
THE BLUE BANNER

Volume 7, Issue 2

For Christ's Crown & Covenant

February 1998

The Scope of the Whole Scriptures by Richard Bacon

[Editor's Note: This is an edited transcription from the third lesson of a series Pastor Bacon taught on Westminster Larger Catechism Question 4. Part 1 appeared in the April-May, 1993 *Blue Banner*, part two in the October-December 1997 issue.]

We have been examining Westminster Larger Catechism question number four, which asks, "How doth it appear that the Scriptures are the Word of God?" In more contemporary English we might ask, "How do we know that the Scriptures are the Word of God?" The answer that our larger catechism gives is, "The Scriptures manifest themselves to be the Word of God, by their majesty and purity, by the consent of all the parts, and the scope of the whole, which is to give all glory to God: by their light and power to convince and convert sinners, to comfort and build up believers unto salvation: but the Spirit of God bearing witness by and with the Scriptures in the heart of man, is alone able fully to persuade it that they are the very Word of God."

Our catechism here teaches that there are several reasons that lead us to believe that the Scriptures are the Word of God. Previously we discussed the majesty of its language, the holiness and purity of its doctrine, and the consistency or consent of all its parts. The reasons remaining are: the scope of the whole, which is to give all glory to God; their light and power to convert sinners and to comfort and to build up believers unto salvation. These are reasons that lead us to believe that the Scriptures are the Word of God. But it is only by the Spirit of God working in our hearts that we become *fully persuaded* that the Scriptures *are indeed* the very Word of God.

As we look at the scope and design of the whole, we will also look at the human authors of Scripture. Knowing who they were will lead us to a better understanding of the scope of the whole of Scripture and

that understanding in turn will lead us to believe that the Scriptures are the Word of God.

First: The scope of the whole of the Scriptures is to *give glory to God*. The central purpose of Scripture is to give glory to God. We must start with that understanding. The reason that we must start here is because so much of modern Christianity is focused on *man*, and who *man* is and what God can do for *man*. In fact, even "religious" men often teach that the reason God created all things was so that he would have somebody to love him. Scripture gives a very different reason. Scripture tells us that the reason God created all things is for *his own glory*. Revelation 4:11, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." The truth that God created all things for his own glory does not eliminate the fact that the creature is still required to love God. God still commands us to love him. That is the first and greatest commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy might." Those two are in no way contradictory. However, one is subservient to the other. The one is *our responsibility*; the other is *God's purpose*. Our responsibility is to love God with our whole being but God's purpose in creating us is *for his own glory*. The fact of it is that if God chooses to change our hearts in such a way so that we love him and thereby acquits us at the last day, *God receives glory*. If God does not choose to change our hearts and thereby judges us at the last day; *God receives glory*. In either event, *God receives glory*. One is to the glory of his mercy; the other is to the glory of his just judgment.

The scope of the whole Scripture, as well as the scope of all creation, is to glorify God.

We discussed that subject in some detail when we examined the holiness of Scripture. The holiness of Scripture and the purity of the doctrine of Scripture are apparent because Scripture does not lift up man in man's own estimation. Instead, Scripture subdues man's pride. In fact, Scripture kicks the props from under man's pride. Scripture informs us that we are not God. We do not make the decisions that God makes. It was trying to be as gods that got us into the fallen estate that we are in now. Eve was beguiled by the serpent, who said, "ye shall be as gods." The Scripture reveals to us that God is God, and we are not. Scripture also reveals that because God is God, we must glorify him.

There is direct evidence and evidence by consequence that we can derive from Scripture that the whole scope of the Scripture is to give glory to God.

By direct evidence

First of all, there is direct evidence in Scripture that God is to be the object of our adoration. Psalm 47:2-3, "For the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth. He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet." The Lord is subduing everything! There is *nothing* left that he is not subduing! He is a great and terrible God!

In Exodus 15:11, after the Israelites crossed over the Red Sea, kicking up dust as they went, God closed the Red Sea behind them, "immersing" the enemy. As God did that, a song was sung on the other side. The Israelites were singing, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" *That* is the scope of Scripture! They did not sing, "Oh goody, we made it!" Their song was to *praise God* for the deliverance they had received. They were thankful not only for the deliverance they had received, but also for the manner of the deliverance. They were delivered by the destruction of God's enemies. We need to remember that whenever God shows his arm mighty on our behalf, it is to destroy his and our enemies. Shorter catechism question number 26: "How doth Christ execute the office of a king?" The answer, in part, is: "...in subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, and *in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies.*" One of the things we need to make sure of is that God's enemies are our enemies. We need to be sure that we line up on God's side.

The prophets as well reveal that the scope of the Scripture is to give glory to God. It is not just in the Psalms, it is not just in Moses, but it is in the prophets as well. Jeremiah 10:10, "But the Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation." Notice that the scope of Scripture, even when speaking of his judgment, is to give *glory to God*. One cannot find another religious book with such language. One cannot find *any* other book with such language. Human beings do not think or speak this way. Men want to give glory to mankind. Only as the Holy Spirit inspired men of old did they speak of God's glory! The scope of the Scripture is to give glory to God, even in his indignation with the wicked. Many times even as staunch Calvinists and Presbyterians, we back away from the doctrine of reprobation when we are talking to people about the Lord. We back away from God's judgment against the wicked. We say, "God is not *really* willing that any should perish." But that is not true of the people spoken about here in Jeremiah 10:10. He is willing that *they* should perish! In fact, Scripture claims *God receives glory* not only from the fact that they are perishing, he also *receives glory* from the fact that he is *causing* them to perish. "The Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation."

This passage *does not say* that God is a loving father who just cannot stand the idea of the wicked not being his sons. This passage tells us that he is an angry God and the heathen will not be able to abide the day of his indignation. Human speakers do not *talk* like that, even when we know it to be true. We still back away from it. But the authors of Scripture do not! The authors of Scripture *give all glory to God* even in the awful and terrible and majestic aspect of God's judgment and wrath. Once again, this is evidence to the truth of the Scriptures because human authors would not write in that manner. The scope of the whole of Scripture is to give *glory to God*.

The prophet Daniel also shows the glory of God. Daniel 4:4-9, "I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in mine house, and flourishing in my palace: I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me. Therefore made I a decree to bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me, that they might make known unto me the

interpretation of the dream. Then came in the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers: and I told the dream before them: but they did not make known unto me the interpretation thereof. But at the last Daniel came in before me, whose name was Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods: and before him I told the dream saying, O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee, and no secret troubleth thee, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation thereof.”

Notice verse 24, “This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king.” Daniel did not come to Nebuchadnezzar saying, “The spirit of all these gods is in me.” Daniel did not say, “I am channeling this prophecy.” He did not say that he was going into a trance to do automatic writing. Daniel did not tell Nebuchadnezzar that he was reading his horoscope. Rather Daniel said, “This is the interpretation. This is the decree of the Most High, of *Elohim*, of the Supreme, of God Almighty.” Read on in verse 25: “They shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomever he will.”

Who did Daniel say was in charge of Nebuchadnezzar’s fate? Not King Nebuchadnezzar! The Most High God in charge! God is in charge of all that is. Daniel tells us that prophecy came to pass. Nebuchadnezzar was driven out and for seven years, he ate grass like a cow; his hair grew like eagles’ feathers and his nails became like bird’s claws.

In verses 34-37, at the end of the days decreed by God, Nebuchadnezzar said, “And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? At the

same time my reason returned to me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me, and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.”

This is first person reporting! “All those that walk in pride he is able to abase.” King Nebuchadnezzar discovered this first hand! Nebuchadnezzar looked with pride upon the city of Babylon and congratulated himself for the fine job he had done in building the city. But immediately he was driven out of the very city he built. He was abased. Nebuchadnezzar found out who *really* is in charge. God and God alone decreed the fate of Nebuchadnezzar. Once again, the scope of Scripture is not to give glory to the kings of the earth, nor even to the prophets who speak to the kings of the earth, but to *give glory to God alone!*

Another example is David. As prophet and as king, he gave all glory to God. I Chronicles 29: 10-11, “Wherefore David blessed the Lord before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou are exalted as head above all.” David gave *all glory to God*. The scope of the all the Scriptures is shown to *give all glory to God*. The scope of the Scriptures is to abase men and to exalt God.

By way of consequence

We have seen that the Scriptures speak of the glory of God by direct evidence. Additionally the Scriptures speak of the glory of God *by way of consequence*. When Scripture describes the vanity of everything else, when the Scriptures explains that all else is a seeking after the wind, when the Scriptures tells us that nothing can satisfy, then, by way of consequence, we understand that God is to receive the glory for everything that happens.

Even the elect angels speak of the glory of God as they stand about his throne, crying, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty.” They have to fly with two wings covering their feet and with two wings covering their faces, because even they, much less us as fallen,

sinful men, can not look in the face of God because of his great glory. As they fly about his throne, crying out “Holy, holy, holy,” they praise him. Yet even in the very act of praising him, they can not gaze directly on the fullness of his glory.

The force of the argument

What is the force of this argument? When we say that the scope of the Scriptures is to give glory to God, why does that make us believe that the Scriptures are the Word of God? What persuasive value does such a statement have in persuading us that the Scriptures are the Word of God?

I know me and I know you. I know if we had been given the task of writing the Scriptures that we, as all humans, would have exalted ourselves. The human authors of the Scriptures also would have exalted themselves had they been writing just a human book. The actual human authors were also fallen, sinful human beings like we are. As many today would like to make salvation easy for every man, so the writers of Scripture would have made salvation easy as well. Human writers might have said that you could remain in your sin and still be assured that God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. That is what we would have done, and if the authors of Scripture were not inspired by the Holy Ghost, we would see the same error in their writings because they are the same kind of people we are.

But we do not see that. We see the scope of Scripture debasing man and elevating the name of God. We see Scripture calling upon us to worship him, even in the majestic holiness of his judgment. We see Scripture telling us that the way is not broad that leads to life, but that the way is broad that leads to *destruction*. The Scripture tells us the way that leads to life is *narrow*, and there are few that find it. Scripture is not pandering to mankind! Rather Scripture’s purpose is to *give all glory to God*. So because of the fact that Scripture does not glorify man, nor does it lift the name of man, nor does it uphold the high opinion we have of ourselves, then we can conclude that Scripture did not come from man. Rather, Scripture came from God.

What kind of inferences can we draw from the fact that the scope of the whole Scripture is to glorify God?

First: As we read and study the Scriptures, we should have this design in view. We must come to the Scriptures with the knowledge that the design of

Scripture is not to titillate our imaginations; is not simply to inform us about history; is not simply to increase our knowledge so we can place one more doctrine in the doctrine bag we carry around with us. Rather, it is to *give glory to God*. As we read the Scriptures, if our motive is not to give glory to God, then we have come to Scriptures for the wrong reason all together.

Second: If it is the case—and it is—that the Word of God is to change us, to conform us to the image of Christ; and if the scope of Scripture is to bring all glory to God, then our entire way of life should be lived so as to bring glory to God. Our entire way of living, what the Puritans used to call “conversations,” should be so framed as to bring *glory to God*. We should be governed in everything that we do by the answer to the question: “Will this glorify God?”

Third: If it is the case that the overall scope of Scripture is to bring glory to God, we can say that any pretended doctrine that does not bring glory to God is unscriptural. This understanding of the scope of Scripture gives us a general rule by which we can judge all doctrine.

The character of the human authors

What importance does the character of the human authors carry? Matthew 7:16, “Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?” When we look at the authors of Scripture, we should be able to tell whether we should believe their words or not. If men like Esau and Judas wrote the Scriptures, we might suspect there was something wrong with the Scriptures. But if the Scriptures are written by what Peter calls “holy men” as they were borne along by the Holy Ghost, then we can give greater credence, or be more fully persuaded, that Scriptures are the very Word of God.

First we need to make it clear that when we say that the human authors of Scripture were inspired, we are not saying they were sinless. In fact, the very fact that they were inspired caused them many times to be willing to disclose their sins. How many of us would be willing to write down our recent sins in a document that we knew would last for thousands of years and be read by millions of people? Some of the authors of Scripture wrote about very great sins in their lives. Do you understand the force of this argument? If these were merely men’s words, they would not be making the kinds of confessions in

Scripture that they do. But because it is the Word of God, they were inspired to disclose even that which was unseemly about themselves.

Moses is an example of an author of Scripture who spoke of his own shortcomings. Numbers 11:11-15, "And Moses said unto the Lord, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? And wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? Have I begotten them, that thou shouldst say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers? Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? For they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat. I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight: and let me not see my wretchedness." Does that sound like someone who is tooting his own horn? It sounds like just the opposite. This is someone who is convinced that in himself he has no sufficiency. Moses was convinced that unless his sufficiency came from God, he could not do a thing for the people of God.

In Exodus 32 Moses spoke about his brother. Surely if Moses did not spare himself, he would spare his brother the embarrassment of having his sin exposed in Scripture. Exodus 32:2-5, "And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord." Not only is this passage an embarrassment to Aaron; it is repeated in Scripture a number of times, as a great sin. Moses did not leave it out. Moses did not cover it up. Why? Because these are not originally *Moses'* words; originally they are *God's* words. As God spoke to us through Moses, he did not hide anything that needed to be disclosed. And as a negative example, this needed to be disclosed.

Jeremiah wrote about his moaning and complaining. In Jeremiah 20: 7, 8, 14, 15, and 16, Jeremiah moaned, "Lord, I do not want to talk about this anymore. Every time I say anything to anybody, I end up getting thrown in a hole in the ground. And I just do not want to do it anymore." Why would Jeremiah include these things if his purpose were to exalt himself? Why would he, if he were writing whatever seemed good to him, include such information as this? Rather, it is obvious that the words are God's words and God is disclosing these things to us about Jeremiah through Jeremiah.

In Psalm 51, we see David's penitent prayer, after his sin with Bathsheba. Why would he confess such a thing? He was a great king, mighty in power, yet he spoke of his own great sin. Why? Because it is the very Word of God!

In I Timothy 1, Paul called himself a great, angry persecutor of the church. Why would he disclose such a thing to us? *Because it is God's Word.*

In Matthew 10:3, Matthew disclosed to us his unseemly past. "Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican..." Matthew the publican! The publicans were despised and looked down upon in Matthew's day. Yet he told us in his gospel who he was.

Matthew 9:9, "And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him." Once again this is Matthew's confession that he was of that class of people who were hated in Israel in that day.

So we have here not only a willingness to declare their sins but also a willingness to admit to their own unsavory background.

Amos admitted he was just a farmer from Tekoa. That is what he did for his occupation. He took care of the fig trees. Amos 1:1 and Amos 7:14.

As we look at them, and look at their professions, we find that the authors of Scripture were not generally geniuses. Amos was a farmer; four of the disciples were fishermen. They were not generally speaking men of worldly wisdom. As we look at how they wrote something that *did* hold together; as they wrote something that *did* give all the glory to God, we really must answer the question of how such down to earth men were able to do that. There is no answer apart from

the fact that they were inspired, borne along by the Holy Spirit. We see no appearance in Scripture of a design to advance themselves. Did the writers of Scripture expect to be set upon a pedestal and made saints to be prayed to? No. Their expectations were very much the opposite. Their expectations were that they would be persecuted, that they would suffer shipwreck, and that they would suffer beatings at the hands of the Jews.

II Corinthians 12:10, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." Paul was strong because he received the grace that was sufficient for him. Continue in verse 14: "Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children." Paul's point was this. He was undergoing distress. He was undergoing persecution. He had every kind of heartache that you can imagine. But he resolved to keep on doing what God had called him to do. Paul did not expect a shrine. He did not want them to name a church after him. In fact in I Corinthians 1, he was upset with them because some of them had named a church after him.

In Philippians 4:11-12, Paul said, "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." Paul's expectations were not for a life of ease; his expectation was not a life of exaltation for himself. His expectations were that in the course of preaching the gospel he would undergo persecution. This completely takes away any possibility that the authors of Scripture were thinking that they were going to be hailed as great men for writing the Scriptures.

If they were not doing it for that reason, then we have to look for another reason. The only reason is the one we find on the very surface of Scripture itself. *These are God's words*. They were writing them because God has so moved in their hearts that they could not do anything but write them.

If these human authors were not deceiving, does the possibility exist that they might have been deceived? Could it be that they might have really thought that they were really writing Scriptures, but they were not. Could

it be that they truly believed that they were really doing the right thing, but that they were simply deceived? We have to admit that deception does exist as a possibility. But if it exists as a possibility, then either the flesh deceived them or Satan deceived them.

If the flesh deceived them, then the same thing might be said of all revealed religion: that is to say, we have to throw revelation out altogether. Then we would have nothing but a natural religion. And if we have nothing but a natural religion, what do we know of salvation? Nothing whatsoever! So it brings us back to a situation where we are totally ignorant about what God requires of us.

How would we go about proving it? In a court of law, if a witness swears to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help him God, and then proceeds to give testimony about something of which he has knowledge, what must the person who cross examines him do? Does he say, "Prove you are right?" No. It is the cross-examiner's job to prove that the witness is wrong. If someone protested that the witness was simply deceived, the burden of proof would be on the one who impugned the testimony rather than on the witness himself.

So it is with Scripture. If men who claim to speak for God have such a character that they would not deceive us deliberately; and if the words they wrote are such that the whole scope of their writings was to give glory to God and not men, then upon whom would the burden lie to prove that they were not inspired? The burden of proof falls upon the one who would deny that they are inspired! The burden of proof falls upon the one who would deny that their witness is true. How would we know if their witness were false? We would have to catch them in a lie. We would have to catch them in an inconsistency. That brings us back to our former discussion on the consistency of Scripture. We see that men who were hundreds of miles apart from one another, thousands of years apart from one another, all told the same story. They all said the same thing. There is a consistency in Scripture. Something was prophesied, then came to pass a thousand years later, even to calling out men's names. How do we explain that? Is a human author simply *deceived* that two hundred years later there would be a king named Josiah? Was another simply *deceived* that the man who would send forth the decree to rebuild Jerusalem would be named Cyrus? How could he

be deceived about such *detailed* information that came to pass? He prophesied and it came to pass! The truths of his prophecies show that he was not deceived.

Who would be able to deceive him? We have proven that a mere man would be unable to deceive him. But maybe Satan deceived the writers of Scripture. Satan does have some supernatural powers. Satan does have powers that go beyond the normal natural powers that men have. Perhaps Satan deceived the human authors of Scripture. Satan is referred to in Scripture as one who has blinded the minds of those who do not believe. Maybe Satan deceived the author. But turn that question around. What did Christ say when he was accused of casting out demons in the name of the prince of demons? "A divided kingdom cannot stand." Satan's kingdom would not be divided. Satan would not cast out Satan. Do you see how strange that would be? Satan would not destroy Satan's kingdom. Why would men who were deceived by Satan tell us what a terrible person Satan is? Why would they reveal what a glorious god God is? Do you see that the very language of Scripture indicates that it could not be a satanic deception? It could not be demonic. Because if it were, it would be accomplishing the exact opposite of what Satan would want to accomplish.

We have eliminated deceit by men. We have eliminated deceit by Satan. Therefore we have eliminated deceit from consideration.

Conclusion

Do we know what inspiration is? Inspiration no longer takes place. Illumination takes place today. God is illuminating our minds to understand the Scripture, but that is not inspiration. Scripture is not being written today. We are told that the human authors were holy men borne along by the Holy Spirit. Did they know when they were being inspired? Apparently so, because the phrase that keeps coming forth in Scripture is not, "Here is my opinion," but rather, "*Thus saith the Lord.*" So apparently the authors did know, at least much of the time, when they were being borne along by the Spirit.

The claim of the authors themselves that they received their words from the Lord can be measured by whether their message actually gives glory to God. It is true that many non-canonical books may, in one degree or another, give glory to God. But Scripture has as its overall scope to give glory to God; it contains a consent

of all the parts; there is a majesty of language and holiness of subject. All these provide evidence that Scripture is the very Word of God. It remains for us to examine the light and power of Scripture to convict and convert sinners and to comfort and build up believers unto salvation and how God has preserved Scripture for us. But finally we must examine how the Spirit of God himself fully persuades us that our Bible is the Word of God.♦

Second Annual Blue Banner Conference

Scheduled for May 25 - 27, 1998.

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STANDING ON THE PROMISES: A HANDBOOK OF BIBLICAL CHILDREARING, BY DOUGLAS WILSON

REVIEWED BY MARK ARVID JOHNSON

Standing on the Promises: A Handbook of Biblical Childrearing, By Douglas Wilson (Canon Press, Moscow, Idaho).

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works. 2 Timothy 3:16-7

In modern times, it has become common for Christians to assert that the Bible is not a complete guide for life and godliness. One area where this is commonly alleged is child raising. This book is a welcome change from that routine. The author deals well with many facets of biblical childrearing. The home is not merely a dormitory and soup kitchen, but should be a separate, godly culture for raising children. The children of Christian parents are sanctified by God and holy (1 Corinthians 7:13-15). Following Christ's example, the father is to lead by service, respecting the wife's limitations (1 Peter 3:7), and those of the children (Ephesians 6:4). The book summarizes the duties of Christian parents under three heads: 1. Personal obedience (Colossians 3:21); 2. Intercession for the children (Job 1:5); 3. Instruction in the standards of God (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). Each of these is more fully developed in a chapter of its own, along with a chapter on the application of Biblical child discipline.

Because of the importance of the covenant in childrearing, some time is spent on covenant theology and continuity. God's promises of generational blessing are well documented (Genesis 17:7-9, Deuteronomy 5:9-10; 7:9, Ezekiel 37:24-6, Isaiah 59:21). With many scriptures Wilson points out the covenantal unity of the Old and New Testament people. One of these, Ephesians 5:31-6:4, is particularly applicable to the subject matter, in that promises originally given to Hebrew parents at Sinai are applied to Christian, Gentile parents. The author shows that both the Old and New Testaments oppose ethnic presumption, the idea that we can rely on our parentage for a right standing before God. Ironically, after arguing that we can not rely on our

parentage before God, he goes on to argue that parents may presume upon God to save their children if they obey his commands in childrearing!

Though the book contains much of value, both in the theory and practice of Biblical child raising, it is marred by the author's misunderstanding of the gospel in making the salvation of covenant children depend upon the works of their parents. The reader should be careful to understand the objection at this point. Certainly God has ordained means as well as ends. Further, the family is normally the means of salvation for covenant children. The specific point of disagreement is whether God has promised to bless those means in such a way that we should *trust* in the means. Is God bound by the use of certain means? This claim is repeated through the book:

"The Scriptures teach a direct connection between how children are brought up and how they turn out. When God-fearing parents are confronted with a God-defying child, shame is an entirely appropriate response. In this shame the parents are acknowledging that they are responsible for what has happened." p. 42-43.

"Under the promised grace of God, fathers *can* control whether or not their children grow up to walk with God. Are their children going to spend eternity in heaven because of how they were loved, spanked, read to, and prayed with? Or are they going to be saved, if they are saved, in spite of their parents?" p. 75. [Italics in original]

"Now many children of believing parents do not become believers themselves. At the same time, children of obedient believers *will become believers*." p. 83. [Italics in original]

Perhaps the most direct objection that can be raised against such claims is that the Sacred Scriptures provide counter examples. Abraham is a case in point. The LORD tells us that Abraham will faithfully raise his children:

[17] And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; [18] Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? [19] For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and

judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him. Genesis 18:17-9

Clearly, Abraham raised his children after a godly fashion. We have no indication that Ishmael was being raised any differently than Isaac. Still there was a radical distinction between his two sons. Only Isaac was the son of Promise. Ishmael was cast out. It pleased God not to elect both sons of Abraham. God is not always pleased to elect all children of faithful families. Children of obedient believers will not necessarily become believers themselves.

In Romans 9 we are given another counter example, that of Jacob and Esau:

[10] And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; [11] (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) [12] It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. [13] As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. Romans 9:10-13

Here we are told that the election of God logically and temporally preceded the birth of Jacob and Esau, and was not conditioned on their actions. By parity of reasoning, we see that the election of God also logically and temporally preceded any childrearing by Isaac or Rebecca, and was not conditioned on their actions. The election of God is not of works--neither of the children, nor of their parents--but of him that calleth.

Another counter example is Samuel, when compared to Eli. In relevant ways, Eli and Samuel were very similar. Both were ecclesiastical authorities in ancient Israel. Both had sons that did evil in the sight of the LORD, causing the people to stumble, when their father was old (1 Samuel 2,3; 1 Samuel 8). Eli and his house were rejected, but Samuel was not rebuked nor removed from his ministry (cf. 1 Samuel 3:11-14; 1 Samuel 8:7-22). In fact, the LORD tells Samuel that the people have "not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them" (1 Samuel 8:7). What then was the difference between Eli and Samuel? I submit that Samuel was not punished as Eli because he was not to blame as Eli.

These examples show that despite the generational blessings and promises of God, the relation between the election of God and childrearing is not *always* straightforward. This is as we would expect (Deuteronomy 29:29). The election of our covenant children is not conditioned on our obedience. This is

cause for rejoicing. God is pleased with only one man: Jesus Christ (Isaiah 64:6-7, Matthew 17:5, Romans 1:18-3:18, Romans 3:23). It is a sign of God's grace that our children's salvation does not rest upon us as parents, because as fallen parents, none of us is sufficient to please God, in our childrearing, or anything else. If the salvation of our children were conditioned on our faith or works, then none of them would be saved. Let us thank God who has given us a name under heaven by which we may be saved: Jesus Christ. ♦

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