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Bacon: Confessions in Scripture. Part 2. ❀ **Objections to Psalmody** ❀ **Whitefield: The Lord Our Righteousness.** ❀ **Crampton: *Jesus, Divine Messiah.***

by Richard Bacon



This issue begins with the second portion of *Confessions in Scripture*. The point of this extract from my dissertation, *The Pattern in The Heavens* was that it is wrongheaded to separate biblical theology and systematic theology to such an extent that we can think ourselves safe in ignoring the church's creeds. The church has been a creed-making institution since the Apostles' day.

This issue also contains an answer to an objection sometimes raised against the exclusive use of Psalmody in corporate praise song. The objection does not touch on all the Psalms, but specifically on those that are called *impreccatory*, or *cursing*, Psalms. The objection is along the lines that (some of) the Psalms contain a sub-Christian ethic or pre-Christian ethic and should therefore not be used by those who are animated by the love of Christ.

Next appears a sermon originally preached by George Whitefield in the eighteenth century. The message contained in it is that Gospel question: Will we appear before God in our own righteousness or plead the righteousness of Christ alone?

Following this, Dr. Gary Crampton reviews Robert Reymond's *Jesus, Divine Messiah: The Old and New Testament Witness*. Reymond's study of the scriptural testimony to the deity of Christ has been slightly updated from when it was published as two separate volumes. It has never been more timely than it is today.

Finally, there is a short article on page 32 announcing the release of my 230+ sermon series on the book of Hebrews. Next to Romans the book of Hebrews is the most fundamental teaching of the gospel of grace in the New Testament. It deserves a detailed treatment because of its proclamation of Christ and his righteousness, and these sermons do just that. ❀



Confessions in Scripture. Part 2.

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

By Dr. Richard Bacon.

“CHRIST”

Cs demonstrated earlier in this chapter, the confession of Jesus as “the Christ” is the most foundational Christian confession of faith in the Scriptures. Thus, not only in one of the synoptic gospels, but in all three of them, Peter early makes a creedal confession that Jesus is the Christ.¹ According to Luke’s gospel, some even thought that John Baptist might be the Christ due to their expectation of his coming. Of course, John was not the Christ; but this expectation demonstrates the eschatological importance of confessing that Jesus is, in fact, the Christ that was anticipated throughout the Old Testament and even until the time of John the Baptist.² Below, this paper shall examine the fact that even the devils referred to Jesus, confessing him to be the Son of God; but it is also the case that they confessed him as “the Christ.”³ Not only the unclean spirits, but even the high priest and Pontius Pilate, before both of whom Christ was

tried, were interested to know whether Jesus would himself confess to being the Christ.⁴

Finally, just as Jesus was compelled to correct Peter’s view of the work of “the Christ,” so also did Jesus undergo reviling during his cross-work because the nature of “the Christ” was not truly known to those who do not rightly confess him as Christ. The leaders of the people, the people themselves, and those who were being crucified together with him all spoke of him in derision as though he could not possibly be the Christ because of his crucifixion.⁵ Thus it was that as part of his humiliation, even the office and work that Christ came to perform was misunderstood.

“SON OF GOD”

As this dissertation pointed out above when discussing the quotation from F. F. Bruce, the terms “Christ” and “Son of God” are virtual synonyms. Christ invested the term “Christ” with the understanding of his cross-work. That explanation began even as Peter was confessing him as Christ for what appears to be the first time. Immediately subsequent to Peter’s confession, Christ explained, “From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many

1. 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.” Matthew 16:16-20, “And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.” Luke 9:20, “He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God.”

2. Luke 3:15, “And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not.”

3. Luke 4:41, “And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking *them* suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ.”

4. Mark 14:61, “But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” 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.”

5. Mark 15:32, “Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him.” Luke 23:35, “And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided *him*, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.” Luke 23:39, “And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.”



things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.”⁶ Thus the identification of Jesus as “the Christ” may have more to do with his work, while the confession of Jesus as “the Son of God” may have more to do with his eternal identity. There were particular points in Jesus’ ministry at which he was identified by various of those about him as “the Son of God.”

AT HIS BAPTISM

The first of these occurrences at which Christ was identified as the Son of God was at his baptism. On that occasion the Father himself identified Jesus as the Son of God and confessed him to be “my beloved Son.” The Father was identified as a *Bath Qol* (voice from heaven). In two of the synoptic gospels, the Father is recorded as speaking directly to Jesus in the second person singular. In the third synoptic gospel, the voice identified Jesus in terms of the demonstrative pronoun “this” in the third person singular. Yet, whether it was an identification in the third person or in the second person, it was quite clear from the fact that it was upon Jesus that the Holy Spirit settled that the Father spoke to him and of him.⁷

AT HIS TEMPTATION

Previously above we noted the fact that the unclean spirits referred to Jesus as “the Christ” and he admonished them to hold their peace, or to “be quiet.”⁸ But there was also a time in his earthly ministry at which Jesus was confronted by the Prince of the devils, Satan himself. However, just as the tempter began to tempt Eve (the woman) in the garden by first casting doubt upon the word of God (“yea, hath God said...?”), so he attempted to cast doubt upon Jesus’ identity as the Son of God immediately after the Father had

so identified him.⁹ The language of both Matthew and Luke demonstrates that the devil called him the Son of God, even though he was calling it into question as a temptation; the idea seemingly being that if Christ did not do the devil’s bidding he was not really the Son of God. Mark does not use the language primarily because he moves completely through the wilderness temptation in only two verses.

AT HIS TRANSFIGURATION

We noted earlier that at Christ’s baptism there was a voice from heaven (the voice of the Father) that spoke both to Jesus directly, telling him that he was the Son of God and that spoke to those who could hear that this one (οὗτος) was the Son of God. At the transfiguration, when the glory of Jesus “peeked through” his humanity but briefly, there was also the *Bath Qol* confessing Jesus as the Son of God. In each of the synoptic gospels in the instance of Jesus’ transfiguration, the voice from heaven uses the third person to refer to Jesus in the confession of him as the Son of God. The reason for using the third person in the confession is because of the command that was associated with the confession that Jesus is the Son of God. If Jesus was and is, indeed the Son of God, then those who confess him to be such should “hear him.” That is to say, those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God should “hearken” to his voice or “do as he commands.”¹⁰

UNCLEAN SPIRITS’ TESTIMONY

Not only did the Father on two separate occasions confess Jesus to be his Son; not only did the devil himself at the time of the temptation

6. Matthew 16:21.

7. Mark 1:11, “And there came a voice from heaven, *saying*, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Matthew 3:17, “And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Luke 3:22, “And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.”

8. Luke 4:41, etc. Thus even when spiritual “mediums” speak what appears to be facts, we should have nothing to do with them and we should *never* consult them for information, even about God’s will.

9. Matthew 4:3, “And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.” Matthew 4:6, “And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.” Luke 4:3, “And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.” Luke 4:9, “And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence.”

10. Mark 9:7, “And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.” Matthew 17:5, “While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.” Luke 9:35, “And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.”



in the wilderness also confess by way of implication that Jesus is the Son of God; also throughout Jesus' ministry as he went about casting out unclean spirits (devils), they also confessed that he was the Son of God. Of course, it must be noted that when the devils make this confession and when Satan himself makes such a confession, it is not for their salvation. It is a bare knowledge that does not trust him or "hear him" as the voice from heaven commanded. So, then, even though the unclean spirits may have fallen down before him as divine, thus worshipping him or doing obeisance to him as the Son of God,¹¹ yet because they were not among those for whom Christ died their confession was not one of obedience and regeneration.¹²

Thus, even when Jesus confronted the unclean spirits and they confessed that he was the Son of God, Jesus nevertheless told the unclean spirits to hold their peace or not to speak.¹³ The reason for this is that even though they identified Jesus correctly as the Son of God and even though they confessed him as the Son of God, yet they did not "hear him" as commanded by the voice from heaven. We see this in the synoptic gospels when the unclean spirits used the phrase "what have I to do with thee," or alternatively when there was more than one "what have we to do with thee," which statement or query was an idiom indicating that the person speaking did not believe the person to whom he was speaking had authority to command him.¹⁴ This is the phrase that Jesus used with his mother, not out of disrespect, but to indicate that he was the miracle working Son of

God, and considered as such, Mary had no authority over him.¹⁵

HIS DISCIPLES

As strange as it may be, given the numerous other confessions that we see in Scripture that Jesus is the Son of God, there is apparently only a single instance in the synoptic gospels of the disciples confessing Jesus as the Son of God. The occasion of that one confession was when he walked on the water.¹⁶ In John's gospel the only occasion of a disciple confessing that Jesus is the Son of God is Nathanael, and that quite early in the gospel.¹⁷ This observation, however, does not detract from the fact that the confession of Jesus as the Son of God was an extremely important confession in the primitive (New Testament) church, for it seems to be also the *sine qua non* of baptism in the book of Acts. Thus before Philip would baptize the Ethiopian Eunuch, it was first necessary that the Eunuch confess that he believed Jesus to be the Son of God. Further, immediately after his baptism in Acts chapter nine, Paul began preaching in the synagogues that Christ was the Son of God.¹⁸

THE HIGH PRIEST

Significantly, when Peter first confessed that Jesus was the Christ at Matthew 16:16, Jesus began to teach them of the importance of that confession by imbuing the term with a proper understanding of his cross-work. Thus Jesus taught the disciples at Matthew 16:21 that he

11. Mark 3:11, "And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God."

12. James 2:19, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble." Cf. 1 John 5:5, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

13. Luke 4:41, "And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking *them* suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ."

14. Mark 5:7, "And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, *thou* Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not." Luke 8:28, "When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, *thou* Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not." Matthew 8:29, "And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?"

15. John 2:1-4, "And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come."

16. Matthew 14:33, "Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God."

17. John 1:49, "Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel."

18. Acts 8:37, "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." Acts 9:18, "And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God."



must suffer, die, and rise again from the dead.¹⁹ So, too, as his cross-work began in his trial before the High Priest he began to be known more and more as the “Son of God.” So it was that both Mark and Matthew record that the High Priest “adjured” Jesus to tell him whether he was the Son of God.²⁰ Of course, it was not the High Priest’s purpose to confess Christ to be the Son of God in anything like a believing sense. Yet it is nevertheless significant that while the High Priest was ready to *deny* that Jesus was the Son of God, he seemingly understood the importance of the confession itself,²¹ though he referred to the “Son of the Blessed” rather than the “Son of God.”

AT THE CROSS

Not only at his trial, but even while Jesus hung upon the cross, the confession of him as the Son of God was used tauntingly. Thus the “passers-by”²² mocked him as one who would “destroy and rebuild” the temple because of his good confession that he was the Son of God. The chief priests, likewise, taunted him because of his trust in God, indicated by his confession that he was the Son of God.²³ So also, at Matthew 27:44 the thieves on the cross must have taunted him as the Son of God, for Matthew reports that they “cast the same” in Jesus’ teeth. Finally, when the centurion who was apparently in charge of the crucifixion together with the others who were present on his account noted the earthquake, darkening of the sun, etc. he also confessed that Jesus was the Son of God.²⁴

19. 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.”

20. 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 thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.”

21. Mark 14:61, “But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?”

22. Matthew 27:40, “And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.”

23. Matthew 27:43, “He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.”

24. Matthew 27:54, “Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.”

“SON OF DAVID”

It was well understood in New Testament times that the Messiah to come would be, according to the flesh, the son of David.²⁵ This was in accordance with the Davidic covenant in which God promised that the Messiah would come from the loins of David after the flesh. Thus, we should understand that when someone in the New Testament confesses that Jesus is the son of David, he is confessing also that Jesus is the Messiah and the fulfiller of the Davidic covenant. Further, as we learn from Christ’s questioning of those who opposed him in the temple, confessing that Messiah was the “son of David” should also require the confessing that he was David’s Lord.²⁶

THE PEOPLE

At the time when Jesus would teach that he cast out devils by the Spirit of God, a man was brought to him not only possessed by a devil, but also blind and dumb as a result of it. When Jesus healed the man such that the man became able to speak and to see, the people became convinced that this was a signal that the kingdom of God had come and that therefore the son of David must be among them. When the Pharisees suggested that Jesus cast out the devil by the power of Beelzebub, Christ insisted that it was a sign that the kingdom of God had come. Thus this confession that the kingdom of God has come is voiced by the people as a confession that Jesus was the Son of David.²⁷

DEMONIACS AND THE OPPRESSED

An important “subset of the people” were those who were oppressed by both devils and by incurable disease during Christ’s ministry on earth. Numerous times in his healing ministry, Jesus was called upon to have mercy upon such as were possessed by devils or who were oppressed by disease and blindness. Significantly, when blind Bartimaeus referred to Jesus as “the son of David,” Jesus himself confirmed that as a

25. Romans 1:3-4; Matthew 1:1, 6; Luke 3:31.

26. Luke 20:41-44, “And he said unto them, How say they that Christ is David’s son? And David himself saith in the book of Psalms, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Till I make thine enemies thy footstool. David therefore calleth him Lord, how is he then his son?”

27. Matthew 12:23, “And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?”



true confession of Bartimaeus' faith.²⁸ Similarly, on the road departing from Jericho (the incident with Bartimaeus had taken place on the way *toward* Jericho), two blind men desired their sight, perhaps knowing what Jesus had done for Bartimaeus. They, too, referred to Jesus as the son of David; and Jesus also healed them of their blindness.²⁹ On yet another occasion, as Jesus departed the house of one of the rulers, two blind men cried out to him as the son of David. Again, Jesus asked them regarding their faith (considering the statement that he was the son of David as a confession of their faith) if they believed he was able to restore their sight.³⁰ Finally, there is the instance of the Canaanitish woman whose daughter was oppressed by a devil. She, too, referred to Jesus as the son of David. Perhaps this is an even more significant reference, given the fact that she was not herself a Jew and would therefore have not necessarily had the same thinking about the coming of the kingdom as did those who were Jewish. Nevertheless, she did seem to understand that inherent in Jesus' preaching of the "gospel of the kingdom" there was implicit a power over the world of darkness.³¹

28. Mark 10:46-52, "And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee. And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way." See also Luke 18:42.

29. Matthew 20:30-31, "And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, *thou* Son of David. And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, *thou* Son of David."

30. Matthew 9:27-29, "And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us. And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord. Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you."

31. Matthew 15:22, "And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, *thou* Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil."

"KING OF THE JEWS"

The confession of Jesus as the son of David was virtually a confession that he was the king of the Jews, or as it is sometimes recorded, the king of Israel. Thus, "he who comes in the name of the Lord," the "son of David," and the "king of the Jews" all refer to a confession of Jesus as the Messiah, who was come to destroy the works of the devil. This is seen most clearly in the triumphant entry into Jerusalem on what has been referred to as "Palm Sunday." In that context, the multitude of the people confessed Jesus as "the Son of David," as the one who "comes in the name of the Lord," as the blessed one of "the kingdom of our father David," and as "the king who comes in the name of the Lord."³² The repeated cry of "hosanna" is undoubtedly a fulfillment of Psalm 118:25,³³ where the Hebrew הוֹשִׁיעָה נָא is a cry to the Lord to deliver, with the particle indicating that it is a plea to one who is superior in station.³⁴ Thus, the fulfillment of Psalm 118:25 is itself a confession of faith, but the very use of the terminology of "hosanna" is also a sort of confession that it would be by the life (and subsequent death as Christ was bound with cords to the altar) of Jesus that salvation would come to God's people. Finally, as noted previously, Jesus himself pointed out that confessing Messiah to be the son of David requires that one also confess that he was *more* than David.³⁵

32. Matthew 21:5, "Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass." Matthew 21:9, "And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest." Matthew 21:15, "And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased." Mark 11:10, "Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest." Luke 19:38, "Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest."

33. Translated "Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord."

34. TDNT, IX.682.

35. Mark 12:35ff., "And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he *then* his son? And the common people heard him gladly." Luke 20:41ff., "And he said unto them, How say they that Christ is David's son? And David himself saith in the book of Psalms, The LORD said unto my



Finally, in the very final hours of Jesus' life and death, we see in the gospels how the confession that he is King of the Jews resurfaces repeatedly. The soldiers who platted a crown for him mockingly called him the King of the Jews;³⁶ the accusation that stood over his head on the cross referred to him as the king of the Jews;³⁷ the accusation to which he was forced to make a good confession before Pilate was that he was the king of the Jews;³⁸ Pilate on more than a single occasion referred to him as king of the Jews;³⁹ and what may be regarded as the final indignation that Christ received from his countrymen and even the thieves with whom he died was when they mocked him as the "king of the Jews" even as he hanged upon the cross.⁴⁰

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

In previous sections of this chapter we have examined various passages that occur in the book of Acts, but in this section it is our purpose to see how the preaching of the apostles in the book of Acts is a preaching designed to elicit a confessional response from the hearers of the preaching. We will see this primarily in the form of "direct discourse" as we note the content of the

Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Till I make thine enemies thy footstool. David therefore calleth him Lord, how is he then his son?"

36. Matthew 27:29, "And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put *it* upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!" Mark 15:18, "And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews!"

37. Matthew 27:37, "And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS." Mark 15:26, "And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS."

38. Luke 23:2-3, "And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this *fellow* perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King. And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest *it*."

39. Mark 15:9, "But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?" Mark 15:12, "And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do *unto him* whom ye call the King of the Jews?"

40. Matthew 27:42, "He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him." Luke 23:37-38, "And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself. And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, this is the king of the Jews." Mark 15:32, "Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him."

preaching of the apostles and the extent to which that preaching is designed along a confessional basis. Not only does this teach us that the confessions of the church were early; i.e., as early as New Testament times; it also teaches us regarding our own preaching in these days. Just as the preaching in the book of Acts was designed such as to bring forth confessions of faith, so should the preaching of these days be designed to bring forth confessions of faith in our hearers. This, too, is a part of the function of the constitution of Presbyterianism. It gives us a guideline for our preaching so that we will know what to preach and how it should be phrased. So, when Paul was first converted and then baptized, he began preaching a confessional message in the synagogues of his day. Paul "preached Christ" in the synagogues. We dare not think that this was some misguided attempt simply to have "no creed but Christ." Rather, it was Paul's purpose to teach *what* one must confess regarding Christ. We know that this is true because it is mentioned first, that he informed his hearers that Christ is the Son of God. We should recall the fullness of meaning and content that Jesus gave those words. Further, he preached considerably from the life of Jesus, because it was not only his purpose to teach the Jews that Christ was the Son of God; he also insisted that Jesus was that Christ whom he preached.⁴¹ Thus, for Paul's preaching to be "successful," it was needful that he preach who Christ was, who the Son of God was, and who Jesus was in light of the two previous considerations. In other words, Paul preached confessionally.

Later, in the city of Thessalonica, we learn that Paul had a particular manner of preaching. In Acts 17:2 we read, "And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, 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." Paul had a particular manner of preaching, which was to reason from the Scriptures Sabbath by Sabbath. As he opened the Scriptures, he demonstrated from the Scriptures the truthfulness of the Christian confession of Jesus

41. Acts 9:20, 22, "And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ."



as the Christ. He demonstrated first, the necessity of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ. Then he showed by the events of Jesus' life that Jesus was the Christ that was taught by the Scriptures. This is amazingly similar to the confession of Peter at Caesarea Philippi, "Thou art the Christ," and Jesus' response to that confession, that he must suffer, be killed, and rise the third day. Thus Paul demonstrated from the entirety of the Old Testament the truth of the Christian confession that Jesus is the Christ. As Paul went to various cities, we suppose his preaching was the same as the preaching at Thessalonica, for the inspired report is that it was his "manner" so to do. Further, when Paul arrived in Corinth, he did the same thing.⁴² Interestingly, Paul then taught Aquila and Priscilla to preach confessionally,⁴³ and they in turn taught Apollos,⁴⁴ who boldly and eloquently preached confessionally, just as Paul had done before him.⁴⁵

However, we should also carefully note that such preaching was not strictly Pauline, but was generally apostolic. Thus in the very first public preaching recorded in the book of Acts, we read, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."⁴⁶ Peter began preaching from the Old Testament and from the life of Christ, and ended by making the confessional statements that Jesus, who was crucified, is Lord and he is Christ. Further, as the apostles continued teaching in the temple and the synagogues (houses of worship), they ceased not teaching and preaching the confession that Jesus is the Christ or alternatively that Jesus is the Lord.⁴⁷ Again, just as it is important for us to remember that every word contained in the sermons is not recorded in the book of Acts, there is no reason to suppose that every word of the confessions is contained in the book of Acts. This

dissertation does not propose that the confessions of the apostolic church were as detailed as the confessions of the fourth century and later. In light of what we have discerned regarding biblical confessions up to this point in this study, however, when we read that they preached "Jesus Christ," we should not seriously consider the simplistic notion that the apostles merely stood in front of the synagogue and mouthed the words "Jesus Christ."⁴⁸ The apostles preached simple *kerygmas*, bipartite confessions, etc., just as we saw in the previous section. And we must suppose that when they preached these confessions, they anticipated that their hearers would confess the very things that they heard from the apostles' lips.

PASTORAL EPISTLES

Due to the purpose that underlies the Pastoral Epistles, we should not be surprised to find it abounding in confessional assertions. We should not be surprised and we would not be disappointed, because 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus all three set forth numerous kerygmatic ejaculations, bipartite formulas, and at least one lengthy confession regarding the person and work of Christ (1 Timothy 3:16). George W. Knight III, in his previously referenced *NIGTC* commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, explains a part of the purpose of the Pastoral Epistles:

Two broad concerns characterize all three letters: (1) Paul warns Timothy and Titus about a false teaching...and exhorts them to stand against it; (2) Paul gives instructions to the Christians of Ephesus and Crete, through Timothy and Titus, concerning their conduct and church life. In 1 Timothy and Titus the latter includes instructions concerning what sort of men are to be appointed to church leadership (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Tit. 1:5-9; cf. 2 Tim. 2:2). These concerns are not treated individually but are interwoven in the letters.⁴⁹

42. 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."

43. Acts 18:18ff.

44. Acts 18:24ff.

45. Acts 18:28, "For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ."

46. Acts 2:36.

47. Acts 5:42, "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." 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."

48. Acts 10:36, 42, "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead." Acts 4:10, "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole." Acts 26:23, "That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles."

49. George W. Knight III, *Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eermans, 1992), 10.



The purpose(s) of the Pastoral Epistles, then, looms large as fertile ground for New Testament confessional statements. Additionally, however, we should note that the Pastoral Epistles are of relatively late vintage. The Pastoral Epistles were certainly written after Paul's first imprisonment in Rome and thus subsequent to the events depicted in the book of Acts; and 2 Timothy may have been written shortly before Paul's death.⁵⁰ In addition to numerous instances of direct discourse in the Pastoral Epistles, one also finds several "faithful saying" or "the saying is faithful" confessions in Paul's writing in these epistles and *only* in these epistles.⁵¹

The first of the "faithful sayings" in the Pastoral Epistles is 1 Timothy 1:15. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." Professor Knight pointed out that the key to understanding this faithful saying is the aorist infinitive "σωσαι." He rightly observed that the aorist infinitive here speaks of the *purpose* of Christ's coming into the world, "namely deliverance for sinners from their sin and all its consequences."⁵² Knight went on to propose that the origin of this faithful saying is most likely found in "an objectification and *restatement* of what Jesus said about himself, as it is recorded in the Gospels."⁵³ This idea of restating in one's own words the previously known doctrine of Scripture is *precisely* what this dissertation claims is the primary purpose of a creed or confession of faith.

Professor B. B. Warfield also was of the opinion that the faithful sayings were confessional statements found in Scripture. Though he did not write about all the faithful sayings of the Pastoral Epistles, yet he did say regarding 1 Timothy 1:15,

...this is not Pauline phraseology that stands before us here; as, indeed, it professes not to be—for does not Paul tell us that he is not speaking in his own person, but is adducing one of the jewels of the Church's faith? At all events, it is the language of John that here confronts us, and whoever first cast the Church's heart-conviction into this compressed sentence had assuredly

learned in John's school. For to John only belongs this phrase as applied to Christ: 'He came into the world.' It is John only who preserves the Master's declarations: 'I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world'; 'I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on Me should not abide in darkness.' It is he only who, adopting, as is his wont, the very phraseology of his Master to express his own thought, tells us in his prologue that 'the true Light—that lighteth every man—was coming into the world,' but though He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, yet the world knew Him not.⁵⁴

Warfield claimed that Paul was adducing "one of the jewels of the Church's faith," implying perhaps that there were others and that those others consisted in the numerous confessions to be found in the pages of the New Testament. Further, Warfield pointed out that the language itself was not Pauline and even went so far as to claim that the language was Johannine in character. But this demonstrates that Paul was quite willing to adduce *as a faithful saying* of the church, a Confession that was not original with him. The five "faithful sayings" are not the full confessions of faith that would come in the later, more mature years of the church's existence. But they were confessions that were regarded as "words of faith" or πίστοι οί λόγοι that the church could collectively confess as the faith of Christians. Here is the purpose of Christ's coming into the world, a purpose confessed by the whole church: he came to save sinners.

The second of the "faithful sayings" in the Pastoral Epistles is found at 1 Timothy 3:1, "This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." Though the AV translates the Greek phrase as "a true saying," the Greek is the same as for the other "faithful sayings" in the Pastoral Epistles. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to attempt to determine if the "faithful saying" in this passage refers to the previous statement in 2:15 regarding those who continue in faith, charity, holiness, and sobriety or if it refers to the subsequent statement that one who desires the office of an overseer desires a good work. Either of these two statements might be regarded in terms of a confession of a well-known truth of Scripture and would thus fit the category of a creed or confession of faith. Knight discusses for a few pages whether the faithful

50. See Knight, 15-20 and 53-54.

51. 1 Timothy 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Timothy 2:11 and Titus 3:8. For some reason the AV has translated this Greek phrase by "true saying" rather than "faithful saying" in 1 Timothy 3:1, but the Greek predicative phrasing of "πιστός ὁ λόγος" is the same in all five places.

52. Knight, 101.

53. *Ibid.*, 102. emphasis added.

54. B. B. Warfield, "The Saving Christ," in *The Person and Work of Christ* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1950), 550-51.



saying is found in 2:15 or in 3:1b, concluding that it is the latter. But the fact that the statement may have to do with the offices of the church does not in itself make the saying any less confessional in this writer's opinion.⁵⁵

What may be the fullest confession in the whole of the Pastoral Epistles is not one of the "faithful sayings," but is found at 1 Timothy 3:16. "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." The word that introduces this verse, "ὁμολογουμένως," and translated in the AV as "without controversy" is an adverb used only here in the entire New Testament. It is related to the *homologia* word group and might well be translated as "confessedly,"⁵⁶ or "by common consent."⁵⁷ What is confessedly (or confessionally) beyond all question is the greatness of the mystery (revelation) of the Christian religion. The greatness is summarized by Paul in six consecutive statements describing "the pivotal points of Christ's earthly ministry and the continuing results of that ministry (cf. Rom. 16:25)."⁵⁸ Though one may agree or disagree with some text critics who maintain that the text should read ὅς (a relative pronoun referring to Christ, though understood because Paul is quoting from another source) or θεός (because Christ was God manifested in the flesh), the statement is clearly creedal, whether hymnic or not.⁵⁹ Following the subject, whichever text criticism might demonstrate to be the true subject, are six parallel third-person singular aorist passive indicative verbs. Each verb is followed by a dative either of location or instrument. Thus:

Manifested	in the flesh
Justified	in the spirit
Seen	by angels
Preached	to Gentiles, alternatively, <i>among the nations</i>
Believed on	in the world
Taken up	in glory

The entire series of passives followed by datives forms a complete confession consisting of six parts. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to analyze this passage in detail for content beyond noting its confessional nature and thus its antecedent example for the church to continue framing confessions. However, it does seem that there are three carefully crafted antitheses denoted by the datives. First, Christ was manifested *in the flesh*, but was vindicated *in the spirit*. He was seen *by angels*, but was preached *among the nations*. Finally, he was trusted *in the world*, but taken up *in glory*. A series of three antitheses lends itself to confessional statement and also to easy memorization.

Yet another of the "faithful saying" passages is found at 1 Timothy 4:8-9. "For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance." George W. Knight III is of the opinion that the actual saying is that of verse eight, with verse ten being more or less of a "personalization" of the general truth contained in the faithful saying. Thus it is *because* of the promise that godliness is profitable for both the life that now is and the one to come that "we labor and suffer reproach."⁶⁰ If this interpretation is correct, then the faithful saying would be about the relationship of athletic exercise in this life and spiritual exercise in this life *and* the next. Thus the parallelism of confession and creed would be maintained in this passage.

The next "faithful saying" to consider is 2 Timothy 2:11-13. "It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with *him*, we shall also live with *him*: If we suffer, we shall also reign with *him*: if we deny *him*, he also will deny us: If we believe not, *yet* he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." There are many commentators who regard the faithful

55. The *Westminster Confession of Faith*, for example, has a good bit to say about office and officers; yet nobody would deny that it is a confession even in those places where it deals with the church jurisdiction.

56. BAGD. s.v.

57. TDNT, V.213.

58. Knight, 182.

59. This is not to deny in an absolute sense that there may have been an early Christian hymn from which Paul is quoting. These "hymnic fragments" of form criticism are quite convincing as creeds, but evidence is simply lacking that they were utilized in early liturgy as hymns. Yet one needs no external evidence to see them as early creeds of the church, especially as they are Christological "fragments."

60. Knight, 201-202.



saying to be what precedes this portion. This opinion seems due primarily to the fact that the preceding verses deal more directly with salvation, and that of the elect. However, if that is the case, then Paul interspersed his own comments within the faithful saying, which would be out of keeping with his usual manner of presenting the faithful saying. On the other hand, what follows the Greek phrase “πιστὸς ὁ λόγος” is a nearly lyric confession containing four parallel phrases and each phrase containing an antithesis. Each of the four parallel phrases is a conditional clause. “The structure of each protasis is the same: εἰ plus a first person plural verb.”⁶¹ The first two antitheses are first person plural in both protasis and apodosis. The second two are contrasts between first person plural (we) and third person singular (he). Thus:

If we are dead together	We shall also live together
If we suffer	We shall also reign together
If we deny	Also he will deny us
Although we are unfaithful	He abides faithful

There seems to be a distinction made between denial in the third clause and unfaithfulness in the fourth. The key thing seems to be that God’s faithfulness, or more explicitly Christ’s faithfulness, abides even when we are momentarily weak in faith. But if we explicitly deny, i.e. reject him by our confession of faith, then he will also deny us. The first half of the faithful saying is about endurance of faith in suffering and death. The latter half of the faithful saying is about a lack of endurance, and we would suppose under similar circumstances of suffering and death. So, there is a broad sense in which this faithful saying is, in fact, soteriological, at least in the ramification of salvation that the saved one endures to the end. Though the truly regenerate may have lapses in which their weakness of faith is manifested; yet an outright denial evidences Christ’s denial of that person as truly regenerate. Knight stated regarding this passage:

Denial of Christ manifests itself in various ways in the NT. It can consist in denying his name (Rev. 3:8) or faith in him (Rev. 2:13). It can thus take the form of forsaking or repudiating the Christian faith

61. *Ibid.*, 402.

and its truths, particularly the truth concerning Jesus. In doing so one personally denies Christ (and the Father, cf. 1 Jn. 2:22-23). The denial can also manifest itself in the moral realm. Some may ‘profess to know God, but by their deeds deny him’ (Tit. 1:16 cf. 1 Tim. 5:8).⁶²

Another consideration that may be significant for the study of confessions of faith within the pages of Scripture is the usage of the Greek verb “ἀρνέομαι” in the third parallel. In John 1:20,⁶³ the Greek ἀρνέομαι is used by John as an antonym for ὁμολογέω. Thus the term may take upon itself in this context the idea of “confessing the opposite.”⁶⁴ This is seemingly the view of the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* on this Greek word for “deny.”

This leads us to the third form of denial, namely, the failure to acknowledge Jesus Christ in sound doctrine. Particularly when a statement about Christ has consequences for the practical decisions of life, it must be made correctly and cautiously. Nor is it merely the inner connection between teaching and practice which makes of heresy a denial of Christ (cf. 2 Pt. 2:1 ff.). In itself a false statement concerning Christ is a denial of Christ. For the claim of Christ extends to thinking, and where there is a false statement it implies that this claim is heard but not acknowledged.⁶⁵

The last instance of a “faithful saying” in the Pastoral Epistles is found in Titus 3:8. “This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.” D. E. Holwerda commented on this particular saying, “Tit. 3:4–7 seems to be a quotation from an existing confession in the early Church. Because of its stress on washing, the Holy Spirit, inner change, and the Trinity, it is possible that this saying was originally a corporate baptismal confession.”⁶⁶ Not only Holwerda, but an entire host of commentators, also view the previous

62. *Ibid.*, 406.

63. John 1:20, καὶ ὁμολόγησεν καὶ οὐκ ἠρνήσατο, καὶ ὁμολόγησεν ὅτι ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμὶ ὁ χριστός.


64. This seems to be why refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter is tantamount to a confession of faith on Moses’ part in Hebrews 11:24.

65. *TDNT*, I.470.

66. D. E. Holwerda, “Faithful Sayings,” in editor Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2001, c1979-1988), II.275.



section⁶⁷ as the faithful saying in this passage. This passage is a mature Trinitarian formula, probably used very early in the apostolic church at baptism.⁶⁸ Verse 4 identifies God the Father as the author of salvation, but also connects this salvation with the Holy Spirit in verse 5 and with “Jesus Christ our Savior” in verse 6. The idea that this is a baptismal formula arises from identifying “the washing of regeneration” as that which is symbolized in baptism. Space constraints prevent us from continuing with considerations of such creedal formulas in Hebrews⁶⁹ and 1 Peter.⁷⁰

The Scriptures themselves, then, abound in creedal and confessional statements. When the church today makes creedal statements or frames confessions of faith, it is doing nothing but following the example of the apostolic church. Those confessions were clearly not as elaborate or as multi-faceted as modern confessions of faith must be, but they were far more than a mere statement of “no creed but Christ.” We must conclude, along with J. N. D. Kelly, “that one-membered, two-membered, and three-membered confessions flourished side by side in the apostolic Church as parallel and mutually independent formulations of the one [Christological] *kerygma*.”⁷¹ 

67. Either beginning at verse 4 according to some commentators, or at verse 5 according to others.

68. Cf. Matthew 28:19.

69. Hebrews 3:1, “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;” Hebrews 4:14, “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* profession.” Hebrews 10:23, “Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised).”

70. 1 Peter 3:18, “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.” 1 Peter 1:21, “Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.” 1 Peter 2:21, “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.” 1 Peter 3:22, “Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.”

71. Kelly, 24.

BOOKS & TRACTS BY RICHARD BACON

The Visible Church & the Outer Darkness. Regular Price \$8.00. **Special Price This Issue \$1.50.** This book was written as a response to those who wish to separate themselves from local congregations of the visible church. They believe that in these ungodly days every local congregation of the visible church is corrupt and that to remain in them is to partake of other’s sin. These former church members usually end up worshiping in their own homes by themselves or with a small group without proper church leadership or even an ordained minister. Bacon refutes this practice with a study of the nature of the church and the evils of schism, the duty of church officers and members when churches are corrupt, and a discussion as to when it is necessary to depart from a corrupt church to keep from partaking in other’s sin. The book is also a brief introduction to 17th century Presbyterian Ecclesiology as Bacon deals with Samuel Rutherford, George Gillespie, James Durham, Robert Baillie, and others.

Justification by Faith: What is Faith. \$2.50. This short, easy-to-read tract is a good, basic explanation of the true biblical teaching of justification by faith alone. It distinguishes between the modern easy believism based upon asking Jesus into your heart, or making Christ your Lord and Master, or walking a sawdust trail of emotional tears, and the true gospel faith of the Reformation which had the power to turn the world upside down. It is a useful tract that can be used many ways: edifying reading for your personal or family devotions, a useful resource for a new members class or as a tract to pass out.

Built Upon The Rock: A Study of the Doctrine of the Church. By W. Gary Crampton, Th.D. & Pastor Richard Bacon, Ph.D. \$3.95. This pamphlet by Drs. Bacon and Crampton explains the historic Presbyterian view of the church. It covers biblical ecclesiology and also deals briefly with the polity of the church in the New Testament. Please Note: For a fuller view of both ecclesiology and biblical polity, the reader is encouraged to download Dr. Bacon’s two dissertations from the FPCR website at www.fpcr.org

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Objections to Psalmody: “The Psalms Contain a Sub-Christian Ethic”

By Dr. Richard Bacon.



Objection: Some Psalms are imprecations against the wicked. But Christ now teaches us to love our enemies and even to pray for them. It is therefore opposite a Christian spirit to sing such Psalms as call for the destruction of the wicked (or our enemies).

Answer: There are so many problems with this objection that the only real difficulty in answering it is deciding where to begin. Perhaps the best place to begin is with the fact that the biblical ethic is absolute. If it is immoral for us today to sing and pray for the destruction of God’s enemies, then so has it ever been immoral to do so. The biblical ethic required the believer in David’s day to do good to his personal enemies as much as it requires the same of Christians today. And so David did (1 Samuel 26:23-25).

The first thing for the Christian to address in singing the imprecatory Psalms is that he is not speaking to God of his own (i.e., the Christian’s own) personal enemies. The law required that an Israelite should treat the stranger in the land according to the same law of God as the home-born (Exodus 12:48ff.). Moreover, not only did God forbid his people from “vexing” a stranger, he positively required them to good to them. Thus the Bible teaches, in Exodus 22:21, Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. Exodus 23:4-5, If thou meet thine enemy’s ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him. Proverbs 25:21-22, If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee.

It is absolutely necessary that Christians understand some basic ethics while they are singing – ethics very much different from the Dispensationalism presupposed by this objection. It is absurd to think that it was moral for David to write the imprecatory Psalms, but immoral for Christians to sing them. Unquestionably there are distinctions that must be maintained between the Old Testament and the New; between law and gospel; and between works and grace. However, the gospel is the same; the law is the same; and morality is the same in both testaments.

So far are the Psalms from commending a sub-Christian morality that they teach conduct of the highest and purest standard. The purpose of the Psalms is not strictly to teach morality, but when the Psalms bless one course of conduct, speech, or thought over against another, it is always the higher, nobler, and more godly path that is blessed. When the pagans of old were still struggling to adopt some speculative notion of “good and true,” there was already – in the Hebrew Psalms – a poetry that embodied a true moral philosophy. A nation that adopts the moral principles it finds in the Psalter will be a nation famous for its justice and mercy.

The Psalter inculcates a righteous ethic because of its conception and presentation of God and his attributes. No book of the Bible (and certainly no uninspired hymnody) gives a more complete understanding of God’s perfections. It is only as men have the glory of God as the purpose of their actions that any action can rightly be called “good.”¹ Men’s thoughts, conversations, and deeds are all influenced by the way they understand God’s perfections. God’s character is displayed in greater manifest glory in the inspired

1. See *Westminster Confession of Faith*, XVI.7 for the confessional basis for this assertion.



words of the Psalter than in the compositions that originate in the human heart, regardless of how pious that heart may be. The Psalter presses God's law upon the psyche in such a way that singers cannot lightly dismiss or contemn its message. The standard of righteousness and justice by which men may evaluate every system of ethics is the character of God, revealed in his moral law and celebrated in the Psalter.

In addition, the Psalms – like the law of God – are extremely broad (Psalm 119:96). The ethics of the Psalter touch upon the whole life of man. The Psalms teach:

Integrity (Psalm 7:8; 26:11):

“The Lord he shall the people judge: my Judge, Jehovah, be,

After my righteousness, and mine integrity in me....

But as for me, I will walk on in mine integrity:

Do thou redeem me, and, O Lord, be merciful to me.”

Benevolence (Psalm 41:1; 112:9)

“Blessed is he that wisely doth the poor man's case consider;

For when time of trouble is, the Lord will him deliver....

He hath dispers'd, giv'n to the poor; his righteousness shall be

To ages all; with honour shall his horn be raised high.”

Regard for Authority (Psalm 21:5)

“In that salvation wrought by thee his glory is made great;

Honour and comely majesty thou hast upon him set.”

Obedience to God's Law (Psalm 119:9, 15)

“By what means shall a young man learn his way to purify?

If he according to thy word thereto attentive be....

I will thy holy precepts make my meditation;

And carefully I'll have respect unto thy ways each one.”

Love for Brethren (Psalm 133:1)

“Behold, how good a thing it is, and how becoming well,

Together such as brethren are in unity to dwell.”

Love for Enemies (Psalm 7:4-5)

“If I rewarded ill to him that was at peace with me;

(Yea, ev'n the man that without cause my foe was I did free;)

Then let the foe pursue and take my soul, and my life thrust

Down to the earth, and let him lay mine honour in the dust.”

Returning Good for Evil (Psalm 35:13-14)

“But as for me, when they were sick, in sackcloth sad I mourn'd:

My humbled soul did fast, my prayer into my bosom turn'd.

Myself I did behave as he had been my friend or brother;

I heavily bow'd down, as one that mourneth for his mother.”

Homelife (Psalm 101:2b-c, 7)

“O when, in kindness unto me, wilt thou be pleas'd to come?

I with a perfect heart will walk within my house at home....

Who of deceit a worker is in my house shall not dwell;

And in my presence shall he not remain that lies doth tell.”

Purity of Thought & Speech (Psalm 17:3; 24:4; 39:1)

“Thou prov'dst mine heart, thou visit'dst me by night, thou didst me try

Yet nothing found'st; for that my mouth shall not sin, purpos'd I....

Whose hands are clean, whose heart is pure, and unto vanity

Who hath not lifted up his soul, nor sworn deceitfully....

I said I will look to my ways, lest with my tongue I sin:

In sight of wicked men my mouth with bridle I'll keep in.”

It is clear that examples could be multiplied page upon page. That is not the purpose of this essay. The point, rather, is that in demonstrating the high morality of the Psalter, Christians should understand that the Psalter does not incite to anything sinful, including a sinful hatred or vengeance toward personal enemies. In fact, the term “imprecatory” may even be somewhat misleading. These Psalms do not call down curses merely for the sake of cursing. They are rather appeals to God's own justice for him to act justly. Thus if one calls them “justice” Psalms, much of the prejudice against them can be removed. Besides, there is no reason to see spiritual harm coming to the singer of these Psalms any more than to the reader.

The confession of this writer is that all the canonical Psalms are given by inspiration of God, and as such, are *profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly [sic] furnished unto all good works* (2 Timothy 3:16). The fact that David wrote such Psalms by inspiration of God should settle the fact, then, that they are profitable to the church for the same reasons that all holy Scripture is profitable.



Further, the language of the New Testament is no more “mellow” toward those who have set themselves incorrigibly against God’s will. John Baptist cried, *O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?* (Matthew 3:7; Luke 3:7). The same term was used by the meek and mild Jesus at Matthew 12:34 and 23:33. The Apostle Peter cursed (pronounced judgment) on Simon Magus when he said, *thy money perish with thee* (Acts 8:20) and pronounced a similar judgment on Ananias and Sapphira recorded in Acts chapter 5.

The Apostle Paul cursed (anathematized) all those who preach false gospels (Galatians 1:8-9), instructed that an incestuous man be delivered to Satan, and prayed that God would *reward* [the evil-doer] *Alexander the coppersmith according to his [evil] works*. The saints under the altar, in Revelation chapter 6, cried out, *how long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on earth?* (Revelation 6:10). So far is this prayer from a sinful desire that the author of Hebrews refers to such souls as *the spirits of just men made perfect* (Hebrews 12:22-24). None of the expressed judgments or pleas for justice in the New Testament arose from sentiments of personal revenge, and it is a false sense of superiority that would suppose that the expressed judgments and pleas for justice in the Psalms do arise from such a spirit.

Psalm 137 is one of the most maligned of the Psalms. But Calvin commented on Psalm 137:9, *Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones,*

As God had determined to punish Babylon, he pronounced a blessing upon Cyrus and Darius, while on the other hand Jeremiah (ch. 48:10) declares those cursed who should do the work of the Lord negligently, that is, fail in strenuously carrying out the work of desolation and destruction, to which God had called them as his hired executioners. It may seem to savour of cruelty, that he should wish the tender and innocent infants to be dashed and mangled upon the stones, but he does not speak under the impulse of personal feeling, and only employs words which God had himself authorized, so that this is but the declaration of a just judgment, as when our Lord says, ‘with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again’ (Matthew 7:2).²

2. John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, volume 5. trans. The Rev. James Anderson (Grand Rapids: Baker Book

Another problem with the objection against singing “justice Psalms” arises from the fact that King David was, in great measure, not only a man after God’s heart (Acts 13:22), but a type and spokesman for Christ. The imprecations of the Psalms are, therefore, most often expressions of the infinite justice of the God-man. They express Christ’s righteous indignation against wrong-doers and his righteous compassion for the wronged. They represent his attitude as the king and defender of his church. These Psalms reveal the depths of Christ’s love for the church and of his hatred for sin. Christ himself is the best key to understanding the Psalms, and the imprecatory Psalms are not exceptions to this rule.

Further, there is an implicit exhortation not to be one of those against whom the church sings. Such Psalms teach their singers to love justice and hate iniquity, to *do good and eschew evil* (1 Peter 3:11). The Rev. J. H. Webster of Philadelphia pointed this out nearly a century ago when he stated,

It must be obvious to the attentive student of the Imprecatory Psalms that their effect is to restrain us from sin, to make us love and value justice, to lead us to commit vengeance into the hands of the Lord, thus strongly deterring us from private and personal revenge, and to show us that God is to be praised for His justice as well as His mercy. History itself teaches us that civilization progresses most rapidly when justice and mercy go hand in hand in the conduct of affairs, as they do in the Scriptures of God.³

As I tell the children of the church I pastor, “when you sing the imprecatory Psalms, make sure you are not standing on the bull’s eye.”

Prayer for the overthrow of the wicked is sinful only insofar as it may arise from sentiments of private ill will or revenge, or from a desire for gain or success upon the failure of others. When that prayer proceeds from a love for justice, for the protection of the innocent, for the peace of society, for the vindication of the righteous, for the encouragement of the virtuous, for the spread of the gospel, and for the honour of God, however, it is a just prayer. Aversion to the

House, 1983 reprint of Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1843), 197.

3. J. H. Webster, “The Imprecatory Psalms,” in John McNaugher, ed. *The Psalms in Worship* (Edmonton, AB: Still Waters Revival Books, 1992 reprint of Philadelphia: UPCNA, 1907), 309.



imprecatory Psalms may arise in some from a misunderstood or misguided idea of mercy; but there are many for whom the aversion arises from a misunderstanding or contempt for God's justice. If men had greater contempt for sin, they would have correspondingly less contempt for the Psalms of God's justice.

Finally, it is not broad charity that refuses to sing of the justice and judgment of God, but a narrow and man-centered humanism. The church in Scripture cries to God for justice and judgment, while the church today expects and longs for peace at any price. Those who consider the judgment God brought upon Babylon in Psalm 137, for example, to belong to a former, less gracious age should consider that it was the merchants of the earth (*i.e.*, the worldlings) who wept and mourned over Babylon in the New Testament book of Revelation. But for God's people, the command from heaven remains, *Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her. And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee;...and in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth* (Revelation 18:20-22a, 24).

The New Testament in many places such as the one just quoted either alludes to imprecatory Psalms or quotes them directly – but not once does it criticize or censure either the author of the imprecatory Psalm or the spirit in which he wrote. There may be those today who regard God's justice and judgment to be unfit subjects for the church's praise. It is certainly understandable that those who are the potential or actual objects of God's wrath would be of such an opinion – they mourn the fall of Babylon. However, those who would be protected and comforted against God's enemies understand that the church is not saved by sudden and secret "rapture" from her enemies, but by the destruction of her enemies by God's powerful right arm. Therefore a refusal to pray and sing against God's avowed enemies is tantamount to refusing to pray for the deliverance of Jerusalem – his people.

"Like fire that burns the woods, like flames of lightning,
Pursue them with thy storms and strike with fear.
Fill up their faces with humiliation,
And let them seek thy name, Jehovah, then.
Let them be terrified and sham'd forever,
And let them be dismay'd and be destroy'd.
Let them know thou alone – thou art Jehovah –
Thou art the one most high o'er all the earth."

Psalm 83:14-18

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The Lord our Righteousness

A Sermon on Jeremiah 23:6. From George Whitefield, *Selected Sermons of George Whitefield* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1999).

By George Whitefield



Whoever is acquainted with the nature of mankind in general, or the propensity of his own heart in particular, must acknowledge, that self-righteousness is the last idol that is rooted out of the heart: being once born under a covenant of works, it is natural for us all to have recourse to a covenant of works, for our everlasting salvation. And we have contracted such devilish pride, by our fall from God, that we would, if not wholly, yet in part at least, glory in being the cause of our own salvation. We cry out against popery, and that very justly; but we are all Papists, at least, I am sure, we are all Arminians by nature; and therefore no wonder so many natural men embrace that scheme. It is true, we disclaim the doctrine of merit, are ashamed directly to say we deserve any good at the hands of God; therefore, as the Apostle excellently well observes, “we go about,” we fetch a circuit, “to establish a righteousness of our own, and,” like the Pharisees of old, “will not wholly submit to that righteousness which is of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

This is the sorest, though, alas, the most common evil that was ever yet seen under the sun. An evil that in any age, especially in these dregs of time wherein we live, cannot sufficiently be inveighed against. For as it is with the people, so it is with the priests; and it is to be feared, even in those places, where once the truth as it is in Jesus was eminently preached, many ministers are so sadly degenerated from their pious ancestors, that the doctrines of grace, especially the personal, *All-Sufficient Righteousness* of Jesus, is but too seldom, too slightly mentioned. Hence the love of many waxeth cold; and I have often thought, was it possible, that this single consideration would be sufficient to raise our venerable forefathers again from their graves; who would thunder in their ears their fatal error.

The righteousness of Jesus Christ is one of those great mysteries, which the angels desire to look into, and seems to be one of the first lessons that God taught men after the fall. For, what were the coats that God made to put on our first parents, but types of the application of the merits of righteousness of Jesus Christ to believers hearts? We are told, that those coats were made of skins of beasts; and, as beasts were not then food for men, we may fairly infer, that those beasts were slain in sacrifice, in commemoration of the great sacrifice, Jesus Christ, thereafter to be offered. And the skins of the beasts thus slain, being put on Adam and Eve, they were hereby taught how their nakedness was to be covered with the righteousness of the Lamb of God.

This is it which is meant, when we are told, “Abraham believed on the Lord, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” In short, this is it of which both the law and the prophets have spoken, especially Jeremiah in the words of the text, “The Lord our righteousness.”

I propose, through divine grace,

I. To consider who we are to understand by the word Lord.

II. How the Lord is man’s righteousness.

III. I will consider some of the chief objections that are generally urged against this doctrine.

IV. I shall show some very ill consequences that flow naturally from denying this doctrine.

V. Shall conclude with an exhortation to all to come to Christ by faith, that they may be enabled to say with the prophet in the text, “The Lord our righteousness.”

I. I am to consider who we are to understand by the word Lord. The Lord our righteousness.

If any Arians or Socinians are drawn by curiosity to hear what the babbler has to say, let



them be ashamed of denying the divinity of that Lord, who has bought poor sinners with his precious blood. For the person mentioned in the text, under the character of the Lord, is Jesus Christ. Ver. 5, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days (ver. 6) Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our righteousness." By the righteous branch, all agree, that we are to understand Jesus Christ. He it is that is called the Lord in our text. If so, if there were no other text in the Bible to prove the divinity of Christ, this is sufficient: for if the word Lord may properly belong to Jesus Christ, he must be God. And, as you have it in the margin of your Bibles, the word Lord is in the original Jehovah, which is the essential title of God himself. Come then, ye Arians, kiss the son of God, bow down before him, and honor him, even as ye honor the Father. Learn of the angels, those morning-stars, and worship him as truly God: for otherwise you are as much idolaters, as those that worship the Virgin Mary. And as for you Socinians, who say Christ was a mere man, and yet profess that he was your Savior, according to your own principles you are accursed: for, if Christ be a mere man, then he is only an arm of flesh: and it is written, "Cursed is he that trusteth on an arm of flesh." But I would hope, there are no such monsters here; at least, that, after these considerations, they would be ashamed of broaching such monstrous absurdities any more. For it is plain, that, by the word Lord, we are to understand the Lord Jesus Christ, who here takes to himself the title Jehovah, and therefore must be very God of very God; or, as the Apostle devoutly expresses it, "God blessed for evermore."

II. How the Lord is to be man's righteousness, comes next to be considered.

And that is, in one word, by *Imputation*. For it pleased God, after he had made all things by the word of his power, to create man after his own image. And so infinite was the condescension of the high and lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity, that, although he might have insisted on the everlasting obedience of him and his posterity; yet he was pleased to oblige himself, by a covenant or agreement made with his own creatures, upon condition of an unsinning

obedience, to give them immortality and eternal life. For when it is said, "The day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die;" we may fairly infer, so long as he continued obedient, and did not eat thereof, he should surely live. The 3rd of Genesis gives us a full, but mournful account, how our first parents broke this covenant, and thereby stood in need of a better righteousness than their own, in order to procure their future acceptance with God. For what must they do? They were as much under a covenant of works as ever. And though, after their disobedience, they were without strength; yet they were obliged not only to do, but continue to do all things, and that too in the most perfect manner, which the Lord had required of them: and not only so, but to make satisfaction to God's infinitely offended justice, for the breach they had already been guilty of. Here then opens the amazing scene of *Divine Philanthropy*; I mean, God's love to man. For behold, what man could not do, Jesus Christ, the son of his Father's love, undertakes to do for him. And that God might be just in justifying the ungodly, though "he was in the form of God, and therefore thought it no robbery to be equal with God; yet he took upon him the form of a servant," even human nature. In that nature he obeyed, and thereby fulfilled the whole moral law in our stead; and also died a painful death upon the cross, and thereby became a curse for, or instead of, those whom the Father had given to him. As God, he satisfied, at the same time that he obeyed and suffered as man; and, being God and man in one person, he wrought out a full, perfect, and sufficient righteousness for all to whom it was to be imputed.

Here then we see the meaning of the word righteousness. It implies the active as well as passive obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ. We generally, when talking of the merits of Christ, only mention the latter, — his death; whereas, the former, — his life and active obedience, is equally necessary. Christ is not such a Savior as becomes us, unless we join both together. Christ not only died, but lived, not only suffered, but obeyed for, or instead of, poor sinners. And both these jointly make up that complete righteousness, which is to be imputed to us, as the disobedience of our first parents was made ours by imputation. In this sense, and no other, are we to understand that parallel which the apostle Paul draws, in the 5th of the Romans,



between the first and second Adam. This is what he elsewhere terms, "our being made the righteousness of God in him." This is the sense wherein the Prophet would have us to understand the words of the text; therefore, Jer. 33:16, "She (i.e. the church itself) shall be called, (having this righteousness imputed to her) The Lord our righteousness." A passage, I think, worthy of the profoundest meditation of all the sons and daughters of Abraham.

Many are the objections which the proud hearts of fallen men are continually urging against this wholesome, this divine, this soul saving doctrine. I come now,

III. To answer some few of those which I think the most considerable.

And, *First*, they say, because they would appear friends to morality, That the doctrine of an imputed righteousness is "destructive of good works, and leads to licentiousness."

And who, pray, are the persons that generally urge this objection? Are they men full of faith, and men really concerned for good works? No; whatever few exceptions there may be, if there be any at all, it is notorious, they are generally men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. The best title I can give them is, that of *profane moralists*, or moralists false so called. For I appeal to the experience of the present as well as past ages, if iniquity did and does not most abound, where the doctrine of Christ's whole personal righteousness is most cried down, and most seldom mentioned. Arminian being antichristian principles, always did, and always will lead to antichristian practices. And never was there a reformation brought about in the church, but by the preaching the doctrine of an imputed righteousness. This, as the man of God, Luther, calls it, is the article by which the Church stands or falls. And though the preachers of this doctrine are generally branded by those on the other side, with the opprobrious names of Antinomians, deceivers, and what not; yet, I believe, if the truth of the doctrine on both sides was to be judged of by the lives of the preachers of professors of it, on our side the question would have the advantage every way.

It is true, this, as well as every other doctrine of grace, may be abused. And perhaps the unchristian walk of some, who have talked of

Christ's imputed righteousness, justification by faith, and the like, and yet never felt it imputed to their own souls, has given the enemies of the Lord thus cause to blaspheme. But this is a very unsafe, as well as a very unfair way of arguing. The only question should be, Whether or not this doctrine of an imputed righteousness, does in itself cut off the occasion of good works, or lean to licentiousness? To this we may boldly answer, "In no wise." It excludes works, indeed, from being any cause of our justification in the sight of God; but it requires good works as a proof of our having this righteousness imputed to us, and as a declarative evidence of our justification in the sight of men. And then, how can the doctrine of an imputed righteousness be a doctrine leading to licentiousness?

It is all calumny. The apostle Paul introduceth an infidel making this objection, in his epistle to the Romans; and none but infidels, that never felt the power of Christ's resurrection upon their souls, will urge it over again. And therefore, notwithstanding this objection, with the Prophet in the text, we may boldly say, "The Lord is our righteousness."

But Satan (and no wonder that his servants imitate him) often transforms himself into an angel of light; and therefore, (such perverse things will infidelity and Arminianism make men speak) in order to dress their objections in the best colors, some urge, "That our Savior preached no such doctrine; that in his sermon on the mount, he mentions only morality:" and consequently the doctrine of an imputed righteousness falls wholly to the ground.

But surely the men, who urge this objection, either never read, or never understood, our Lord's blessed discourse, wherein the doctrine of an imputed righteousness is so plainly taught, that he who runs, If he has eyes that see, may read.

Indeed our Lord does recommend morality and good works, (as all faithful ministers will do) and clears the moral law from many corrupt glosses put upon it by the letter-learned Pharisees. But then, before he comes to this, 'tis remarkable, he talks of inward piety, such as poverty of spirit, meekness, holy mourning, purity of heart, especially hungering and thirsting after righteousness; and then recommends good works, as an evidence of our having his righteousness imputed to us, and these graces



and divine tempers wrought in our hearts. "Let your light (that is, the divine light I before have been mentioning) shine before men, in a holy life; that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your father which is in heaven." And then he immediately adds, "Think not that I am come to destroy the moral law: I came not to destroy, (to take away the force of it as a rule of life) but to fulfill, (to obey it in its whole latitude, and give the complete sense of it.)" And then he goes on to show how exceeding broad the moral law is. So that our Lord, instead of setting aside an imputed righteousness in his sermon upon the mount, not only confirms it, but also answers the foregoing objection urged against it, by making good works a proof and evidence of its being imputed to our souls. He, therefore, that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Prophet says in the words of the text, "The Lord our righteousness."

But as Satan not only quoted scripture, but backed one temptation after another with it, when he attacked Christ in the wilderness; so his children generally take the same method in treating his doctrine. And, therefore, they urge another objection against the doctrine of an imputed righteousness, from the example of the young man in the gospel.

We may state it thus: "The Evangelist Mark, say they, chapter 10, mentions a young man that came to Christ, running, and asking him what he should do to inherit eternal life? Christ referred him to the commandments, to know what he must do to inherit eternal life. It is plain, therefore, works were to be, partly at least, the cause of his justification; and consequently the doctrine of an imputed righteousness is unscriptural." This is the objection in its full strength: and little strength in all its fullness. For, was I to prove the necessity of an imputed righteousness, I scarce know how I could bring a better instance to make it good.

Let us take a nearer view of this young man, and of our Lord's behavior towards him, Mark 10:17, the Evangelist tells us, "That when Christ was gone forth into the way, there came one running (it should seem it was some nobleman; a rarity indeed to see such a one running to Christ!) and not only so, but he kneeled to him, (perhaps many of his rank now, scarce know the time when they kneeled to Christ) and asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do that I may

inherit eternal life?" Then Jesus, to see whether or not he believed him to be what he really was, truly and properly God, said unto him, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God." And, that he might directly answer his question, says he, "Thou knowest the commandments: do not commit adultery, do not bear false witness, defraud not, honor thy father and thy mother." This was a direct answer to his question; namely, That eternal life was not to be attained by his doings. For our Lord, by referring him to the commandments, did not (as the objectors insinuate) in the least hint, that his morality would recommend him to the favor and mercy of God; but he intended thereby, to make the law his schoolmaster to bring him to himself; that the young man, seeing how he had broken every one of these commandments, might thereby be convinced of the insufficiency of his own, and consequently of the absolute necessity of looking out for a better righteousness, whereon he might depend for eternal life.

This was what our Lord designed. The young man being self-righteous, and willing to justify himself, said, "All these have I observed from my youth;" but had he known himself, he would have confessed, all these have I broken from my youth. For, supposing he had not actually committed adultery, had he never lusted after a woman in his heart? What, if he had not really killed another, had he never been angry without a cause, or spoken unadvisedly with his lips? If so, by breaking one of the least commandments in the least degree, he became liable to the curse of God: for "cursed is he (saith the law) that continueth not to do all things that are written in this book." And therefore, as observed before, our Lord was so far from speaking against, that he treated the young man in that manner, on purpose to convince him of the necessity of an imputed righteousness.

But perhaps they will reply, it is said, "Jesus beholding him, loved him." And what then? This he might do with a human love, and at the same time this young man have no interest in his blood. Thus Christ is said to wonder, to weep over Jerusalem, and say, "O that thou hadst known, Me." But such like passages are to be referred only to his human nature. And there is a great deal of difference between the love wherewith Christ loved this young man, and that wherewith he loved Mary, Lazarus, and their



sister Martha. To illustrate this by comparison: A minister of the Lord Jesus Christ seeing many amiable dispositions, such as a readiness to hear the word, a decent behavior at public worship, and a life outwardly spotless in many, cannot but so far love them; but then there is much difference betwixt the love which a minister feels for such, and that divine love, that union and sympathy of soul, which he feels for those that he is satisfied are really born again of God. Apply this to our Lord's case, as a faint illustration of it. Consider what has been said upon the young man's case in general, and then, if before you were fond of this objection, instead of triumphing, like him you will go sorrowful away. Our Savior's reply to him more and more convinces us of the truth of the prophet's assertion in the text, that "the Lord is our righteousness."

But there is a fourth, and a grand objection yet behind, which is taken from the 25th chapter of Matthew, "where our Lord is described as rewarding people with eternal life, because they fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and such-like. Their works therefore were a cause of their justification, consequently the doctrine of imputed righteousness is not agreeable to scripture."

This, I confess, is the most plausible objection that is brought against the doctrine insisted on from the text; and that we may answer it in as clear and brief a manner as may be, we confess, with the Article of the Church of England, "That albeit good works do not justify us, yet they will follow after justification, as fruits of it; and though they spring from faith in Christ, and a renewed soul, they shall receive a reward of grace, though not of debt; and consequently the more we abound in such good works, the greater will be our reward when Jesus Christ shall come to judgment."

Take these consideration along with us, and they will help us much to answer the objection now before us. For thus saith Matthew, "Then shall the King say to them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed children of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye

visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. I will therefore reward you, because you have done these things out of love to me, and hereby have evidenced yourselves to be my true disciples." And that the people did not depend on these good actions for their justification in the sight of God, is evident. "For when saw we thee an hungered, say they, and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in, or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?" Language, and questions, quite improper for persons relying on their own righteousness, for acceptance and acquittance in the sight of God.

But then they reply against thee: "In the latter part of the chapter, it is plain that Jesus Christ rejects and damns the others for not doing these things. And therefore, if he damns these for not doing, he saves those for doing; and consequently the doctrine of an imputed righteousness is good for nothing."

But that is no consequence at all; for God may justly damn any man for omitting the least duty of the moral law, and yet in himself is not obliged to give to any one any reward, supposing he has done all that he can. We are unprofitable servants; we have not done near so much as it was our duty to do, must be the language of the most holy souls living; and therefore, from or in ourselves, cannot be justified in the sight of God. This was the frame of the devout souls just now referred to. Sensible of this, they were so far from depending on their works for justification in the sight of God, that they were filled, as it were, with a holy blushing, to think our Lord should condescend to mention, much more to reward them for, their poor works of faith and labors of love. I am persuaded their hearts would rise with a holy indignation against those who urge this passage, as an objection to the assertion of the prophet, that "the Lord is our righteousness."

Thus, I think, we have fairly answered these grand objections, which are generally urged against the doctrine of an *imputed righteousness*. Was I to stop here, I think I may say, "We are made more than conquerors through him that loved us." But there is a way of arguing which I have always admired, because I have thought it always very convincing, by showing the



absurdities that will follow from denying any particular proposition in dispute.

IV. This is the next thing that was proposed. And never did greater or more absurdities flow from the denying any doctrine, than will flow from denying the doctrine of Christ's imputed righteousness.

And *First*, if we deny this doctrine, we turn the truth, I mean the word of God, as much as we can, into a lie, and utterly subvert all those places of scripture which say that we are saved by grace; that it is not of works, lest any man should boast, that salvation is God's free gift, and that he who glorieth, must glory only in the Lord. For, if the whole personal righteousness of Jesus Christ be not the sole cause of my acceptance with God, if any work done by or foreseen in me, was in the least to be joined with it, or looked upon by God as an inducing, impulsive cause of acquitting my soul from guilt, then I have somewhat whereof I may glory in myself. Not boasting is excluded in the great work of our redemption; but that cannot be, if we are enemies to the doctrine of an imputed righteousness. It would be endless to enumerate how many texts of scripture must be false, if this doctrine be not true. Let it suffice to affirm in the general, that if we deny an imputed righteousness, we may as well deny a divine revelation all at once; for it is the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end of the book of God. We must either disbelieve that, or believe what the prophet has spoken in the text, "that the Lord is our righteousness."

But further: I observed at the beginning of this discourse, that we are all Arminians and Papists by nature; for as one says, "Arminianism is the back way to popery." And here I venture further to affirming that if we deny the doctrine of an imputed righteousness, whatever we may style ourselves, we are really Papists in our hearts; and deserve no other title from men.

Sirs, what think you? Suppose I was to come and tell you that you must intercede with saints, for them to intercede with God for you; would you not say, I was justly reputed a papist missionary by some, and deservedly thrust out of thy synagogues by others? I suppose you would. And why? Because, you would say, the intercession of Jesus Christ was sufficient of itself, without the intercession of saints, and that it was

blasphemous to join theirs with his, as though he was [not] sufficient.

Suppose I went a little more round about, and told you that the death of Christ was not sufficient, without our death being added to it; that you must die as well as Christ, join your death with his, and then it would be sufficient. Might you not then, with a holy indignation, throw dust in the air, and justly call me a "setter forth of strange doctrines?" And how then, if it be not only absurd, but blasphemous to join the intercession of saints with the intercession of Christ, as though his intercession was not sufficient; or our death with the death of Christ, as though his death was not sufficient: judge ye, if it be not equally absurd, equally blasphemous, to join our obedience, either wholly or in part, with the obedience of Christ, as if that was not sufficient. And if so, what absurdities will follow the denying that the Lord, both as to his active and passive obedience, is our righteousness?

One more absurdity I shall mention, as following the denying this doctrine, and I have done.

I remember a story of a certain prelate, who, after many arguments in vain urged to convince the Earl of Rochester of the invisible realities of another world, took his leave of his lordship with some such words as these: "Well, my lord, if there be no hell, I am safe; but if there should be such a thing as hell, what will become of you?" I apply this so those that oppose the doctrine now insisted on. If there be no such thing as the doctrine of an imputed righteousness, those who hold it, and bring forth fruit unto holiness, are safe; but if there be such a thing (as there certainly is) what will become of you that deny it? It is no difficult matter to determine. Your portion must be in the lake of fire and brimstone for ever and ever. Since you will rely upon your works, by your works you shall be judged. They shall be weighed in the balance of the sanctuary; and they will be found wanting. By your works therefore shall you be condemned; and you, being out of Christ, shall find God, to your poor wretched souls, a consuming fire.

The great Stoddard or Northampton in New England, has therefore well entitled a book which he wrote (and which I would take this opportunity to recommend) "The Safety of appearing in the Righteousness of Christ." For



why should I lean upon a broken reed, when I can have the rock of ages to stand upon, that never can be moved?

And now, before I come to a more particular application, give me leave, in the apostle's language, triumphantly to cry out, "Where is the scribe, where the disputer?" Where is the reasoning infidel of this generation? Can any thing appear more reasonable, even according to your own way of arguing, than the doctrine here laid down? Have you not felt a convincing power go along with the word? Why then will you not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, that so he may become the Lord your righteousness?

But it is time for me to come a little closer to your consciences.

Brethren, though some may be offended at this doctrine, and may account it foolishness; yet, to many of you, I doubt not but it is precious, it being agreeable to the form of sound words, which from your infancy has been delivered to you; and, coming from a quarter, you would least have expected, may be received with more pleasure and satisfaction. But give me leave to ask you one question; Can you say, the Lord our righteousness? I say, the Lord *our* righteousness. For entertaining this doctrine in your heads, without receiving the Lord Jesus Christ savingly by a lively faith into your hearts, will but increase your damnation. As I have often told you, so I tell you again, an unapplied Christ is no Christ at all. Can you then, with believing Thomas, cry out, "My Lord and my God?" Is Christ your sanctification, as well as your outward righteousness? For the word righteousness, in the text, not only implies Christ's personal righteousness imputed to us, but also holiness wrought in us. These two, God has joined together. He never did, he never does, he never will put them asunder. If you are justified by the blood, you are also sanctified by the Spirit of our Lord. Can you then in this sense say, The Lord our righteousness? Were you ever made to abhor yourselves for your actual and original sins, and to loathe your own righteousness; for, as the prophet beautifully expresses it, "your righteousness is as filthy rags." Were you ever made to see and admire the all-sufficiency of Christ's righteousness, and excited by the Spirit of God to hunger and thirst after it? Could you ever say, my soul is athirst for Christ, yea, even

for the righteousness of Christ? O when shall I come to appear before the presence of my God in the righteousness of Christ! Nothing but Christ! Nothing but Christ! Give me Christ, O God, and I am satisfied! My soul shall praise thee for ever.

Was this ever the language of your hearts? And, after these inward conflicts, were you ever enabled to reach out the arm of faith, and embrace the blessed Jesus in your souls, so that you could say, "my beloved is mine, and I am his?" If so, fear not, whoever you are. Hail, all hail, you happy souls! The Lord, the Lord Christ, the everlasting God, is your righteousness. Christ has justified you, who is he that condemneth you? Christ has died for you, nay rather is risen again, and ever liveth to make intercession for you. Being now justified by his grace, you have peace with God, and shall, ere long, be with Jesus in glory, reaping everlasting and unspeakable fruits both in body and soul. For there is no condemnation to those that are really in Christ Jesus. Whether Paul or Apollos, or life or death, all is yours if you are Christ's, for Christ is God's. My brethren, my heart is enlarged towards you! O think of the love of Christ in dying for you! If the Lord be your righteousness, let the righteousness of your Lord be continually in your mouth. Talk of, O talk of, and recommend the righteousness of Christ, when you lie down, and when you rise up, at your going out and coming in! Think of the greatness of the gift, as well as the giver! Show to all the world, in whom you have believed! Let all by your fruits know, that the Lord is your righteousness, and that you are waiting for your Lord from heaven! O study to be holy, even as he who has called you, and washed you in his own blood, is holy! Let not the righteousness of the Lord be evil spoken of through you. Let not Jesus be wounded in the house of his friends, but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, day by day. O think of his dying love! Let that love constrain you to obedience! Having much forgiven, love much. Be always asking, What shall I do, to express my gratitude to the Lord, for giving me his righteousness? Let that self-abasing, God-exalting question be always in your mouths; "Why me, Lord? Why me?" why am I taken, and others left? Why is the Lord my righteousness? Why is he become my salvation, who have so often deserved damnation at his hands?



My friends, I trust I feel somewhat of a sense of God's distinguishing love upon my heart; therefore I must divert a little from congratulating you, to invite poor Christless sinners to come to him, and accept of his righteousness, that they may have life.

Alas, my heart almost bleeds! What a multitude of precious souls are now before me! How shortly must all be ushered into eternity! And yet, O cutting thought! Was God now to require all your souls, how few, comparatively speaking, could really say, the Lord our righteousness!

And think you, O sinner, that you will be able to stand in the day of judgment, if Christ be not your righteousness? No, that alone is the wedding garment in which you must appear. O Christless sinners, I am distressed for you! The desires of my soul are enlarged. O that this may be an accepted time! That the Lord may be your righteousness! For whither would you flee, if death should find you naked? Indeed there is no hiding yourselves from his presence. The pitiful fig-leaves of your own righteousness will not cover your nakedness, when God shall call you to stand before him. Adam found them ineffectual, and so will you. O think of death! O think of judgment! Yet a little while, and time shall be no more; and then what will become of you, if the Lord be not your righteousness? Think you that Christ will spare you? No, he that formed you, will have no mercy on you. If you are not of Christ, if Christ be not your righteousness, Christ himself shall pronounce you damned. And can you bear to think of being damned by Christ? Can you bear to hear the Lord Jesus say to you, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels"? Can you live, think you, in everlasting burnings? Is your flesh brass, and your bones iron? What if they are? Hell-fire, that fire prepared for the devil and his angels, will heat them through and through. And can you bear to depart from Christ? O that heart-piercing thought! Ask those holy souls, who are at any time bewailing an absent God, who walk in darkness, and see no light, though but a few days or hours; ask them, what it is to lose a sight and presence of Christ? See how they seek him sorrowing, and go mourning after him all the day long! And, if it is so dreadful to lose the sensible presence of Christ only for a day, what must it be to be banished from him to all eternity!

But thus it must be, if Christ be not your righteousness. For God's justice must be satisfied; and, unless Christ's righteousness is imputed and applied to you here, you must hereafter be satisfying the divine justice in hell-torments eternally; nay, Christ himself shall condemn you to that place of torment. And how cutting is that thought! Methinks I see poor, trembling, Christless wretches, standing before the bar of God, crying out, Lord, if we must be damned, let some angel, or some archangel, pronounce the damnatory sentence: but all in vain. Christ himself shall pronounce the irrevocable sentence. Knowing therefore the terrors of the Lord, let me persuade you to close with Christ, and never rest till you can say, "the Lord our righteousness." Who knows but the Lord may have mercy on, may abundantly pardon you? Beg of God to give you faith; and, if the Lord gives you that, you will by it receive Christ, with his righteousness, and his All. You need not fear the greatness or number of your sins. For are you sinners? So am I. Are you the chief of sinners? So am I. Are you backsliding sinners? So am I. And yet the Lord (for ever adored be his rich, free and sovereign grace) the Lord is my righteousness. Come then, O young man, who (as I acted once myself) are playing the prodigal, and wandering away afar off from your heavenly Father's house, come home, come home, and leave your swines' trough. Feed no longer on the husks of sensual delights: for Christ's sake arise, and come home! Your heavenly Father now calls you. See yonder the best robe, even the righteousness of his dear Son, awaits you. See it, view it again and again. Consider at how dear a rate it was purchased, even by the blood of God. Consider what great need you have of it. You are lost, undone, damned for ever, without it. Come then, poor, guilty prodigals, come home: indeed, I will not, like the elder brother in the gospel, be angry; no, I will rejoice with the angels in heaven. And O that God would now bow the heavens, and come down! Descend, O Son of God, descend; and, as thou hast shown in me such mercy, O let thy blessed Spirit apply thy righteousness to some young prodigals now before thee, and clothe their naked souls with thy best robe!

But I must speak a word to you, young maidens, as well as young men. I see many of you adorned, as to your bodies, but are not your



souls naked? Which of you can say, the Lord is my righteousness? Which of you was ever solicitous to be dressed in this robe of invaluable price, and without which you are no better than whited sepulchers in the sight of God? Let not then so many of you, young maidens, any longer forget your chief and only ornament. O seek for the Lord to be your righteousness, or otherwise burning will soon be upon you, instead of beauty!

And what shall I say to you of a middle age, you busy merchants, you cumbered Marthas, who, with all your getting, have not yet gotten the Lord to be your righteousness? Alas, what profit will there be of all your labor under the sun, if you do not secure this pearl of invaluable price? This one thing, so absolutely needful, that it only can stand you in stead, when all other things shall be taken from you. Labor therefore no longer so anxiously for the meat which perisheth, but henceforward seek for the Lord to be your righteousness, a righteousness that will entitle you to life everlasting. I see also many hoary heads here, and perhaps the most of them cannot say, the Lord is my righteousness. O gray-headed sinner, I could weep over you! Your gray hairs, which ought to be your crown, and in which perhaps you glory, are now your shame. You know not that the Lord is your righteousness: O haste then, haste ye, aged sinners, and seek an interest in redeeming love! Alas, you have one foot already in the grave, your glass is just run out, your sun is just going down, and it will set and leave you in an eternal darkness, unless the Lord be your righteousness! Flee then, O flee for your lives! Be not afraid. All things are possible with God. If you come, though it be at the eleventh hour, Christ Jesus will in no wise cast you out. Seek then for the Lord to be your righteousness, and beseech him to let you know, how it is that a man may be born again when he is old! But I must not forget the lambs of the flock. To feed them was one of my Lord's last commands. I know he will be angry with me, if I do not tell them, that the Lord may be their righteousness; and that of such is the kingdom of heaven. Come then, ye little children, come to Christ; the Lord Christ shall be your righteousness. Do not think, that you are too young to be converted. Perhaps many of you may be nine or ten years old, and yet cannot say, the Lord is our righteousness: which many have said, though younger than you. Come then, while you

are young. Perhaps you may not live to be old. Do not stay for other people. If your fathers and mothers will not come to Christ, do you come without them. Let children lead them, and show them how the Lord may be their righteousness. Our Lord Jesus Christ loved little children. You are his lambs; he bids me feed you. I pray God make you willing betimes to take the Lord for your righteousness. ❀

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Jesus, Divine Messiah: The New and Old Testament Witness

By Robert L. Reymond. (Christian Focus, 560 pages) \$29.99.

Reviewed by W. Gary Crampton, Th.D.



r. Robert L. Reymond, an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church in America, is professor of biblical studies at Knox Theological Seminary in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. He holds B. A., M. A., and Ph.D. degrees from Bob Jones University and has done doctoral and post-doctrinal studies in other seminaries and universities. Prior to taking the position at Knox Theological Seminary, Dr. Reymond taught at Covenant Theological Seminary for more than twenty years. He has authored numerous articles in theological journals and various reference works, and written some dozen books, including (in this writer's opinion) the finest one-volume systematic theology book available today: *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*.¹ To say the very least, Dr. Reymond is a well-educated, highly trained, and skilled theologian. And as a strong adherent of the Westminster Standards, he is unapologetically Reformed and Calvinistic in his beliefs.

In *Jesus, Divine Messiah: The New and Old Testament Witness*,² which is a combination of two of his earlier books,³ Professor Reymond has given the church (as the title implies) a comprehensive analysis of the witness of the Old and New Testaments to the deity of Jesus the Christ. Notably, the author is very much at home with the original languages of the Old Testament Hebrew and the New Testament Greek. And he adroitly utilizes his linguistic capabilities in the

exegesis of the numerous Scripture texts surveyed in this volume. Dr. Reymond does not, however, so burden the reader with this aspect of his analyses that the layman will find himself unable to follow the argumentation. He has even "transliterated into English every Hebrew and Greek word [employed] to make this edition more accessible and readable to people who do not know the biblical languages" (7).

In Chapter 1, "Introduction: Present Denials of the Deity of Jesus," Dr. Reymond interacts with and critiques much of modern day critical scholarship – a scholarship which has failed to give the church a biblical picture of Jesus Christ. Sadly, the (alleged) church has been too quick to imbibe a godly portion of this form of liberal thinking. Reymond concludes that: "Although those who have advanced these objections are for the most part scholars of great breadth of learning and recognized literary achievement, I am convinced that the biblical portrayal of Jesus is still sound and offers the basis for an intellectually satisfying faith." Furthermore, as he goes on to say, "I believe something far more vital than an intellectually satisfying faith is at stake" (61-62). What we are talking about is the everlasting state of men's souls.

In Part One: "The Old Testament Witness," Dr. Reymond explains that the title⁴ "Messiah" (Hebrew: Mashiach; Greek: Christos) means "anointed one." Just as the Old Testament prophets (1 Kings 19:16; Psalm 105:15; Isaiah 61:1), priests (Exodus 28:41; 29:7), and kings (1 Samuel 10:1; 16:13) were anointed to perform their God-given callings, so also Jesus of Nazareth, the unique Messiah, was anointed (as

¹ Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998).

² Robert L. Reymond, *Jesus, Divine Messiah: The New and Old Testament Witness* (Christian Focus Publications, 2003). The pagination found in this review is from this book.

³ *Jesus, Divine Messiah: The New Testament Witness* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1990), and *Jesus, Divine Messiah: The Old Testament Witness* (Christian Focus Publications, 1990).

⁴ "Messiah" or "Christ" is not a name. It is a title; in fact, it is the most frequently used of Jesus' titles.



prophet, priest, and king) to carry out His God-given calling, as the final and supreme revelation of God to man. And in light of many explicit New Testament declarations that speak to this fact, “the church from the beginning to the present has believed itself to be justified in seeing both adumbrations and explicit descriptions of Jesus of Nazareth and that which befell Him in the Old Testament Scripture” (66). This being so, while restricting himself to Genesis 3:15; 16:7-13 *et al.*, Psalms 2:7; 45:6-7; 102:25-27; 110:1; Isaiah 7:14-16; 9:6-7; 52:15-53:12; Micah 5:2; Daniel 7:13; Zechariah 12:10; and Malachi 3:1, the author writes his book to answer the questions: 1) “How does the Old Testament represent the Messiah’s role?” and 2) “Is Jesus Christ in some sense the God (Yahweh) of the Old Testament and, if so, in what sense” (68)?

In Chapter 2, “The Old Testament Witness to the Messiah,” Dr. Reymond studies the various passages cited above. He begins with Genesis 3:15 (“The ‘Seed of the Woman’”), and the inauguration of the covenant of grace: “biblical messianism begins early in the Old Testament and highlights the fact that it would include a tragic dimension within it” (69). Immediately subsequent to the Fall of man, God reveals the first messianic or gospel promise (the protevangelium), that He would send His Messiah to crush the head of the evil one. Even “from the very beginning of redemptive history the saint’s everlasting hope rested in the triumphant ‘conflict work’ carried out by a specific individual, namely, the mortally wounded ‘seed of the woman.’ Thus begins the history of Old Testament (and biblical) messianism” (71).

Genesis 16:7-13 is one of a number of Old Testament references to the “Angel of the Lord”: that Old Testament figure whom Geerhardus Vos terms “the most important and characteristic form of revelation in the patriarchal period” (72). Having carefully analyzed the relevant passages, Reymond contends that this Angel is, on the one hand differentiated from God, while on the other hand He is identified with God. The biblical data, therefore, suggests that the Angel is a divine, uncreated Person. “Here then,” writes the author, “in the revelational form of the Old Testament figure of the Angel of the Lord, we find the first visible expression of that ‘sacramental-spiritual’ character of God’s redemptive program which was to find its ultimate tangible expression in

that supernatural act which John captures in his great Christological affirmations ... ‘the Word was with God, and the Word was God’” [John 1:1] (77).

In his exposition of “The Psalmist’s Messiah,” using Jesus’ words that certain things written in the book of Psalms were about Him (Luke 24:44) as a springboard, Dr. Reymond studies four particular Psalms (2, 45, 102, 110). Psalm 2, which is considered to be “directly messianic and therefore exclusively prophetic of David’s greater Son, the Lord Jesus Christ,” teaches us about “The Enthroned Son” (78). Psalm 45 speaks of Christ as “The Divine King/Bridegroom,” thereby describing the relationship which exists between the Messiah (the Bridegroom) and His people (the church/bride). Psalm 102 has to do with “The Eternal Lord.” And Psalm 110, which is also directly messianic, and is the Psalm to which the New Testament writers allude most frequently as “having explicit and emphatic application to our Lord’s person and work” (87), tells us about “The Lordly Priest/King.” Having studied these four in a biblical-theological manner, Reymond argues that they, along with a number of other Psalms, do indeed “foretell the coming of a divine Messiah,” who is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ (89).

Next, the writer studies “Isaiah’s Immanuel Child.” According to Gleason Archer, Isaiah is the Bible’s “evangelical prophet”; the reason being that “deeper Christological insights are to be found in his work than anywhere else in the Old Testament” (89). Isaiah 7:14-16 is one example. Concerning these verses, Professor Reymond reviews the commentaries of a number of biblical exegetes (both non-evangelical and evangelical), and in agreement with J. Gresham Machen, Edward J. Young, and R. Laird Harris, he maintains that:

I believe they [Machen, Young, and Harris] have demonstrated that the prophecy [of Isaiah 7:14-16] *exclusively* predicted Mary’s virginal conception and the supernatural birth of Jesus Christ, and that in doing so it provided at the same time the time measure for the length of duration of Judah’s eighth century B. C. trouble as well. I would suggest also that Jesus’ uniqueness as the uniquely-conceived son of Mary came to expression precisely in terms of His being God incarnate, “the Word become flesh,” as the name of “Immanuel” suggests (105-106).



Isaiah 9:6-7 has to do with “Isaiah’s Child of the Four Exalted Titles.” The author writes: “When one considers the prophetic utterances in Isaiah 9:6-7, there can be no doubt that Isaiah of Jerusalem intended that we should recognize that we stand on messianic ground, as virtually all Old Testament scholars, even the most critical ones, will acknowledge” (106). A study of these four “Isaianic Names” (“Wonderful Counselor,” “Mighty God,” “Everlasting Father,” and “Prince of Peace”) which follows, reveals, in the words of Franz Delitzsch, that “the name Jesus is the combination of all the Old Testament titles used to designate the Coming One according to His nature and His works” (117).

It is generally recognized that the book of Isaiah contains four “Servant Songs” (42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12). It is the fourth of these (the “climactic” Servant Song) that informs us, not only *that* the Servant must suffer, but also *why* He must do so; He must suffer to bear the sins of many. In Isaiah 52:13-53:12 “The Suffering Servant in Isaiah’s ‘Fourth Servant Song’” is portrayed. Dr. Reymond is well aware that a number of scholars would have us believe that the servant of this passage is “corporately” to be considered as the nation of Israel. “In sum,” however, he writes: “I must conclude that the corporate view does not fit and cannot be made to fit the terms of the Song exegetically” (123). The Song depicts an individual, and this individual, according to the numerous references to these verses in the New Testament, is Jesus Christ: “In light of both the predictive character of Isaiah’s Fourth Servant Song and these explicit usages of Isaiah 53 by Jesus and the New Testament writers, the church from the beginning to the present has believed itself to be justified in seeing both adumbrations and explicit descriptions of the cross work of Jesus Christ throughout Isaiah 53” (128).

Micah 5:2 has to do with “Micah’s Divine Human Ruler.” In this verse, we are assured, not only is “the true humanity of the Messiah” clearly implied (129), but so also is “His preexistence and eternity”; He is “from everlasting” (133). That is to say, Micah 5:2 foretells the coming of the God-man: Jesus Christ.

Professor Reymond reveals a great breadth of scholarly research in the study of “Daniel’s ‘Man-Like Figure.’” He surveys a number of erudite

opinions on the Son of Man figure of Daniel 7, and having reviewed all of the evidence he concludes: “Evangelical Christians, as they always have, may continue to believe that Daniel intended by his ‘man-like figure’ to confront his readers with a superhuman, indeed, just a divine Messiah, and that Jesus understood Himself to be the Danielic Son of Man” (143).

Of the “some seventy-one quotations and allusions from Zechariah” which we find in the New Testament Scriptures (143), it is 12:10 which the author focuses on in “Zechariah’s Pierced Lord.” And “for the one for whom the New Testament is an authoritative guide to the Old Testament, there can be no doubt that here we have to do with a messianic prophecy” (144). To be faithful to God and His Word, then, we must stand on this authority, and boldly assert that “Zechariah 12:10 is messianic in intent and as such depicts a *divine* Messiah” (148).

In “Malachi’s Messenger of the Covenant,” we study the final Old Testament prophet. Whereas Malachi foretells the coming of Elijah “before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD” (4:5), the New Testament witness places it “beyond all controversy” that John the Baptist fulfilled this prophecy. He was the Elijah “who was to go before the Lord to prepare the way before Him (3:1).” This being the case, “a further conclusion [from the New Testament witness] inevitably follows from it”: Jesus Christ is the divine Messenger of the covenant, before whom “John the forerunner... was to go to prepare His way” (153-154). When we study the prophetic voice of Malachi in light of the New Testament attestations, then, says Reymond, “without doubt, the entire biblical witness supports the view that Malachi 3:1 is messianic, and that the Messiah envisioned therein was to be none other than Yahweh Himself,” the Lord Jesus Christ (158).

At the end of Part One we come to “The Sum of the Matter.” Dr. Reymond has saved the best for last. He begins this section by stating that in this first portion of the book he has followed the path marked out by the Lord Himself for the disciples on the road to Emmaus, where “beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He explained...in all of the [Old Testament] Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24:25-27). The author has “explained” a number of those Old Testament



passages which are traditionally taken to teach the divinity of the Messiah, and “in each case, on the basis of *exegesis*,” he has concluded that these passages do in fact “anticipate a Messiah who would be divine in nature and/or would suffer at the hands of men and that the New Testament writers were entirely correct when they applied them to Jesus Christ” (159).

In his exposition of these passages, Professor Reymond would have us know that he is not contending that the saints of the Old Testament understood the things which the prophets spoke of to the same degree that New Testament saints do. But on the other hand he does “believe it is true to say that they probably understood more than we are at first blush inclined to grant them” (162). The fact of the matter is, in the words of B. B. Warfield, that the Old Testament is “a chamber richly furnished but dimly lit.” And the revelation of the triune God which is *latent* in the Old Testament, is *patent* in the New. The elect of the Old Testament era, then, looked for the same Messiah that has come under the New (163). This is the Davidic Messiah announced by the angels to the shepherds of Judea, humankind’s only Savior: “He is Christ the Lord” (165).

When it comes to Part Two, the “New Testament Witness,” says Reymond, “I have set forth the New Testament’s messianism and its messianic hope.” Herein the questions posed by Christ in Matthew 22:42 (“What do you think of the Christ? Whose Son is He?”) are answered by expounding “the key Christological passages of the New Testament.” And the author does so by allowing “the very voice of Scripture (*ipsissima vox Scriptura*) to supply its answers to these questions” (167).

In Chapter Three, Professor Reymond studies “Jesus’ Self-Witness.” He begins by discussing Jesus’ claim to Messiahship, and then goes on to consider His claim to deity. Did Jesus believe Himself to be the promised Old Testament Messiah? Did He believe Himself to be ontologically divine? The answer to each of these questions is: Yes He did. Jesus Christ claimed to be the ontologically divine Son of God. And it is due to the fact that Christ is ontologically divine that He received from the Father His functional or economical messianic investiture.

Chapter Four is on “The Pre-resurrection Witness to Jesus.” Here the author investigates

five areas of “testimony” to Jesus’ divinity prior to His resurrection: the nativity accounts, Jesus’ baptism accounts, the accounts of His temptation, the accounts of His transfiguration, and the disciples’ pre-resurrection understanding of Jesus. And as he brings this chapter to a close, Dr. Reymond asserts that “the over-all witness of the combined testimony of these areas in the Gospel accounts...is overwhelmingly supportive of the historic view of the church that the Christ of the Gospels is supernatural, indeed, both divine and human, and thus God manifest in the flesh” (354).

In Chapter Five, “The Post-resurrection Witness to Jesus,” Professor Reymond considers four historical events: the resurrection of Christ, the pre-ascension ministry of Christ, His ascension, and Pentecost. Each of these “in its own way,” he concludes, provides “data which the church has [correctly] employed in confessing Jesus to be the Christ and both very God and very man and thus God incarnate” (411).

In Chapter Six, “Paul’s Witness to Jesus,” two matters are discussed in detail: the historicity of Paul’s conversion, and Pauline Christology. Having concluded that the apostle’s conversion was real and his apostolic calling divinely authoritative, Reymond proceeds to a survey of the Pauline corpus (which in itself is worth the price of the book). Here we see that from his very first days as a Christian Paul regarded Jesus as the incarnate Son of God, and he continued to do so throughout his apostolic ministry. According to Paul, Jesus Christ is “God blessed forever” (Romans 9:5), and “our great God and Savior” (Titus 2:13).

Chapter Seven has to do with “The Remaining New Testament Witness to Jesus.” In this final chapter the author looks at the witness of James, Jude, Peter, the Synoptic Evangelists (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), the author of Hebrews,⁵ and John. Once again, the biblical evidence is clear. Says Reymond: “I think it a fair deduction that Jesus was for all of them...the promised Messiah of Old Testament hope and expectation who, while being certainly human in every sense of the word, exhibited by His life, His words, and His

⁵ Dr. Reymond is of the opinion that the apostle Paul authored the book of Hebrews.



works that He was also the divine Son of God and thus God incarnate” (528).

Finally, in the Epilogue, “My Personal Witness,” Robert Reymond states that “both the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the historic Christian church have declared...that Jesus is the eternal Son of God who, as God’s ordained Messiah, became incarnate for us men and for our salvation and who then went to the cross to pay the penalty for the sin of His people.” This being the case, the simple matter of fact is just this: “what a man thinks about Christ will determine what he ultimately thinks about everything else.” Ultimately, as Jesus Himself declared, “a man’s eternal destiny would be determined by his thoughts about Him (John 8:24)” (535).

Always the evangelist, Robert Reymond draws the book to a close with the following challenge:

At the end of the first chapter, I invited my reader to continue with me on an investigative pilgrimage through the evidences from Scripture for Jesus Christ as both God the Son incarnate and the promised Old Testament Messiah. I suggested then that there was more at stake than just an *intellectually* satisfying faith. That journey has now reached its end. Now I invite my reader, if he has not already done so, to face squarely the fact that Jesus Christ is both God the Son incarnate and the promised Old Testament Messiah and that as God’s Son He came into the world to save sinners because His Father in heaven “so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16)...If the reader has been convinced from the biblical data that what we have argued is true, I urge him to bow in faith before Christ’s saving scepter and to join Christ’s witnesses in their effort to make the salvation that He accomplished at His cross known to the rest of mankind (537-538).

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The Book of Hebrews, Dr. Richard Bacon. 233 Sermons.

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The book of Hebrews was written at a time of crisis for the church; especially the congregations of Jewish believers in Jerusalem and its environs. Those Christians were undergoing persecution from friends and family because of their adherence to “the way” of Christianity. What could they say to their neighbors who accused them of leaving the old ways of Moses and the Prophets? The book of Hebrews was written to give those persecuted Jewish Christians a definitive answer in the face of rabbinic opposition to the truth.

Many of the truths argued by the author of Hebrews are concepts very familiar to the Jewish Christians of the first century, and they are often worded in terms that would be well-known to students of the Rabbinic literature. In fact, this has even led some scholars to the belief that there is a strong connection between the writer of Hebrews and the Jewish commentator Philo.

The Rabbinic literature taught those instructed in the ways of God to look for “the world to come” or “the last days.” The religious leaders of Israel – or rather, those who truly followed Moses – believed that Messiah (the anointed one, or the Christ) would come and rule over “those last days.”

The Mishnah specifically excluded those who denied the resurrection and inspiration of Scriptures from the world to come (Sanhedrin 10:1) together with the entire generation of the flood, the dispersion at Babel, and the inhabitants of Sodom (10:3). Rab Eleazar the Modite maintained, “He who treats holy things as secular, and he who defiles the appointed times, he who humiliates his fellow in public, he who removes the signs of the covenant of Abraham



our father, may he rest in peace, and he who exposes aspects of the Torah not in accord with the law, even though he has in hand learning in Torah and good deeds, will have no share in the world to come” (Aboth 3:11).

A footnote in the Babylonian Talmud (Sanhedrin 90a) reads, “The conception of what is to be understood by the future world is rather vague in the Talmud. In general, it is the opposite of ‘**olam hazeh**, this world.” In Berekhoth 1:5E ‘this world’ is opposed to the days of the Messiah. Whether the Messianic age is thus identical with the future world, and these with the post resurrection days, is a moot point. Another footnote at Baba Bathra 122a. equates the phrase “world to come” with “the Messianic era.” Thus the place might rightly read either “the world to come” or “the Messianic age.”

Midrash Rabbah at Numbers 12:15 (7:1E), referring to Moses’ anointing and sanctifying of the vessels of the Tabernacle, offers the opinions of R. Tahlifa of Caesarea and R. Simeon b. Lakesh: “One of them holds that after he had anointed each object he anointed them all together, while the other holds that the expression and had anointed them signifies anointing in this world and anointing for the world to come, and it teaches that by the anointing of these all the vessels to be used in the Messianic era were sanctified.”

None of this is quoted to claim that Hebrews has a specifically rabbinic view of eschatology. Rather, it seems that the book adopted *rabbinic language* in order to point out to the Jewish believers that the Messianic age had already begun. The author proceeded to maintain that a tension now exists between “the already” (what Christ has fulfilled by coming into the world) and “the not yet” (what remains for Christ to fulfill concerning the world to come). “Now it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking... Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him” (Hebrews 2:5, 8).

The author of Hebrews, whom Dr. Bacon believes to be the Apostle Paul, taught in this thirteen-chapter alimentionation that Jesus is that one of whom the Old Testament testified. As a result, “the world to come” has now descended upon the church and a New Covenant has been

inaugurated by God through Christ. It is significant to us that the persecution believers underwent in the first century involved many of the same issues that bring persecution upon the church in these days of the 21st century.

The first few verses of Hebrews claim that the true issue between the Old Covenant and the New is the fact that God’s Son, Jesus Christ, has brought a better revelation of the truths of God. Everything that could not be accomplished by the Old Covenant now *can be and is* accomplished by the New Covenant. The former ways of God revealing himself were fragmentary and disjointed. The revelation of God in Jesus Christ is unitary, sufficient, and final. The first chapter of this exhortation to faithfulness continues to aver that Jesus Christ is superior to the angels and is, in fact, the express image of God himself.


With the coming of Christ Jesus, everything that was peculiar to the Old Covenant passed away. One greater than Moses; greater than Aaron; and greater than Joshua has come and inaugurated the New Covenant. Since the mediator of the New Covenant is greater, the New Covenant must itself be a better covenant. “For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses.... If Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on.... Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron?”

Paul explained that the Old Covenant worship and its furnishings were mere shadows and symbols of that which is true and eternal (Heb. 8:5). Although the shadows and types of the Mosaic dispensation could point the faithful to Christ, they did not have any efficacy in themselves. When the substance (the object of faith, Jesus Christ) came, the shadows were made obsolete. Clearly there was a change in the priesthood from Aaron to Christ, but that change of priesthood implies necessarily that there has been a change in the law as well (Heb. 7:11-12).

This change of law requires the ratification of a better covenant. “For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.... In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete.



And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away” (Heb. 8:7, 13). Moreover, the shadows of the Old Covenant pointed to the work of Christ that was effectual in itself. “According to this [Old Covenant] arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation. But when Christ appeared as a high priest...he entered once for all into the holy places...securing an eternal redemption” (Heb. 9:9-12).

Paul concluded that the shadows of the Old Covenant were incapable of justifying God’s worshipers. “For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (Heb. 10:4). The issue in the Old Covenant never was what man could do to appease God’s anger. The Old Covenant sacrifices were incapable of being such a propitiation. Rather, the Old Covenant worshiper who worshipped according to God’s will in spirit and in truth came to God by faith alone (Heb. 11:6), asking and expecting God to do for him that which he could not do for himself. “For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.... But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin every year” (Heb. 10:1, 3). 

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Though these denominations still have lots of room for progress in their understanding of Scripture and the reformed faith, some progress has been evident over the past three and a half years. Work is nearing completion on a Falam language Psalter. This will be the first project in which there has been significant cooperation among the various reformed denominations. There is also work going on to have a Burmese language Psalter as well. Bibles already exist in both these languages, but there are also many in the reformed denominations who would like to see a more conservative translation of the original languages rather than the paraphrastic translation they presently have from an English Bible.

Even the best seminaries in Burma fall considerably short of the standards we would normally have for an educated ministry. Long term goals include helping some of the reformed men in that country to obtain the education necessary to establish such a seminary. At present very few of the reformed people in the nation have access to Greek and fewer still have access to Hebrew. Books are very difficult to obtain in that country because of the high import duties that the government has for such items. Eventually it may make sense to have a publishing ministry within the nation of Myanmar (a sort of Reformed Literature Society).

As we go to press, Dr Bacon is in Myanmar making final arrangements for the Falam Psalter and other things that could well lead to a permanent mission being established in that country. Please pray for his success in that place and if the Lord should lay this country upon your heart, please consider making contributions of time or other resources as well. 

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