a significantly lengthy and elaborate confession of Christ and his work for our justification.

Paul, in 2 Corinthians 13:4 made another elaborate confession in which he contrasted Christ’s weakness and life and then compares that to the weakness and life of the believer. Paul stated, “For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you.” This statement is not exactly the same as Paul’s statement elsewhere that in Christ we are crucified to the world, but it is both similar and it is at the same time a more elaborate confession of faith. The creedal statement with its elements might be broken down something like the following:

Christ was crucified through weakness	Christ lives by God’s power
We are weak in being crucified with him	We shall live by God’s power

27. 1 Corinthians 8:5-6, “For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us *there is but* one God, the Father, of whom *are* all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom *are* all things, and we by him.”

There is a similar structure in Paul's confession in 1 Thessalonians 4:14.<sup>28</sup> In that context, Paul wrote of the confession of faith one makes that Jesus died and rose again and how it impacts our faith that there is a general resurrection also of those who "sleep in Jesus." Thus the structure, as outlined above, falls as follows:

Jesus died	Jesus rose again from the dead
Believers die (sleep)	Believers shall be raised from the dead

It seems that also in Romans 4:24-25 there is an embryonic confession of faith that has a sort of bipartite formulation.<sup>29</sup> Here Paul confessed that righteousness is imputed to those who believe. He stated this fact in such a way that we see that Jesus who was dead was raised from the dead. Then Paul stated the purpose for the death (deliverance) of Christ and the cause of his resurrection.<sup>30</sup> This same contrast between the death of Christ and his resurrection is found in Romans 14:9, "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living." Here the contrast is that Christ died and is the Lord of the dead; but he also rose and revived and is thus the Lord also of the living.

One of the lengthiest of New Testament confessions of faith is found in 1 Corinthians 15:3ff. There Paul stated "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve." Here we see virtually all the elements of a confession. It was something that Paul claimed that he had both received and then

delivered to others. Thus it is a public confession of the church—a *paradosis*, so to speak. But then the Christological elements are unmistakable. Christ 1) died for our sins; 2) was buried; 3) rose again; 4) was seen. Actively he laid down his life and took it again. Passively he was buried (demonstrating that his death was a true death) and was seen (demonstrating that his resurrection was a true resurrection). Thus the bipartite formulation still holds, because there is a twofold action on Christ's part: that of dying and rising again. But there is also a twofold evidence given that Christ actually laid down his life and took it again, *viz.* his burial in death and his being seen subsequent to his resurrection.

Paul, in the Ephesian epistle, also demonstrated this bipartite confession in Ephesians 4:8-10. There we read, "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)" Here the formula is not simply between death and resurrection, but between descending from heaven and ascending back to heaven again. However, it might be noted that the descent from heaven includes a descent all the way into the lower parts of the earth. That is to say, Christ's humiliation consisted not merely in his taking flesh to himself, but in the death of his human nature on the cross and its subsequent burial.<sup>31</sup> Subsequently, Christ's exaltation began with his resurrection, but did not end there. Rather, Christ's exaltation includes his ascension into heaven. Thus he ascended from death before he ascended far above the heavens. This also is in line with the Westminster documents at *Shorter Catechism* #28.<sup>32</sup>

28. 1 Thessalonians 4:14, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

29. Romans 4:24-25, "But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

30. *διά* with accusative case might well be translated "on account of" or "because of."

31. Thus, the Westminster Shorter Catechism speaks correctly of Christ's humiliation: "Christ's humiliation consisted in his being born, and that in a low condition, made under the law, undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, and the cursed death of the cross; in being buried, and continuing under the power of death for a time." WSC 27. *Confession*, 294.

32. "Christ's exaltation consisteth in his rising again from the dead on the third day, in ascending up into heaven, in sitting at the right hand of God the Father, and in coming to judge the world at the last day." *Confession*, 294-95.

J.N.D. Kelly regarded Romans 1:3-4 as a sort of primal form of 1 Corinthians 15:3-4.<sup>33</sup> Whether that is the case or not, it is certainly true that we can see in the Romans passage a bipartite confession of Jesus Christ. There is an early confession of the hypostatic union, as Paul confessed that Jesus was both the son of David and the Son of God.<sup>34</sup> Paul stated, "Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared *to be* the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

Not Paul only, but John as well, commonly used a bipartite confession when speaking of the church's confession of Jesus Christ. John commonly speaks of the confession of the Son in conjunction with the confession of the Father. Though he does so in a variety of ways, it generally comes down to that basic formula. In 1 John 5:1, John states that those who believe that Jesus is the Christ are regenerate.<sup>35</sup> This much was examined earlier in this chapter. But John goes on to say that if one truly loves the Father that he must also love the Son.<sup>36</sup> John also utilizes the basic confession that Jesus Christ is come into the world<sup>37</sup> to set up a bipartite contrast in 1 John 4:2-3. John claims that there are those who make the Christian confession and those who do not so confess Christ. And all must be tried in terms of this basic confession. "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that *spirit* of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world." So, then, those who are truly regenerate know that Jesus Christ "is

come." For John, this is not only an important statement regarding the discernment of those who have been truly regenerated, however. It is also a confession that, when true, is also a personal evidence for our own assurance.<sup>38</sup> Assurance of God's love is not based on experience, but on a true confession that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh and has given us understanding of all the mysteries that were mere dark shadows prior to his advent.

John also associated the Father and the Son in the salvation of the elect. He did so by contrasting the love of men to the love of God. God's love is such that he sent his Son for men's salvation.<sup>39</sup> John regarded that testimony as an integral part of his function both as an apostle and as an author of Scripture. Thus he said at 1 John 4:14, "And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son *to be* the Saviour of the world." The word that John used for "testify" is the Greek μαρτυρέω, which only many years later came to have the connotation of testifying unto death. At the time John penned his words, the term had not yet taken such a technical usage, but was quite similar to the Greek ὁμολογέω.<sup>40</sup>

Just as John considered it necessary for one to confess and testify to the fact that Jesus is Christ in order to demonstrate that he is justified in the Father's eyes, so also a denial of that confession is tantamount to a demonstration that one is not regenerate. Thus one who claims to be a Christian, a member of the community of faith, but who also denies that Jesus is the Christ is a liar. Thus a Jew of John's day (and a Muslim of today) might claim to believe in God the Father. But if such a one denies that Jesus is the Christ, he by implication denies the Father and the Son. 1 John 2:22-23, "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father:

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33. Kelly, *Creeds*, 23.

34. The word Paul used that is translated in the A.V. as "declared" is the Greek ὀρίζω, which carries a significance of defining or setting boundaries. Thus he sets the boundaries or defines the person of Christ as being both human and divine.

35. 1 John 5:1, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him."

36. John also draws this out to establish that this also means that we must love the brethren as they also are born of God.

37. 2 John 7, "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist."

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38. 1 John 5:20, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

39. John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." 1 John 4:10, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins."

40. See *TDNT*, IV.474 cf. V.199.

*(but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also."*

Throughout his gospel as well, John demonstrated the importance of confessing that Jesus is the Christ (or the Messiah). Those who confessed that Jesus was the Christ would be cast out (excommunicated) from the synagogue.<sup>41</sup> At one point when Jesus was preaching, the people seemed astounded that the leaders did not know that he was the Christ.<sup>42</sup> Thus in John's Gospel, the people are divided on the very issue of whether Jesus was the Christ.<sup>43</sup> It was upon the basis of the confession of Jesus being the Christ that the Jews challenged Christ's ministry.<sup>44</sup> Finally, it seems to this author, as a demonstration of the "confessional nature" of his gospel, John concluded his gospel by pointing out that the underlying reason that he had for writing the fourth gospel was to demonstrate that Jesus was "the Christ, the Son of God" and that true believers in Jesus will make that same confession.<sup>45</sup> F. F. Bruce correctly pointed out that this is the very message of the fourth gospel.

The purpose of the Gospel is stated in John 20:30f.: it is to bring the readers to faith, or to confirm them in the faith. Faith involves both believing *in* and believing *that*: believing in Jesus is emphasized as the way of life throughout the Gospel, but believing in him implies believing certain things about him—that he is 'the Christ, the Son of God.' These are not two separate designations: for John, to believe in Jesus as the Messiah is to believe in him as the Son of God (and this is true of the other Evangelists also).<sup>46</sup>

Additionally, as Bruce pointed out, John was not only interested in demonstrating in his gospel that Jesus was the Christ. The similar confession

of faith that Jesus was the Son of God also looms large in John's gospel. For John, confessing that Jesus was the Christ is tantamount to confessing that he was the Son of God.<sup>47</sup> As Bruce explained, for John these were not two separate designations. Thus, John claims in his first epistle, that belief or confession of Jesus as the Christ is the demonstration that one is born of God and confession of Jesus as the Son of God is the demonstration that one has "the faith" or confession that overcomes the world.<sup>48</sup>

#### SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

Not only Paul and John, but the synoptic gospel writers as well, insist upon the confession of Jesus as "Christ," as "Son of God," as "Son of David," and as "King of the Jews." Thus as we read the synoptic gospels we see these confessions playing a large part in the narratives that the writers are setting before us. ❀

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41. John 9:22, "These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue."

42. John 7:26, "But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?"

43. John 7:41, "Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee?"

44. John 10:24, "Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly."

45. John 20:31, "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

46. F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel and Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 12.

47. John 1:34, "And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God." John 1:49, "Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." John 10:36, "Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?" John 20:31, "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." John 6:69, "And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." John 9:35, "Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" Cf. John 9:22, "These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue."

48. 1 John 5:1, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him." 1 John 5:5, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

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**Worship Services:** 10:30 AM and 2:00 PM on each Lord's Day. Visitors are welcome to stay for **lunch** between the two services. **Biblical Institutes:** 4:00 PM.

**Location:** First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett meets at 8210 Schrade Road, Rowlett, TX. From Interstate 30, take exit 64 north on Dalrock Road. From the Diamond Shamrock gas station, go 1.5 miles north to Schrade Road. Turn left and go approximately 1/4 mile. We are in the first building on the left. Parking is in the rear of the building.

**Order Form**

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