

THE BLUE BANNER

Volume 8, Issue 11-12

For Christ's Crown & Covenant

November/December 1999

Daniel 4: Kings and Beasts

By Richard Bacon

In *Alice Through the Looking Glass* or *Alice In Wonderland* the walrus and the carpenter walked along the beach and spoke of many things including cabbages and kings. We are not going to speak about cabbages and kings but we are going to speak about beasts and kings...or a king who became a beast. Thinking himself to be as God, God showed him to be a beast.

There are a number of things in Daniel chapter four that demonstrate what separates man from beast. Man has many things in common with the beastly world; we breathe the same air, we drink the same water, we live in the same environment; but these are all of a physical nature. What separates us from the animals is the fact that *God has made us in his image*. It is because we are *the image of God*, that we are able to glorify God reasonably just as Nebuchadnezzar did at the end of this chapter, when his reason was returned to him.

Nebuchadnezzar reigned for a long time. This particular story seems to take place late in his reign, perhaps in the last ten or twenty years. The events in this chapter took place about twenty-five or thirty years later than those recorded in chapter three. This chapter begins in a way that is different from all the other chapters in the book of Daniel. It begins with an edict from Nebuchadnezzar. Both Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel wrote this chapter — Nebuchadnezzar originally wrote the edict, and Daniel, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, included it in his book. This is similar to the Book of Job. In Job you will find the speeches of Bildad and Elihu, but they did not write the book. By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the author of Job included those speeches. So here, we have an edict from Nebuchadnezzar, which Daniel, the author of the book, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, included in the text.

There is an introduction in verses 1-3 which is a royal edict from Nebuchadnezzar. In verses 4 through the end of the chapter, there are three basic divisions: the vision,

its interpretation and its fulfillment. The third section, the fulfillment, is the restoration of Nebuchadnezzar.

Introduction: The Royal Edict

The edict of Nebuchadnezzar in the first three verses of Daniel chapter four is quite different from the edict in chapter three upon the plains of Dura. The edict on the plains of Dura commanded that when the music played, everyone was to bow down to an image. Everyone was to be a part of the religion that Nebuchadnezzar had invented. Everyone was to bow down according to the king's appointment. In this edict in Daniel 4:2-3, Nebuchadnezzar declared, "I thought it good to shew the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me. How great are his signs! and how mighty are his wonders! his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation." Nebuchadnezzar had learned some important things about the attributes of God. He learned that God is omniscient; that He is a revealer of secrets; that all knowledge finds its source in God, because God knows all things. Earlier, in chapter three, Nebuchadnezzar found out that God is a mighty God; He is an omnipotent God; He is a God that is able to deliver those who He says He will deliver. He found out that God is a faithful God. Here Nebuchadnezzar not only declares that God is omniscient, not only that He is powerful and omnipotent, not only is He a faithful God, but that He also is a *sovereign* God. *God does whatsoever He wills*. He is an eternal God and an immutable God. That sounds very much like Shorter Catechism question number four.¹ If Nebuchadnezzar had just learned his catechism, he would not have had to go through so many trials to find these things out!

¹ Q. 4. What is God? A. God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

Nebuchadnezzar's second edict is quite different from the edict on the plains of Dura. He had to go through some very difficult times to come to this conclusion. When he called the people to the plains of Dura to bow down to his image, he called for all people, all nations, all languages. He addressed this edict in chapter four to those same people: to all people, all nations, all languages. This edict is for everyone who dwelled in the earth — everyone in the land. Nebuchadnezzar began this edict, "Peace be multiplied unto you." That sounds almost like the Apostle Paul or the Apostle Peter. Nebuchadnezzar continued by declaring who God is. In the vision and its fulfillment, Nebuchadnezzar will explain how he learned who God was. He referred to Him as the high God, as the great and mighty God. In fact, the word we see translated here as "high" may also be translated as "true." He referred to Him as the everlasting God. He is the unchanging God. In the vision of the image of man in chapter two, the image was characterized by the fact that the more it changed, the more it stayed the same. It was changing and yet it was consistent. There was a continuation from top to bottom in that the image was all one man. It was not four different statues; it was all one statue. It was all one image indicating that humanism, at its core, is *one religion*. Yet as we look from the top of the image to the bottom of the image, it changed by bands. The head was gold, and the breast and the arms were made of silver, the thighs were brass and the legs of iron, the feet and the ten toes of clay and iron. What does this statue tell us about humanity? Humanism does not stay the same. It is not the same from everlasting to everlasting. It is not the same from generation to generation. Humanism, the image of man, changes — even "devolves" — as time goes by. *Contrast that to God*. The true God is an everlasting God and His kingdom an everlasting kingdom. At the end of the dream in chapter two, a stone cut out without hands demolished the image, and then it filled the earth and lasted for forever. The stone represented the kingdom of God! It is an everlasting kingdom. It does not pass from one people to another people, as the previous kingdoms — the humanistic kingdoms — had done. The humanistic kingdom had passed from the Babylonians to the Medes and Persians, to the Greeks, to the Romans — and even though it was all one kingdom of man, it was passing from people to people. But the everlasting kingdom, the fifth monarchy, the one represented by that stone cut out without hands, will last forever! It will pass to no one. It will not pass to another people. It will be the same people — the people of God — forever and ever. So in this chapter Nebuchadnezzar confessed God, whose kingdom was represented by the stone which is

cut out without hands, and he professed that kingdom as opposed to the humanistic kingdom of the image.

What brought about such a change of thinking in Nebuchadnezzar? He was shown what man is apart from the image of God. Take the image of God away from the image of man and man is only a beast. *They were worshipping an image of man not the image of God*. But it was man without the image of God. It was a lifeless form, a breathless form! It had ears but it could not hear; it had a mouth but it could not speak. It was lifeless; it had *no* image of God in it. *Therefore it was the image of a beast!* In the book of Revelation John wrote about man worshipping the image of a beast. What does the image of a beast look like? *It looks like a man*. To worship the *image of the beast is to worship man*: it is to worship the ways and the doings and the beings of man as opposed to the great works and signs and wonders of God. Nebuchadnezzar learned that *man apart from the image of God is but a beast*.

The Vision and Its Fulfillment

1. The Vision and the Interpretation

In verse four, Nebuchadnezzar began to relate the dream. Daniel 4:10, "Thus were the visions of mine head in my bed; I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great." To understand this verse, we have to go to the interpretation at the end of the chapter. The tree was Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar is set before us in the book of Daniel as that man who aspired to be God. He was that man who set himself in the place of God. In fact, his grandson, Belshazzar, in Daniel chapter five, was that very one in Isaiah 13 and 14 who was characterized as Lucifer, the son of light; the lightened one who attempted to sit in the place of God. He got the desire to be God from his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar. In this passage in Daniel four, Nebuchadnezzar saw himself as a tree in the very center of the earth. He was in the midst of the earth. Everything revolved around him. Have you ever known someone who thought the whole world revolved around them? That was exactly what Nebuchadnezzar thought. The whole world revolved around the tree that was in the midst of the forest in the midst of the earth.

In verse twelve we read, "The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it." In saying this about himself, Nebuchadnezzar was also saying this about man in general. He was saying that man is the crown, not of creation, but of all that is.

If he had understood that man was the crown of creation, he would not have been quite so wrong. But he did not understand that he was under God. He believed himself to be the lord of all he surveyed. Because he was the lord of all he surveyed, he thought of himself as the lord of all that was.

The vision was of man at the center of the universe. But the tree, which represented Nebuchadnezzar, stretched up toward heaven. That should bring to our mind the tower of Babel in Genesis 11. The tower of Babel stretched up toward heaven. Remember that the tower of Babel got its name because man desired the tower to reach up toward heaven and God confused the languages and spread mankind throughout the world.

This is a long standing desire of mankind. It is the desire of man without God. Man does not desire that God would reach down to him but that he could reach up to God. This is the distinction between true Biblical Christianity and every other religion. *This is the difference between God's true religion and the religion of man.* The distinction is whether God reaches down from heaven to draw man up to himself or whether man stands on the earth and reaches up toward heaven. Nebuchadnezzar was symbolized in this vision as a tree — a tree reaching up toward heaven. What Nebuchadnezzar had done is the same thing that every idolater does: he exchanged the truth for a lie.

Man is the image of God. What is man but the image of God? If a man tries to become as God, in his pride he has usurped the place of God. If we understand the image of God correctly, we understand that we have dominion over the rest of creation. *But God has dominion over us.* In the garden God told Adam and Eve to take dominion over all the creatures of the earth. When they came across a serpent — even if it was a talking serpent — it was still their responsibility to take dominion over that serpent. But they did not and the serpent took dominion over them. They exchanged the truth for a lie. *That is the very nature of man in his proud estate.* He attempts to be like God. That was the temptation that the serpent placed before Eve in the garden. Genesis 3:4-5, “And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: ... ye shall be as gods.” The tree in the midst of the earth here in Daniel 4 was an attempt to reach up to heaven, once again exchanging the truth for a lie.

Let us compare the Babylonian ziggurats— The tower of Babel in Genesis 11 and the tree here in Daniel 4. When the fulfillment of this vision took place in verses 28-33, Nebuchadnezzar was standing on the roof of his palace. He was walking around the roof, surveying his entire kingdom and proudly claiming the credit for it all.

Verse 30, “The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?”

Compare that to Genesis 11:1-9, “And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.” — Remember that in Daniel 1:2, Daniel told us that Babylon was in Shinar. — “And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.”

What were these men trying to build? Josephus believed that they were simply trying to build something tall enough that a flood would not wipe them out again. But I reject that rationale. *They were trying to reach heaven!* They were building a tower up toward heaven. Verse 4, “And they said, Go to ... let us make us a name.” *This is a pride of life.* They had a belief that man could get to heaven *by his own efforts.* The tree in the midst of the earth in our Daniel passage represents Nebuchadnezzar reaching up to heaven *by his own efforts.* The old Babylonian religion was basically this: man can reach up high enough to eventually reach heaven. There is a continuity, they believed, between man and God. “All I have to do is become spiritual enough and I will be like God.” That was exactly what Nebuchadnezzar was imagining for himself in Daniel 4 and it was exactly what Nimrod was imagining for himself in Genesis 11. “I will eventually become spiritual enough that I will be like God.” Let us compare that to Revelation 21:1-2. We are specifically told that John “... saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God

out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” Man’s way — Nebuchadnezzar’s way, Nimrod’s way — is to build up to heaven from earth. “Go to ... let us make us a name.” *God’s way is to send down heaven upon man.* It is a descending religion. *True religion has God as its source* rather than the wit and wisdom of men as its source.

Notice that both Nebuchadnezzar’s and Nimrod’s dream required the whole world to be one to come true. The whole world has to be in agreement. Except for those few Christians who believe in the grace of God and salvation by grace alone and worship of God by His appointed Word alone, the whole world is agreed upon this thing: Salvation is man reaching up to God. They may disagree about the way man does the reaching. In fact some say that we can all reach together even though we are reaching differently. *True Christianity — Biblical Christianity — insists that salvation is God reaching down to man.* Salvation is wrought by the New Jerusalem — the Holy City — coming down from God, prepared by Him for His bride. In Revelation, this city that comes down from God is foursquare. In Ezekiel’s vision in Ezekiel 48, the shape of the city was foursquare — 1800 by 1800 by 1800. So also, the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle was a perfect cube: the same height, the same width, the same depth. The camp of Israel, as they went through the wilderness, was set up foursquare. Three tribes of Levites plus the Aaronic priesthood are set up in a square directly around the tabernacle, then outside the Levites were the twelve tribes of Israel. Three tribes were on each side. So you have a square of the Holy of Holies, then a square of Levites, then a square of the tribes of Israel.²

In Exodus 25:9, “According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.” God designed the tabernacle; not Moses, not Aaron. *God designed the tabernacle* and Moses saw a pattern of it and *he was to imitate it precisely.* In Exodus 25:40, “And look that thou make them,” [all the vessels] “after their pattern which was showed thee in the mount.” God appointed the building, the vessels, the worship, the religion. That was the true religion. That was the religion of which Shadrach, Meshach and Abednigo were descendants.

On the other hand, there was the “religion” based on the wit and wisdom of men. Regardless of how they did it — build a tower in Genesis; have a tree in Daniel; a pole in Jeremiah (the “groves by the green trees” of Jeremiah 17:2) it was an unappointed worship; it was

² Numbers 2 actually lays out where the different tribes were placed around the tabernacle.

something not commanded by God. It was not shown to them in the mount, and therefore *it was not pleasing to God.*

So we have basically two religions in the world till yet. There is the one religion that says, “Whatever I do for God he better appreciate it.” The other religion says, “Whatever God commands, I will do. I will not add to that pure worship any defilement from my own sinful inclinations.” One believes that men have sinned, but if we work at it hard enough, we will become good. The other maintains that men are so fallen that anything we add to worship will simply defile it. We have to do things precisely as God has said. We cannot go to God any other way but by Jesus Christ. God appointed Jesus as the one way to Him. He is the *one Sacrifice* that God will accept. He is the *one incense* that gives a soothing aroma, a sweet savor, to God. If we try to go to God any other way, it is unacceptable. *The same thing is true with respect to His worship.* That is what we see in Exodus 25:9-40.

In Ezekiel 43:10-11, we read, “Thou son of man, shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities: and let them measure the pattern. And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, shew them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof: and write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them.” Ezekiel was not prophesying of some future millennium, nor was he prophesying merely of the day of Ezra and Nehemiah’s return to the land. He was prophesying primarily of *the day of Messiah the prince.* In the day of Messiah, our worship is to be according to all of the ordinances and all the forms that He has written down in His book. Once again, we understand that *true worship is appointed by God.* It is not man reaching up to God. There is no metaphysical continuity between man and God. Only as God condescends to man is man anything other than a beast.

Hebrews 8:4-6, “For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest,” [that is to say, if Christ were on earth, He would not be a priest] “seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount. But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.” What is the teaching then of the pattern? What are we to

understand from Moses' learning from God what was the appointed worship? We are to learn that *God continues to appoint His worship*. Even in the new covenant, we cannot simply make up anything that seems good to us. That is the same pride that brought the downfall of man in the garden.

Turn again to Numbers 8:4, "And this work of the candlestick was of beaten gold, unto the shaft thereof, unto the flowers thereof, was beaten work: according unto the pattern which the LORD had shewed Moses, so he made the candlestick." Notice how much detail God showed Moses in the mount. *Right down to the candlesticks*. We know that those candlesticks were not there only for light. Those candlesticks were there as a type of Christ — to demonstrate that Christ is the light of the world. Nevertheless, they were a part of the religious vessels in the tabernacle, and because they were a part of the religious vessels, they had religious significance. *Anything that has religious significance must be appointed by God or it is idolatry*. If we put religious significance upon anything other than that which God has appointed to us, we have made an idol of it.

When man sees himself as the tree of life, he no longer recognizes that he has ethically fallen and is no longer a part of the life of God ethically. *Christ is the true tree of life*. For Nebuchadnezzar to think of himself as the tree of life is really for him to arrogate to himself those very names that apply to Christ alone. In Proverbs, Christ as wisdom is referred to as a tree of life. Proverbs 3:18, "She [wisdom] is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her." There are many other Scriptures where Christ is associated with the tree of life. Proverbs 11:30, "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise." Revelation 2:7, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Revelation 22:2, "In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." Genesis 2:9, "And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil." Genesis 3:22, "And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever."

2. The Fulfillment.

Whenever man attempts to be more than man, he becomes less than man. Twelve months after this dream, Nebuchadnezzar became a beast — at the very hour that God pronounced judgement upon him. Daniel 4: 31-33, "There fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee ... The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws." Twelve months after the vision Nebuchadnezzar was bragging about all he had done. Verses 29-30, "At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" His punishment came as a result of his exalting himself above being a man. He was exalting himself to something more than the image of God in man.

The image of God in man was marred by the fall. Children, as you think about the image of God in man, think of a mirror. The reflection of ourselves that we see in a mirror is a physical image of what we look like. Now, think of us as a mirror reflecting back the character of God to Him. But you have all seen those false mirrors — the kind you see in a house of mirrors — where it distorts your image. It scares you to look at yourself. Instead of reflecting back a true image, it reflects back an image that has been distorted. So it is that man, in his fallen estate, continues to be the image of God and yet it is distorted. It is not a true reflection of who God is, but rather it is a monstrous reflection. *Man, rather than wanting to be like man and be the image of God, rather desires to be God*. Nebuchadnezzar's punishment for wanting to be like God was that he became like the beasts. In other words, *the very image of God was taken away from Nebuchadnezzar*. When the image of God is taken away from man, he becomes only a beast.

What did Nebuchadnezzar look like? His hair was so matted down that it looked like feathers. His fingernails grew to where they looked like talons — claws — of a bird. He ate grass. It is the image of God that makes man different from the beast. It is what makes man special. It is God's image upon man that makes him, literally, the crown of creation. God has created man in a special way. Man was not just a continuation of the rest of the

animals. God formed Adam specifically out of dust. He breathed life into him, and in that act of breathing life into him, made him a living soul that was apart from creation. *However, just as we are not continuous with the rest of creation, neither are we continuous with God.* There is a great gulf between God and us. God is God and we are not! That is what Nebuchadnezzar had to learn.

3. Restoration of Nebuchadnezzar

In the third section, we see the restoration of the man, Nebuchadnezzar, when he looked to heaven rather than looking to himself. That is the key thing. In Daniel 4:34, “And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven.” *He looked to God!* That is what it is to come to ourselves. The prodigal son wanted to go out and squander his inheritance. He was characterized by selfishness and licentiousness and sensuality. Then he came to himself! In Luke 15:18, he says, “I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee.” The prodigal son looked to heaven. Like the prodigal son who came to himself at last, so here Nebuchadnezzar at the end of the days appointed, came to himself. And when he came to himself he looked to heaven. He confessed that there is no continuity between heaven and earth; *God is altogether God — and we are altogether creatures.* Look at verses 34-36: “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 unto 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.”

This reminds us somewhat of the story of Job. After going through all of his trials, God added back to Job double the things that He had taken away. Here, after Nebuchadnezzar had been brought to himself, he had come to realize that *God is God and we are not.* He realized that God is sovereign; God is everlasting; God is eternal; God does whatever He will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth. He confessed that there is no continuity between heaven and earth. He finally knew that there was no way he could build a tower high enough for him to reach to heaven; there was no way he

could grow as a tree in the midst of earth high enough to reach to heaven. When he was willing and able to confess that, *then* God returned his kingdom to him.

Incidentally, the archeologists who study ancient Babylon have come to the conclusion that Nebuchadnezzar was simply absent from his kingdom for a while. They do not know where he went or why, but apparently it is recorded that he was gone from the throne for a while. They may not know, but we know where he was during that time. We know because Daniel told us. They have just been reading the wrong books.

The question sometimes arises concerning Nebuchadnezzar: was he converted? Did he worship the true God in a way that we should expect to see him one day in heaven? I do not know, but I will say this: if he did receive mercy, he was not the last blasphemer to receive mercy. Paul also persecuted the church. He said to his protégé Timothy in 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.” Paul received mercy though he was a blasphemer, though he persecuted the church. If Nebuchadnezzar did receive mercy, he was not the last persecutor of the church to do so.

By Christ’s grace I can say to you that just as Nebuchadnezzar was not the last blasphemer to receive grace, nor was Paul the last blasphemer to receive grace, grace is available from Jesus Christ even for blasphemers. There is grace even for those who, in the past, have laughed at the Christian religion, — even for those who have scoffed at the Christian religion. I call unto you, if that is your state, to come to yourself even as Nebuchadnezzar did. It was the God of heaven who lifted Nebuchadnezzar up from his beastly state and the God of heaven also must lift you up from your beastly state. Nevertheless, I call unto you even as Paul called to those blasphemers in Athens on Mars Hill. God, till yet, calls upon all men, everywhere, to repent. As He called upon Nebuchadnezzar to repent and Paul to repent and the blasphemers on Mars Hill to repent so I, by the authority of the ambassadorship that I have from the kingdom of heaven — from that everlasting dominion — from that kingdom that lasts from generation to generation — now call upon you in this generation: “Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand.”✿

Clark's God and Evil: The Problem Solved

Reviewed by W. Gary Crampton, Th.D.

In 1961, the first edition of Gordon Clark's *Religion, Reason and Revelation*,¹ was published. It was at that time, and still is, a classic in the field of Christian apologetics. Among those issues which Clark deals with in this treatise are Christianity's uniqueness, the place of logic in philosophy and theology, the definition of faith, the usefulness and importance of language, the inerrancy of Scripture, the standard of ethics, and the problem of evil. A biblical apologetic must be able "to give a defense to everyone who asks you to give a rational account" regarding each of these matters (1 Peter 3:15). And Dr. Clark does so in an admirable fashion.

Of the issues mentioned above, perhaps none is so difficult as the problem of evil. Thomas Warren, for example, has written that "it is likely the case that no charge has been made with a greater frequency or with more telling force against theism of Judeo-Christian (biblical) tradition" than the complication of the existence of evil."² Even the biblical writers themselves address the topic of God and evil. The prophet Habakkuk complained: "You [God] are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness. Why do you look on those who deal treacherously, and hold your tongue when the wicked devours?" (1:13). And Gideon contemplated: "O my lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this [hardship] befallen us? (Judges 6:13).

If, according to the Bible, God, who is omnipotent and omnibenevolent, has eternally decreed all that ever comes to pass, and if he sovereignly and providentially controls all things in his created universe, how is he not the author of evil? How can evil exist in the world? How do we justify the actions of God in the midst of evil, suffering, and pain? This is the question of "theodicy." It has to do with the justification of the goodness and righteousness of God in light of the evil in the world.

In his *God and Evil: The Problem Solved*,³ which was originally Chapter Five of *Religion, Reason and Revelation*, Gordon Clark accomplishes what many theologians and philosophers have attempted and failed to do, i.e., explain the problem of evil. As Clark has said, "whereas various other views disintegrate at this point, the system known as Calvinism and expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith offers a satisfactory and completely logical answer" (7). The answer as we will see, lies in our epistemological starting point: the Word of God.

Throughout the centuries, there have been numerous non-Christian attempts to deal with the matter of theodicy (7-12). Some, such as Mary Baker Eddy, have simply denied that evil exists at all, i.e., it is illusory. Others, such as John Stuart Mill and William Pepperell Montague, have opted for a finite god, one who is limited in power. Hence, he cannot be blamed for the existence of evil in the world.

Plato and the Zoroastrians, on the other hand, posited some form of ultimate dualism. Good and evil coexist independently, thus accounting for the mixture of good and evil in the world. Aristotle conceived of god as the Unmoved Mover, who was not really concerned about the things of this world. This being the case, the relation of Aristotle's god to evil and the moral endeavors of men is inconsequential.

These theories, of course, fall far short of a biblical theodicy. Scripture clearly teaches that sin is not illusory (Genesis 3). Further, the God of Scripture is no finite deity. He is the *ex nihilo* Creator and Sustainer of heaven and earth (Genesis 1:1; Hebrews 1:1-3), who is very concerned with his universe and the moral affairs of men (Exodus 20). Moreover, the God of Scripture brooks no competition (Job 33:13), so that there can be no form of ultimate dualism.

¹ Gordon H. Clark, *Religion, Reason and Revelation* (The Trinity Foundation, 1986 [1961]).

² Thomas B. Warren, *Have Atheists Proved There is No God?* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1972), vii.

³ Gordon H. Clark, *God and Evil: The Problem Solved* (The Trinity Foundation, 1996). The pagination used in the body of this review is from Clark's book. Much of the material contained in this review is a revision of an article published earlier in *The Trinity Review*. See W. Gary Crampton, "A Biblical Theodicy," *The Trinity Review* (January 1999).

The great Christian philosopher Augustine, also pondered the theodicy issue. He taught that since God created all things good, evil cannot have a separate or independent existence. Evil is the absence of good, as darkness is the absence of light. Evil is parasitic, in that it cannot exist apart from good.

This being so, said Augustine, evil cannot be the efficient cause of sin; rather, it is a deficient cause in man. Evil is the result of man's turning away from the good commands of God to seek a lesser good: the will of the creature, man. It is man, not God, who is the author of sin. This, though, is no solution to the problem. As Clark states: "Deficient causes, if there are such things, do not explain why a good God does not abolish sin and guarantee that men always choose the highest good" (9).

Arminianism, as an ostensible Christian system, also fails to give us a biblical theodicy (12-19). Arminian theologians attribute the problem of evil to the free will of man. In his freedom, Adam chose to sin, apart from God's will. Adam had a "liberty of indifference" to the will of God. God merely permitted man to sin.

The idea of God's merely "permitting" man to sin, however, is wholly unbiblical and does not give us a solution (17-19). Clark explains:⁴

Somehow the idea of God's permitting evil without decreeing it seems to absolve God from the charge that he is the 'author' of sin, but one must be careful, both with respect to the logic of the argument and to the full scriptural data. God 'permitted' Satan to afflict Job; but since Satan could not have done so without God's approval, the idea of permission hardly exonerates God. Is perfect holiness any more compatible with approving or permitting Satanic evil? If God could have prevented, not only Job's trials, but all the other sins and temptations to which mankind is subject – if he foresaw them and decided to let them occur – is he less reprehensible than if he positively decreed them? If a man could save a baby from a burning house, but decided to 'permit' the baby to burn, who would dare say that he was morally perfect in so deciding?

Such a view of permission and free will cannot coexist with God's omnipotence. Neither is the Arminian view of free will compatible with God's omniscience, because omniscience renders the future certain (31,32). If God foreknows all things, then of necessity they will come to pass; otherwise, they could not be "foreknown." God foreknew, even foreordained, the crucifixion of his Son by the hands of sinful men. Yet, according to Scripture

the godless men who carried out the act are responsible (Acts 2:22,23; 4:27,28). Could they have done differently? Could Judas Iscariot not have betrayed Jesus Christ? To ask the questions is to answer them; of course not (41). The God of the Bible, writes Clark, "determines or decrees every action" (20). Hence, Arminianism's attempted refuge in free will is both "futile" and "false; for the Bible consistently denies [the Arminian view of] free will" (19).

Reformed theology does not disavow the fact that Adam (and all men after him) had a "free will" in the sense of "free moral agency" (13-16).⁵ All men have freedom of choice in this sense of the term. Men of necessity choose to do what they want to do; in fact, they could not do otherwise. What Reformed theology does deny is that man has the "freedom of indifference." His freedom to choose is always governed by factors: his own intellections, habits, and so forth. Of course, all choices are subject to the eternal decrees of God.

As mentioned, this is not only true of post-fall man. It was also true of Adam prior to Genesis 3. The major difference is that post-fall man, who still maintains his free moral agency, has lost that which Adam originally possessed: the ability to choose what God requires. Fallen man, in his state of "total depravity," always chooses to do that which he desires, but his sin nature dictates that he always chooses evil (Romans 3:9-18; 8:7,8; Ephesians 4:17-19). This "ability" to choose good is only restored through regeneration.

Man, then, is never indifferent in his willing to do anything. God has determined all things that will ever come to pass. Yet, this does not undermine the responsibility of man. There is no disjunction here. The Westminster Confession of Faith (3:1; 5:2,4) correctly states that (26-28):

God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established....Although, in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first cause, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly; yet, by the same providence, he ordereth them to fall out according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently....The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God, so far manifest themselves in his providence, that

⁴ Gordon H. Clark, *First Corinthians* (The Trinity Foundation, 1975, 1991), 156,157.

⁵ See also Gordon H. Clark, *What Do Presbyterians Believe?* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1956, 1965), 105-112.

it extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men, and that not by a bare permission, but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to his own holy ends; yet so as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God; who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin.

God, says the Confession, is the sovereign first cause of all things, many of which occur through the free acts of man, which are second causes. The end which is decreed by God must never be separated from the means which he has also decreed, as second causes. God, writes Clark, “does not arrange things or control history apart from second causes....God does not decree apart from the means. He decrees that the end shall be accomplished by means of the means.”⁶

And this is the reason, according to the Confession, that God is not to be considered “the author or approver of sin.” God is the sovereign first cause of sin, but he is not the author of sin. Only second causes sin (51).

This view taught by the Westminster divines is the Calvinistic concept of “determinism” (19-21). The word determinism often carries with it an evil connotation, but this should not be the case. In actuality, determinism expresses a very biblical and high view of God, and it gives us the only plausible theodicy. God determines or decrees every event of history and every action of man.

Moreover, whatever God decrees is right simply because he decrees it; God can never err (48,53). God, says the Scripture, answers to no one (Job 33:13). He is the lawgiver (Isaiah 33:22); man is under the law. God is accountable to no one; he is *ex lex* (“above the law”). The Ten Commandments are binding on man, not God. And the only precondition for responsibility is a lawgiver, in this case God. In Dr. Clark’s words: “Man is responsible because God calls him to account; man is responsible because the supreme power can punish him for disobedience” (54). Thus, man is necessarily responsible for his sin, and God is completely absolved of being the author of sin.

The determinism taught in the Westminster Confession of Faith is not the same thing as fatalism (36-42). In fatalism, god, or the gods, or the Fates, determine all things, while man remains completely passive. Hence, logically man cannot be responsible for his sinful actions. In biblical determinism, on the other hand, God sovereignly determines all things, but he also holds man

responsible, because man and his “freely chosen” sinful actions are the second causes through which things are determined to occur.

But someone will ask: “Is not murder sin and contrary to the will of God? How can it be that God wills it?” The answer, says Clark (35,36), is found in Deuteronomy 29:29: “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.” Here Moses distinguishes between the decretive will (“secret things”) and the preceptive will (“those things which are revealed”). God’s preceptive will is found in Scripture. Therein we learn what God requires of man. God’s decretive will, on the other hand, is the cause of every event. Man is responsible for the preceptive, not the decretive will. In the example used earlier, God from all eternity decreed Christ’s crucifixion, yet when it was carried out by the hands of sinful men, it was contrary to the moral law, i.e., God’s preceptive will.

Conclusion

In the opinion of this reviewer, in Gordon Clark’s *God and Evil: The Problem Solved*, we have the best work available on the subject at hand. The author shows us that standing on the rock foundation of the Word of God (Matthew 7:24,25), we have an answer to the theodicy issue. It is all a matter of one’s epistemic base. With the Bible as the axiomatic starting point, the existence of evil is really not the problem it is made out to be. God, who is altogether holy and who can do no wrong, sovereignly decrees evil things to occur for his own good purposes (Isaiah 45:7). And just because he decreed it, it is right. As stated by the Reformer Jerome Zanchius:⁷

The will of God is so the cause of all things, as to be itself without cause, for nothing can be the cause of that which is the cause of everything....Hence we find every matter resolved ultimately into the mere sovereign pleasure of God....God has no other motive for what he does than *ipsa voluntas*, his mere will, which will itself is so far from being unrighteous that it is justice itself.

It is good, then, that sin exists. God has decreed it and it is working for the ultimate: his glory.✱

⁶ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁷ Cited in Gordon H. Clark, *An Introduction to Christian Philosophy* (The Trinity Foundation, 1993), 113,114.

The Importance of the Study of the Biblical Doctrine of the Church

By Richard Bacon

[Note: This extract is chapter two in Richard Bacon's forthcoming doctoral dissertation, *A Pattern in the Heavens*. Copyright © 1999 Richard E. Bacon]

Church Organization Not Indifferent

The importance of the study of the biblical doctrine of the church was touched upon somewhat in the previous chapter, the introduction to this dissertation. From earliest times Christians have confessed "I believe an holy catholic church."¹ According to Philip Schaff, the original ("old Roman form") Apostles' Creed stated merely, "I believe . . . the Holy Church." Thus the term "catholic" has no place in the creed prior to the close of the fourth century.² But the western church as well as the eastern has always regarded the existence of the church to be a creedal matter — i.e., a matter belonging to the faith and confessions of the church itself. It may seem strange in an age that considers any doctrine over which men differ to be unimportant at best and sectarian at worst that this dissertation would regard the doctrine of the church to be one that not only should attract the attention of seminary professors and students, but even demands the attention of all Christians. This claim regarding the importance of our study I shall set forth under at least three reasons.

A Matter of Divine Revelation

First, the doctrine of the church is a subject of divine revelation. Surely we dare not say that anything that is a matter of revelation from God lacks importance. It may not be central to our lives, but God was pleased to reveal the fact that Paul left his cloak in Troas (Second Timothy 4:13). If it has pleased God to reveal a matter to us, then it is our duty to believe it and to practice it (Deuteronomy 29:29). As Thomas Peck devoutly observed over a century ago in his Notes on Ecclesiology, recently republished by Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, "The doctrine of the church belongs to the things which have been revealed

of God, and are, therefore, objects of faith."³ It seems more than a little odd to this author that there are men in Presbyterian denominations who deny a significant level of importance to the very idea and doctrine that gives their denomination a distinct name.

Herman Hoeksema, the Protestant Reformed author of Reformed Dogmatics, makes the very same claim in his theological textbook that the church is an article of faith precisely because it is revealed in Scripture by the breath of the Spirit. Hoeksema demonstrated that by his confession that he "believes an holy catholic church," the confessor is stating:

That the church is an object of his faith, the existence and nature and calling of which is to be determined not from experience, not by human philosophy, not by observation of the actually existing churches in the world, but only from revelation, i.e., from the Word of God as contained in the Holy Scriptures. Just as the church confesses, "I believe in God, I believe in Jesus Christ, I believe in the Holy Ghost, I believe the forgiveness of sins, I believe the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting," so also she declares, "I believe an holy, catholic church."⁴

We shall consider in more detail in the next section the relationship of the doctrine of the church to the doctrine of salvation and how that relationship contributes to the importance of this study. But even in considering the idea and doctrine of the church as something not essential to salvation, the consideration does not make the doctrine of no importance because it is not amongst those things that must be believed unto salvation. In the work previously cited by Thomas Witherow — his The Apostolic Church: Which Is It? — we read:

Though every statement in the Scripture cannot be regarded as absolutely essential to salvation, yet everything there is essential to some other wise and important end, else it would not find a place in the good Word of God. Human wisdom may be baffled in

¹ Philip Schaff The Creeds of Christendom (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993 reprint of 1931 Harper and Row edition), 21-22.

² Ibid.

³ T. E. Peck, Notes on Ecclesiology, (Greenville, SC: Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary Press, 1994, Reprint of 1892), 8.

⁴ Herman Hoeksema, Reformed Dogmatics, (Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1966), 571.

attempting to specify the design of every truth that forms a component part of the Divine revelation, but eternity will show us that no portion of it is useless. All Scripture is profitable. A fact written therein may not be essential to human salvation, and yet it may be highly conducive to some other great and gracious purpose in the economy of God — it may be necessary for our personal comfort, for our guidance in life, or for our growth in holiness, and most certainly it is essential to the completeness of the system of Divine truth. The law of the Lord is perfect. Strike out of the Bible the truth that seems the most insignificant of all, and the law of the Lord would not be perfect any more.⁵

Thomas Peck was of a similar opinion. In the same work cited above, Peck claimed not only that the doctrine of the church was not unimportant, but that next to the glory of God itself it is possibly the chief doctrine in all of Scripture. He stated, “[The doctrine of the church] is the highest end, next to the glory of God, of all the counsels and all the works of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost . . . for transcending in glory the old creation, over which the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy, as the second Adam, who is a quickening Spirit, transcends in glory the first Adam, who was but a living soul.”⁶ We shall examine in the next section the importance of the church as the Divine Institution and see that Peck simply reflects the view of most Presbyterians.

Thus it came to pass in the very year that Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary was reprinting Peck’s Notes that a sizeable caucus within the Presbyterian Church in America published its so-called PCA Consensus.⁷ The PCA Consensus consisted primarily of a series of affirmations and denials, some of which dealt with the subject of church polity.

The authors of the PCA Consensus did well, in this writer’s opinion, to bring the discussion of church polity to the table.⁸ However, there were portions of the PCA Consensus statements and denials regarding church polity that were so vague as to be dangerous and others that were simply unbiblical and unpresbyterian. The PCA Consensus denied, for example, “that the Church can effectively serve Christ if she irresponsibly opposes and criticizes her leaders privately and publicly; we further

deny that the Church can effectively serve Christ if she seeks to function like a democracy, with no recognized and empowered leadership.”⁹

As pious as such a statement appears to be on the surface, it could quickly and easily become a justification for ecclesiastical tyranny. Surely the PCA does not think its “leaders” are above criticism. Who will be the ones to determine whether criticism of the leadership is responsible or irresponsible? Certainly, as we shall see in its proper place below, we have a duty and an important responsibility to “obey them that have the rule” in the church. In that context, of course, we must “consider the end of their conversation,” i.e. whether they have conducted themselves according to their office. The office in view in Hebrews chapter thirteen, however, is clearly that of a pastor or teaching elder — not a coordinator, president, or permanent committee member.¹⁰

The importance of a study such as this one, then, lies partly in the fact that there are so-called leaders in conservative Presbyterian denominations who are either ignorant of Presbyterian principles or who have chosen willfully to ignore those principles. Responsible criticism should be welcomed in the PCA and every Presbyterian denomination by those who have been designated the servants (ministers) of God’s people. The PCA Consensus denial is seen as even more ominous, however, when we read it in the context of its explanatory paragraph: “The coordinators and presidents and the permanent committee members whom the General Assembly elects should be able to exercise the leadership roles for which they have been chosen without unwarranted suspicion and criticism. The PCA will be held together, and will be effective, in all her courts, by mutual love and trust, not merely by the rule of law.”¹¹

We must notice in unpacking this statement that it is not biblical church officers that the PCA Consensus regards as above criticism (though that would be bad enough), but “coordinators and presidents and the permanent committee members.” But additionally, and even more disconcerting to a constitutional Presbyterian, is the disregard the whole document seems to have even for the rule of law. Are these Prelates (whether called “President” or “Coordinator,” it comes to the same thing as “Prelate”) not only above criticism; should they also be regarded as “above the law” as well? A key

⁵ Witherow, The Apostolic Church, 8.

⁶ Peck, *op. cit.*, 8.

⁷ PCA Consensus: A Proposed Statement of Identity for the Presbyterian Church in America (privately published and distributed by the Vision2000 Caucus of the PCA).

⁸ Ibid., IV.13-17.

⁹ Ibid., 15.

¹⁰ See Hebrews 13:7, 17 where leaders or rulers are characterized as those who “spoke the Word of God.”

¹¹ PCA Consensus, 16.

reason we have rules and procedures is that God has told us that the human heart is deceitful and desperately wicked and therefore not to be trusted (Jeremiah 17:9). The very reason we have accountability and safeguards built into our system of government — and this is much of the genius of Presbyterianism — is that we do not deny the biblical doctrine of total depravity. We properly understand that fallen human nature, even in its regenerated state, remains capable of sins of the worst kind. It is, in fact, because Presbyterians love their brethren that they desire for the brethren to remain accountable to the rule of law.

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if *there be* any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love *is* the fulfilling of the law (Romans 13:8-10).

Interestingly, after referring to the ministerial assemblies of the PCA as “courts” for four pages, the PCA Consensus finally set forth a denial “that our session meetings, presbytery meetings, and general assemblies should be adequately and fully described by the term ‘church courts.’”¹² It is difficult to say whether the PCA Consensus is correct in this denial without knowing what is intended by the terms “adequately” and “fully” in this context. These two words are certainly not synonyms, so while it may be the case that ministerial assemblies cannot fully be described as courts, it is hardly the same as saying that one may not adequately to some purpose describe them as courts. The PCA Consensus, however, complains, “Our description of session, presbyteries, and the General Assembly as ‘Church courts’ tends to place the emphasis on judicial matters and rules of procedure rather than on worship, fellowship, and ministry.”¹³

While there is nothing in constitutional Presbyterianism that prevents biblical worship, fellowship, and ministry from taking place at a meeting of a ministerial assembly, those activities are not the primary reasons for the assembly to take place. More will be said on the purpose and authority of ministerial assemblies below, but given the fact that the PCA Consensus seems to regard “leaders” as those members, presidents, and coordinators of permanent committees who should be above criticism and above the rule of law, this writer has

some concern that there would be a tendency to turn the church courts into an ecclesiastical version of the “happenings” of the 1960s while turning the real work of Christ’s church over to the “leaders” who supposedly should be trusted more than the rules.

A study such as this one gains a part of its importance, then, from the fact that even regenerate men often desire to place human wisdom above divine wisdom and the supposed liberty of the Christian conscience above the right of a sovereign God to order his own church. Unbiblical church government was at the foundation of many of the abuses that eventually made the Protestant Reformation a necessity. What may seem to be a small and even innocuous change (innovation) in church government can lead to all manner of abuses in subsequent generations. Those who call themselves presidents and coordinators today may well be taking to themselves the role and title of “bishop” and “pastor of pastors” in time. Only by knowing and believing and practicing the Word of God — especially what the Word says respecting church polity — can such tyranny be either prevented or overthrown. There is, after all, a pope in each man’s heart. Ecclesiastical leaders are no more immune from such temptations than any man is. It is only by understanding and returning to constitutional Presbyterianism that we have any hope of preventing the abuses of days gone by.

The Church As A Divine Institution

The second reason we should adduce regarding the importance of our present examination of the biblical doctrine of the church is the fact that the church itself is an institution of divine origin. We shall distinguish in the pages that follow, as most Presbyterians have done for many years, between the invisible church and the visible church. But we must be very careful with such distinctions, so that we do not give the impression that one is of divine origin and the other merely a human or voluntary society of men who are free to organize themselves in any way they choose.

Samuel Rutherford, one of the Scottish commissioners to the Westminster Assembly, claimed that the external ordinances and the external government of the church are of divine origin as much as is the institution of the church itself. In his Divine Right of Church Government and of Excommunication Rutherford stated, “Hence also I argue for the immutability of a scriptural platform, that the church cannot alter at her will: thus, that must be of Divine institution which is an essential part of the gospel; but the platform of church-government in the

¹² Ibid., 17.

¹³ Ibid.

word is such, and so must be no less immutable than the gospel.”¹⁴

The church, then, is sometimes more visible and sometimes less visible, but it would be a grave error to think that there are two churches or two bodies of Christ or two peoples of God as surely as it would be wrong to think that there are two Christs or two Holy Spirits. The church as the church is of Divine origin. We must not think, for example, that the invisible church is built upon Christ while the visible church is built upon Peter. Likewise it would be a serious misreading of Scripture to think that calling, faith, and holiness are always and exclusively the province of the invisible church, for there are externals that relate directly to each of these ideas and which will be discussed below under the proper distinction that must be made between the visible and invisible regarding the church of Christ.

The primary reason for the Reformed and Presbyterian distinction — and it is a distinction, not a separation — between the visible and invisible church lies only in the utter impossibility of identifying the elect within the church. Thus the distinction permits us to understand that there are, within the organization of the church and attached physically to the promises pertaining to the church, some false pretenders.¹⁵

The Scots Confession of 1560 therefore with the rest of the Reformed and Presbyterian churches, scripturally declared, “As we believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, so we firmly believe that from the beginning there has been, now is, and to the end of the world shall be, one Kirk, that is to say, one company and multitude of men chosen by God, who rightly worship and embrace him by true faith in Christ Jesus, who is the only Head of the Kirk, even as it is the body and spouse of Christ Jesus.”¹⁶ Clearly the foundational idea and importance of the church, then, has always been for the Reformed and Presbyterian theology the fact that the church finds its origin in the eternal predestinating plan of God. There is, for Reformed theology, “one company and multitude of men chosen by God.”

But this elect company of men on earth does not consist merely of disembodied spirits. The visible

church, as it is called, consists of those people who give the outward appearance of being those elect who form the constituency of the church which is surely invisible to us, but quite visible to God. The “visible church” is therefore every bit as much dependant upon and arising out of the eternal purpose of God as is the “invisible church.” In fact, it may rightly be said that the visible church has no separate existence apart from the eternal plan of God and derives its importance as a divine institution from the fact that it is the manifestation of the people of God. This relationship was seen properly by Professor Robinson in his statement “It is set forth as a distinguishing feature of the purpose of redemption, that it is to save not merely myriads of men as individual men, but myriads of sinners, as composing a Mediatorial body, of which the Mediator shall be the head; a Mediatorial Kingdom, whose government shall be upon his shoulder forever; a church, the Lamb’s bride, of which He shall be the Husband; a bride whose beautiful portrait was graven upon the palms of his hands, and whose walls were continually before him, when in the counsels of eternity he undertook her redemption.”¹⁷

Robinson did not confuse two separate churches when he referred to the body of Christ and the Mediatorial Kingdom. Rather he posited the correct biblical doctrine that the outward and visible respecting the church has its source — its origin and importance — in the internal and invisible.

James Bannerman, the Free Church of Scotland author of the two volume opus The Church of Christ, made a similar assertion when he wrote “We may assert, therefore, that the Christian society which we call the church of Christ is a society formed by Divine appointment, even did we see in it nothing more than a body of men brought together by the constraint of the same faith and same affections wrought in them by the Spirit of God.... [The believer] is not left at liberty to hide that faith within his own heart, and himself to remain alone and separated from his fellow believers. It is the office of the Christian society to be a witness, by means of an outward and public profession, for Christ on earth....”¹⁸ Bannerman, though he did rightly distinguish between the visible and invisible, did not make a full bifurcation, for he stated that the purpose of the visible church was to give an outward manifestation and expression of the true faith of believers. We will examine below the fact that there are false professors who attach to the true church of Christ. Therefore just as

¹⁴ Samuel Rutherford The Divine Right of Church Government and of Excommunication (London: John Field, 1646), 15-16. Spelling and punctuation have been edited to reflect modern usage.

¹⁵ Richard Kyle “The Concept of Predestination in the Thought of John Knox” in Westminster Theological Journal (Philadelphia: Westminster Theological Seminary), 46:1 Spring 1984, 64-65.

¹⁶ The Scots Confession, Chapter XVI, cited in David W. Hall and Joseph H. Hall, eds. Paradigms in Polity: Classic Readings in Reformed and Presbyterian Church Government (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 227.

¹⁷ Robinson, op. cit., 38-39.

¹⁸ James Bannerman The Church of Christ 2 Volumes (Edmonton: Still Waters Revival Books, 1991 reprint of 1869), 19-20.

we cannot make an absolute separation between the visible and the invisible, neither may we assert an absolute identity between the two. Yet for the purpose of understanding the importance of our study of the doctrine of the church, we must see that the outward witness and manifestation of the church of Christ is as much of Divine origin and institution as is the election of God.

Those who would depreciate the importance of the Christian society, the church, by withdrawing or separating themselves for trivial reasons or by not seeking out the church in times when it is less visible, do not thereby emphasize being a member of the invisible church. The church cannot be loved as it is in union with Christ but despised as it is a witness to him. A person cannot properly claim to be a recipient of Christ's grace while simultaneously neglecting the means of grace that Christ has placed within his church. It is contrary to all reason for someone to claim to love election, while at the same time ignoring or contemning the society and ministry by which the elect are called out of the kingdom of darkness. Simply put, we cannot rightly claim that we love the kingdom if we turn our backs upon its citizens and institutions. Quoting again from Bannerman's monumental work on the church, "That community is one, therefore, of Divine institution; and in the duty laid upon them [sic], not as a matter of choice, but of express command, to become members of it, we see the ordinance of God for the existence and permanent establishment of a church on earth. A solitary Christian is seen to be a contradiction in terms, if you view merely his faith as a principle of affinity naturally destined to draw to it the faith of other believers. A solitary believer is worse than a contradiction, he is an anomaly, standing out against the express institution of God, which has appointed the fellowship of believers in one church, and made provision in its outward ordinances for their union and edification."¹⁹

As was discussed in the previous chapter, if the church is a Divine institution as Ezekiel's temple seems to indicate, then just as there were particular and Divine measurements for the ideal temple, so also there are Divine and particular rules and biblical commandments for the church today. It is important, therefore, for Christians to learn those biblical commandments and obey them — because they have been instituted by God for his glory and for our comfort and edification. Even as Thomas Witherow claimed in his Form of the Christian Temple, we must agree, "The church...is therefore a divine institution, not a voluntary society, in

the sense of a human construction, whose principles and methods and objects men prescribe and alter at their pleasure; and not a creature of the state, for those who aided at its birth acted without the leave of Herod, or Pontius Pilate, or Tiberius Caesar. The church is a divine institution, deriving its existence from the will and authority of God, and formed by the Christians of a locality associating and acting together. Under these circumstances it is the duty of every Christian to seek admission to the fellowship of the church"²⁰

The Result And Goal Of The Divine Plan Of Salvation

Each of the reasons given for the importance of the study of the doctrine of the church up to and including this present section is, in a sense, a further narrowing of our reasoning from the general toward the particular. Thus finally at the core of our reasons we find the fact that the doctrine of the church is not only an object of faith; the church is not merely a Divine institution; it is the result and goal of the Divine plan of salvation and the dearly beloved bride for whom Christ died. Understandably, some who are used to making a distinction between the visible church and the invisible church in a way that leads to a theological dichotomy will object at this point. We must remind one who would make such an objection that the visible church, rightly understood, is not a church separate from and independent of the invisible church, but is its outward manifestation and the administration in this present world for the benefit of the elect. It is precisely as God's good intentions for his elect are actualized that the church in this world becomes increasingly visible.

As the Westminster Confession of Faith biblically teaches in chapter 25 "Of The Church," there is no ordinary possibility of salvation outside the visible church, just as there is absolutely no possibility of salvation outside the invisible church. The Confession continues on to explain that the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God were given to the visible church for the purpose of gathering the elect:

Unto this catholick visible church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life, to the end of the world; and doth by his own presence and Spirit, according to his promise, make them effectual thereunto.²¹

¹⁹ Ibid., 20-21.

²⁰ Witherow, Temple, 59.

²¹ WCF XXV.5, Confession, 108.

Notably, the visible church, according to this document, is not a result of the ministry or built upon ordinances. Rather, the ministry and oracles and ordinances of God have been given by God unto the visible church in its worldwide manifestation. This idea is further confirmed in the Westminster Form of Presbyterian Church-Government, where the Westminster Divines wrote, “The ministry, oracles, and ordinances of the New Testament, are given by Jesus Christ to the general church visible, for the gathering and perfecting of it in this life, until his second coming.”²² In the Confession of Faith the ministry, oracles, and ordinances are for the purpose of gathering and perfecting the saints and in the Form of Church-Government the same items are presented to us as having their purpose in the gathering and perfecting of the visible church itself.

The outcome of this consideration should be an awareness of the importance of the visible ministry and ordinances of God as established in the visible church as they are his instruments for perpetuating not only the visible church considered as visible, but for perpetuating the visible church as it is the means of gathering and perfecting the elect of God — the bride of the Lamb.

The Reverend Stuart Robinson, Professor of Church Government and Pastoral Theology in the Theological Seminary at Danville, Kentucky in the nineteenth century summarized this teaching by distinguishing between what he termed the ideal and the actual and then pleading for a right understanding of the relationship between the two. Robinson began by pointing out:

As the general ideal purpose of God becomes actual and revealed in time, so every part of the purpose has its corresponding actual external manifestation. The Mediator of the ideal eternal covenant becomes the Jehovah, in various forms manifesting himself to men; the Angel of the covenant, not only the ideal covenant of Redemption, but of the actual covenant of grace, in its successive renewals and various forms; the King of Zion; the Word, speaking at sundry times and diverse manners to the fathers, and in the last time becoming incarnate to finish the atonement for sin; the ascended Son of Man, that hath the seven Spirits of God, to send forth the Holy Spirit, as his Vicar, to carry on the work of redemption on earth till he shall return a second time.²³

This relationship of ideal to actual (since ideas are real, perhaps a better term than “actual” would be

“historical”), invisible to visible, and internal or mystical to external led Thomas Peck to four implications. First, that there is a two-fold calling — the one an external calling and that by the Word of God alone (as Matthew 20:16); the other an internal calling by means of the Spirit and the Word (Romans 8:30). Second, that there is also a two-fold faith that answers the callings. There is a common, historical, or temporary faith that may be found even in reprobates which assents to the truth of the gospel and which brings with it a transient joy (as Acts 8:13; Matthew 13:20; Mark 6:20; Hebrews 6:4; etc.); the other is a saving or justifying faith, “the faith of God’s elect” (Titus 1:1), or “faith unfeigned” (First Timothy 1:5), or “faith working by love” (Galatians 5:5). Third, that there is a two-fold holiness corresponding to the external and internal calls. The one is relative, external, and federal only, consisting in the segregation from the communion of impure and profane men of the world (Ezra 9:2). Israelites were in this sense referred to in the Scriptures as “the holy seed,” etc. (Romans 11:16). This same holiness is recognized in both the Old Testament and the New Testament (as at First Corinthians 6:1-2; 7:14; etc.). The other holiness — that which corresponds to the internal calling — is absolute, internal, and real. It is the property only of the regenerate — a conformity to the image of God and his holiness — it is the holiness without which no man shall see the Lord (Psalm 93:5; First Peter 1:15-16; Hebrews 12:10, 14). Fourth and finally, there is a two-fold communion in the covenant. One is external in the signs of the covenant that belong to all those who are attached to the covenant by blood or affinity — all those who make a credible profession of the faith, though it may not be in reality their faith (Genesis 17:7, 10, 14; Acts 2:39; John 15:2, 6). The other is an internal and spiritual communion in the very things that are signified in the outward ordinances and sacraments such as remission of sins, the law written on the heart, etc. (Hebrews 8:10-12).²⁴

So, then, whether we make the distinction between visible and invisible, historical and ideal, or external and internal, it is only in the sense in which the former participates as an outworking and manifestation of the latter that we grant it the name of “church.” It also follows from this consideration of the visible as the outworking of the invisible that the visible church also has its source and importance in the eternal decree of God unto the salvation of his elect. Professor Robinson continued in his work on the church and redemption:

²² Ibid., 397. Emphasis added.

²³ Robinson, op.cit., 40-41.

²⁴ Peck, op.cit., 16-17.

So in like manner the ideal eklektoi [chosen ones] of the covenant of redemption become the actual kletoi [called ones] of the manifested purpose in time. Inasmuch as they are called by an external klesis [call] of the word, they are gathered in successive generations to constitute the external ekklesia [assembly] on earth. In as far as they are called also by the internal klesis of the Spirit, they are gathered to constitute the invisible ekklesia, the full and complete actual of the eternal ideal And it is in this visible body that the Mediator carries on his administration, works by his Spirit, gives laws and ordinances for the present and exceeding great and precious promises of that which is to come; and through this body carries on his purposes of mercy toward a world lying in wickedness.²⁵

The church considered as the bride of Christ, then, must be regarded as the object of his eternal love and care (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25; etc.). But as that bride is manifested in time and on the earth, men only see it in its external manifestation. God has decreed the external manifestation of the bride of the Lamb to be the instrument by which he reveals his will to men as well as the means by which he gathers the elect to himself. The visible church bears the same relationship to the eternal decree of God, then, that the net bears to the fisherman (Matthew 13:47-50). Once again, we can do no better than to quote Professor Robinson on this subject:

From what will be shown hereafter, it will appear that the visible Church is an important, if not a necessary, means of revealing the whole counsel of God; and that, for aught we know, such is the constitution of the human mind that by no other method could have been communicated to human intelligence that peculiar feature of the purpose of God which contemplates the redeemed not as individuals merely, but as the mediatorial body of the Redeemer. It will appear, also, that, in another view, the Church is an indispensable means of accomplishing the great purpose of his love to his chosen people, as an institute for the calling, training, and edifying the elect. What is intended in the foregoing view is to exhibit the external Church in time as, primarily in the logical order of thought, the development of the ideal body of the covenant of redemption. Contemplated as a part of the process of manifesting to men the purpose of God to gather an elect people, the Church is a means through which God makes known his counsel. Contemplated as to its immediate end, the Church is a divinely-appointed institute, by which and through which to accomplish his purpose in the calling and edification of his elect.

But both these views, however important and essential, are, logically speaking, secondary and incidental to the idea of the Church actual on earth as the development of the Church ideal, — “the pattern in the heavens.”²⁶

Thus the nineteenth century Presbyterian Professor, Thomas Peck, also considered that “...the church is the great and last result contemplated by the revelation concerning God, man, and salvation. It is the highest end, next to the glory of God, of all the counsels and all the works of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Chosen by the Father, redeemed by the Son, sanctified by the Spirit, and finally presented a glorious church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, the Bride, the Lamb’s wife, shall be hailed by principalities and powers in heavenly places, as the highest and noblest display of the manifold wisdom of God, Ephesians 3:9, 10.”²⁷

This idea or notion of the ideal church as it has always existed in God being manifested outwardly in time is reminiscent also of not only Hebrews 12:22ff., but Revelation chapter twenty-one as well. In the twenty-first chapter of the Revelation, John reports, “I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with man, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.... And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.... And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it” (Revelation 21:2-3, 10, 22).

The holy city is, as Robert H. Mounce has well pointed out, of heavenly origin. The heart of the revelation of the new Jerusalem is that it is a community of redeemed men. The church as it is ideal is a community with the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb at its center. So too as it works itself out — manifests itself or is manifested — in time and on earth the church is a community that comprises the communion of the saints with God. The city of God is apo tou theou (from God) and ek tou ouranou (out of heaven). As Mounce demonstrated in his The Book of Revelation in the series New International Commentary on the New Testament, “...the church is not a voluntary organization created by man but a fellowship initiated and given by God.”²⁸

²⁶ Ibid., 42-43. Emphasis added.

²⁷ Peck, op. cit., 8.

²⁸ Robert H. Mounce The Book of Revelation in New International Commentary on the New Testament, F. F. Bruce, ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977, 1980), 370-71.

²⁵ Robinson, op. cit., 41-42. Translation added.

Further, the expression of descent that John uses both in verse 3 and again in verse 10 indicates more than the simple fact that history will come to a close and an eternal state will ensue.²⁹ Rather, the idea is that what once existed only as an ideal with God is becoming actual in history. Verse 22 clarifies this for us because at the very point that we would anticipate for John to describe something similar to Ezekiel's temple, he instead tells us plainly, "I saw no temple therein."

For John, the reason there is no temple in the city is that the descent of the heavenly Jerusalem from God to earth indicates the historical manifestation of the ideal. The heavenly ideal of God's presence with man is now seen in God's historical presence with man in the church. Granted that the final state toward which everything is moving is that state of eternal blessedness, holiness, and worship when the redeemed shall "ever be with the Lord." We should nevertheless note that it is a movement from and toward — a movement from heaven and toward earth; from God and toward men. The holy city is in descent in John's vision. This new city, in the words of Professor Richard Jeske of Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, "is not a remote oasis beyond the clouds, but it comes down from heaven to the world of human beings.... The new Jerusalem is the manifestation of 'God with us' as expressed in the covenant promise.... [In] all that is done in the city, in all its daily activity, what remains visible is the source of its life, God and the Lamb. The new city reflects the center of its being, God and the victorious Christ who was crucified, for all things now are new."³⁰ D. S. Russell is of the opinion that the vision of John, because it is not unique in apocalyptic literature, must be interpreted in light of the other apocalyptic literature. Even though Russell wrongly regards the vision to have to do with the end of time, yet he admits, "Behind this picture of re-creation and redemption, then, is the strong conviction that God's purpose, which embraces the life of the whole created universe, will at last reach its glorious fulfillment. The powers of wickedness will be routed and creation itself will share in the salvation of God."³¹

The heavenly Jerusalem of John's vision symbolizes the transcendent becoming immanent; the heavenly becoming earthly; the spiritual becoming flesh; the ideal becoming actual. As William Hendriksen pointed out over a half century ago, "The city here described belongs to the realm of heaven: the city is constantly coming

down out of heaven."³² Because the city is from God, because it is continually and progressively coming down out of heaven; because it contains within its walls the pattern from heaven, it behooves us to study its walls and to "go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide unto death" (Psalm 48:12-14). ❀

Built Upon The Rock

A Study of the Doctrine of the Church

By W. Gary Crampton, Th.D.

& Pastor Richard Bacon

This short (52pp) booklet by Crampton and Bacon is designed to explain the basics of Presbyterian Church Government. The booklet would be excellent for teaching church classes on the subject and should be read by all Presbyterian church office-holders or those intending church office.

"The authors understand the eternal Christ to be the Rock upon which the church is built. There may be other organizations built upon Peter (or rather, who think they are), but only the church is built upon the eternal Son of God. We shall go so far as to maintain that except a church is built upon the Rock of Christ, it is no church of his."

Sections include, Covenant Theology and the Church, Meaning of the Word "Church," Attributes of the Church, Marks of the True Church, Authority of the Church, Duties of the Church, Church State Relationship, Government of the Church, Church Officers.

Single Copy \$3.95ea. 2-24 Copies \$2.40ea. 25 Copies & up \$1.95ea.

See Order Form on back page for shipping costs and instructions.

²⁹ Thus Mounce, *Ibid.*, 378.

³⁰ Richard L. Jeske *Revelation For Today: Images of Hope* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 117-19.

³¹ D. S. Russell *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964, 1971), 284.

³² William Hendriksen *More Than Conquerors* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1939, 1967), 243.

Special Tape Offer: 1997 – 1999 Blue Banner Conferences

First Presbyterian Rowlett hosted its annual Blue Banner Conference for 1999 at the end of the month of October. The Conference theme was: "Preaching the Word: Recapturing the Glory."

1999 Blue Banner Speaker: Terry Dowds

Our speaker was Rev. Terry Dowds, a native son of Ulster. Born in Northern Ireland of Presbyterian stock, he received his early education in his native land. He was called to the ministry of the Word in 1987 while living in Toronto, Canada. He received his theological education at the Free Church of Scotland College, Edinburgh, Scotland, graduating in 1992. Rev. Dowds has served our Lord in various places such as Scotland, Canada and now the United States. In the providence of God he is now serving our Lord in the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America in that denomination's congregation in the Kansas City area. His ministry is primarily one of Expository preaching. The main thrust of his philosophy for church growth is two pronged -- the power of the preached Word, together with the fervent prayer of God's people. The congregation, which he presently serves, has experienced noticeable growth, particularly in the past year. Rev. Dowds is married to Barbara a native of New York and former missionary to Guatemala.

1999 Conference Tapes, \$15.95. Six Tapes in a single binder. Postage Extra. See Order Form on the back page of this issue of *The Blue Banner*.

1. What is the Nature of True Preaching?
2. The Minister's Calling
3. The Centrality of Preaching
4. The Preached Word
5. The Presence of Christ in Preaching
6. The Divine Mission in Preaching

Tape Special: Previous Blue Banner Conference Tapes from 1997 and 1998.

1998 Conference Featuring John Robbins

1. Apologetics: Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How
2. How **not** to do Apologetics: Evidentialism
3. How **not** to do Apologetics: Rationalism
4. How **not** to do Apologetics: Irrationalism
5. The Apologetics of Jesus and Paul
6. The Philosophy of Ayn Rand Refuted

1997 Conference with Francis Nigel Lee.

Richard Bacon:

Why Kings Must Kiss the Son
Have Protestants Outgrown the Bible?
Importance of John's Revelation for Today

Francis Nigel Lee:

God's Law or Chaos
The Lord's Prayer
Identity of Antichrist (this exposition of 2 Thess. 2 is excellent).

Buy either the 1998 or the 1997 sets, each consisting of six tapes in a binder, for \$15.95. Or buy all twelve tapes from both 1997 and 1998, in a single binder for \$24.95. Postage extra. See order form on the back page of this issue of *The Blue Banner*.

1999 Sermons of Richard Bacon

01/03/99 through 12/26/99. CDRom. \$25.00

This is a collection of Sermons and Scripture expositions, and other items from FPCR's preaching ministry in real audio format. Requires a multimedia PC with a web browser and the Real Audio Player software installed. Real Audio software is available free over the Internet, Internet access required. Internet connection not required to run the CD. This collection contains the following:

- Over 100 Sermons and Lectures, Communion addresses
- Nearly 200 Scripture Readings and Expositions including: Micah 2-7, Minor Prophets, Genesis, Exodus 1-19, 2 Corinthians 12 through Revelation 22, Matthew 1-4. (D.V. as this issue goes to press).

Tape Series: The Word of God.

Richard Bacon

This is a series of messages addressing the question in the Westminster Larger Catechism, "How doth it appear that the scriptures are the word of God?"

Set of Six Tapes in Album: \$15.95

ID	TITLE
930411A	1 The Majesty & Holiness of God's Word
930418A	2 The Consistency of Scripture
930425A	3 The Scope of the Whole Scriptures
930502A	4 Preservation Of The Word
930509A	5 The Light And Power Of Scripture
930516A	6 The Testimony Of God's Spirit

Blue Banner Audio

Individual Tape Pricing: 1-10 Tapes \$2.50 Each. 11-25 \$2.00 Each. 26-50 \$1.75 Each. 50+ \$1.50 Each. Depending on quantity, tapes will come in a binder or in individual plastic cases. Write for a free catalog of tapes.

Church Architecture. 2 tapes. \$5.00. How our doctrine affects our church architecture.

910818S Church Architecture 1

910825S Church Architecture 2

Sermons on the Book of Daniel by Richard Bacon

In these twelve sermons Pastor Bacon provides us with an overview of the Book of Daniel. Notably, Daniel is not merely a book of history and prediction; it sets forth a Christian philosophy of history, epistemology, and axiology. 12 tapes in binder, \$29.95, plus postage. See back page for order form.

980802A Daniel 1: The Trial Of Obedience

980802P Daniel 2: The God Of Wisdom And Might

980809A Daniel 3: Pleasing God Or Pleasing Men

980809P Daniel 4: Kings And Beasts

980816A Daniel 5: Weighed in the Balance of Justice

980816P Daniel 6: The State As God

980823A Daniel 7: The Progression Of Kingdoms

980823P Daniel 8: A Destructive Peace

980830A Daniel 9: Messiah The Prince

980830P Daniel 10: The Final Vision

980906A Daniel 11: Jerusalem's Enemies

980906P Daniel 12: Future Confidence

Tithing:

By Richard Bacon. One Audio Cassette, \$2.50 postage extra. See Order Form on the back page of this issue of *The Blue Banner*.

Lectures and Sermons on Revelation

In the past 150 years Christians have become fascinated with what they think is the message of the book of Revelation. Some have gone so far as to see "black helicopters" in the book, while others have maintained that the 144,000 are the members of a cult of Arians. In reaction to such speculations, some men today have set forth a strict preteristic view of the book which limits it to the first century and the destruction of the Jewish temple under the Romans. According to Bacon, both the futurist and the preterist views of the book have their source in Jesuit defenses of the papacy.

For the first time in a generation, these tapes by Pastor Bacon offer a sane historical interpretation of the book of Revelation. In fifteen hours of lectures and sermons, Bacon sets forth the view of Revelation that sees it as a symbolic account of the war between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15ff). The lectures consist of chapter by chapter explanations of the book of Revelation from chapter one to chapter nineteen and chapter twenty-two. The sermons consist of five sermons on chapters twenty and twenty-one.

The view set forth by Bacon is that of the reformers Vitranga and Paraeus. Bacon demonstrates that far from considering the beast(s) of the book as belonging either to the distant past or the distant future, Christians today are called upon to war against not only the beasts, but the dragon who manipulates them as well as the harlot Babylon. In his summary of the book, Bacon calls upon Christians to take their places in the golden city, holy Jerusalem.

Set of ten 90 minute tapes in binder. \$20.95. See order form on the back page. Shipping costs are extra. •

Westminster Shorter Catechism Memory Cards

Flash Cards, business card size, with WSC
question and answer on one side and a
Scripture proof on the other.

\$4.95 per set or \$14.95 for 5 sets (postage extra).

See Order Form on Back Page. Shipping on
all items is extra.

FPCR Sermon Subscription Service

FPCR is offering subscriptions to receive tapes of Pastor Bacon's sermons as they are preached. For \$10 per month one receives all of the sermons in either the morning or afternoon services. For \$20 per month a subscriber receives tapes of both services. The tapes will be sent automatically the week following the Lord's day on which they were preached.

Pastor Bacon follows a Puritan model of preaching. He has been preaching through Isaiah in the afternoon and through Hebrews in the morning. Bacon began preaching through Isaiah in November 1993, and is presently in the 56th chapter.

Blue Banner Video

Male Headship and Head Coverings in Worship

A Discourse Analysis of 1 Corinthians 11.

By Richard Bacon

There is a bible commentary called *The Women's Bible Commentary* (so called because women are welcome to make comments in it) that refers to the passage of the Apostle Paul's first letter to Corinth, as those "chaotic verses." The comment then goes on to say "while this is certainly Pauline, nevertheless Paul's arguments are inarticulate, incomprehensible and inconsistent." Richard Bacon, in this 2 hour video series, examines the whole 1 Corinthians 11 passage carefully using a discourse analysis approach. Summing up his introduction he says: "I am not going to suggest to you that this is an easy passage, nevertheless at the end of this study together I want you to decide for yourselves whether Paul was "inarticulate, incomprehensible and inconsistent" or whether in fact he was not quite articulate, comprehensible and consistent. 1 Corinthians 11 articulates *quite well* the mind of Christ regarding the position of women and men in the public assembly."

One 2 hour video tape. \$7.95. Audio (without Q/A session) \$4.95. Edited Transcript \$2.95. Shipping and handling extra (see order form on page 11).

1998 Sermons of Richard Bacon

12/21/97 through 12/27/98. CD Rom. \$25.00

This is a collection of Sermons and Scripture expositions, and other items from FPCR's preaching ministry in real audio format. Requires a multimedia PC with a web browser and the Real Audio Player software installed. Real Audio software is available free over the Internet, Internet access required. Internet connection not required to run the CD. This collection contains the following:

- Over 100 Sermons and Lectures
- Pastoral Prayers and Communion addresses
- Nearly 200 Scripture Readings and Explanations including: Mark 9-16, Jeremiah 42-52, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, 1 Corinthians, Luke, John, Acts.

Blue Banner Ministries

The Blue Banner is one of the ministries of First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett. Other ministries include the books and tracts published through Blue Banner Books and FPCR's Web site on the Internet.

<http://www.fpcr.org>. None of these ministries is self-supporting. If we have ministered to you through any of these, consider sending a donation to help us defray our operating costs.

Jenny Geddes

[From: *Jenny Geddes, or Presbyterianism and its great Conflict with Despotism*, by Rev. W. P. Breed, D.D., Philadelphia, Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1869. This appeared in an early Blue Banner, but we liked it so much, here it is again!]

Writers of human annals have been accustomed to divide their subjects into two general classes. The one comprises those which are truly and in themselves in a high sense historic, affecting widely and powerfully the interests of men and nations. The other embraces agencies and events whose significance is too trivial, whose influence is too feeble or plays in too narrow a circle to entitle them to any marked place upon the historic page.

It is evident, however, that events exceedingly minute in themselves may, by the force they borrow from circumstances, the principles they symbolize, the incidents to which they give rise, or the interests they come to affect, emerge into true historic dignity.

Thus history has not disdained to record that in the infancy of the Massachusetts colony, Canonicus, the haughty chief of the Naragansetts, sent to Plymouth a bundle of arrows bound together with the skin of a rattlesnake, and that Governor Bradford filled the skin with powder and shot and sent it back to his Indian majesty. Not that either Indian or arrows, powder or shot, or their exchange was a matter of any moment, but in this case the affair was a declaration of war on the one hand and an acceptance of the challenge on the other — a war which, had it been prosecuted, might have annihilated either an Indian tribe or the infant colony in which lay embosomed a nation and a civilization.

A few words from the lips of a monarch are in themselves no more than the shaking of a leaf in the wind, but spoken in the ear of a foreign ambassador at his court may not only shock the finances of a continent, but may bring nations into hostile and bloody collision.

The advent of a little seed upon the shore of some island in the sea is in itself an event lost in its own insignificance. But if that seed embosom the germ of some nutritious fruit, and, springing up into prolific maturity, in the course of years reproduce its kind until the whole island is supplied with its productions, its landing on those shores comes to be an event of historic magnitude and importance. Its fruit may not only feed thousands of native islanders, but, becoming an article of commerce, enrich them, build them houses, improve

their domestic habits, cover their nakedness with comely habiliments and clothe the island in the rich attire of an advanced civilization. Nay, more, it may awaken the cupidity of greedy foreigners, and tempt the navies of distant powers to take forcible possession of those fertile fields, and other powers, jealous of this intrusion, may protest, and follow their protest with armed resistance; and thus out of the bosom of that little seed shall grow events the record of which shall fill many a bloody page of human history.

The personage named upon our title-page was one of so humble a rank in life, of such grade of intellectual power and culture, and of such general insignificance, that the mention of her as a subject of discourse might seem only an excuse for literary trifling. She was the consort of no monarch — the daughter of no queenly or titled mother. She was no cultivated Aspasia, fit to lecture on eloquence in the presence of a Socrates and captivate the heart of a Pericles. Neither was she a Hannah More, nor a Florence Nightingale, nor a brilliant beauty, dazzling the eyes of some royal court. Far from it; and yet, if we mistake not, it will be found that the part she played in life's drama, though of a very humble and uncouth sort, was, if not a prolific cause, at least the symbol and instrument of principles and events second in importance to very few in the course of human history.

Jenny (or Janet) Geddes was a Scotch woman, a native of that land of great minds and heroic champions of Calvinistic orthodoxy. Born perhaps about the close, before or after, of the sixteenth century, toward the middle of the seventeenth she found herself a resident of the city of Edinburgh. No doubt her position in life was very humble — her food and raiment, perhaps of the coarsest kind, procured by the labour of her own hands.

Whether this was her maiden or matrimonial name history does not say. She was certainly poor, for in the great cathedral church of St. Giles there was no place for her in the pew, if indeed these conveniences had yet found place there; so she went to church with her stool in her hand, and sat upon it in the aisle wherever she could find a convenient and unoccupied spot.

She was evidently a person of decided character, and did her own thinking, at least on certain subjects; and as the sequel will show could, upon occasion, without consultation with her husband, if indeed she were blessed with matrimonial alliance with any one of the rougher sex, do her own acting also, and that with decision and energy. She was a Presbyterian of the orthodox hue, and, familiar with her Bible, she

demanded conformity to its teachings in all matters of faith and worship.

It was in the month of July — a month since become so memorable in the history of human freedom — on the twenty-third day of the month, that Jenny emerged from domestic obscurity to historic celebrity and renown. On that day there was a strange ferment throughout Scotland and a wild excitement in the city of Edinburgh. King Charles had resolved to make Presbyterianism give place to Prelacy throughout the realm. A book of canons had been prepared subversive of the whole system of Presbyterian government, and had been enjoined upon the realm by proclamation upon the king's simple prerogative. Following this book came a liturgy as a law of public worship, and a royal edict had commanded its introduction into all the churches of the realm on this memorable Sabbath day. Notice to this effect had been given the Sabbath before, and hence this intense excitement. For the Scottish people knew that if this measure were carried into effect by the authorities, Presbyterianism was virtually in its grave.

As the hour of Sabbath service approached, the streets of Edinburgh were thronged with crowds of people — every bosom throbbing, every eye flaming with excitement. But whither were they directing their steps? Conspicuous from many a point in the city of Edinburgh is a lofty tower, terminating in an open, carved stonework, with arches springing from the four corners and meeting together at the top in the form of a crown. Already more than three centuries were looking down from that tower-top. It rose from the centre of a vast and venerable pile, including the High Church at the eastern end, where Knox so often preached, and within which pile "forty altars" were at one time supported. It was thither mainly the crowds were pressing, and among them Jenny Geddes. Not being overburdened with modesty, she elbowed her way through the crowd to a convenient place, in near proximity to the pulpit, and seated herself on her throne.

The edifice was filled to repletion with titled nobility and the nobler untitled nobility of the Scottish Presbyterian masses. There were present archbishops, bishops, the lords of the session, the magistrates of the city, members of the council, "chief captains and principal men," and Jenny Geddes and her stool.

The excitement was becoming every moment more intense. The minutes dragged themselves along with tormenting tardiness and the suspense was becoming almost breathless.

When the feeling was wrought up to its highest tension the Dean of Edinburgh made his appearance, clad in immaculate surplice, book in hand — the fatal book of the liturgy — the device of English Prelacy for the reform of Scotch Presbytery. The book was opened and the service begun.

The cup was now full, though as yet no one pretended to know, no one dreamed, what form of expression the pent-up indignation of the outraged people would assume. The question was soon decided.

No sooner had the first words of the book, through the lips of the dean, reached the ear of Jenny, the stern prophetess on her tripod, than a sudden inspiration seized her. In an instant she was on her feet, and her shrill, impassioned voice rang through the arches of the cathedral:

"Villain! dost thou say mass in my lug?" and in another instant her three-legged stool was seen on its way, travelling through the air straight toward the head of the surpliced prayer-reader.

The astounded dean, not anticipating such an argument, dodged it, but the consequences he could not dodge. He had laid his book, as he thought, upon a cushion — the cushion proved a hornet's nest. In an instant the assembly was in the wildest uproar. Hands were clapped; hisses and loud vociferations filled the house, and missiles, such as the hand could reach, filled the air. A sudden rush was made toward the pulpit by the people in one direction, and from the pulpit by the dean in the other.

On the retreat of the dean, the Bishop of Edinburgh took his place in the pulpit, and solemnly commanded the winds and waves to be still, but no calm followed. He was as rudely handled as his brother in oppression, and nothing but a vigorous onset of the magistrates saved his lawn and mitre from the rough hands of Jenny Geddes' soldiery.

At length, the people having been forcibly ejected from the house, the affrighted dean re-entered the pulpit and resumed the service; but the uproar without, the pounding at the doors, showers of stones hurled through the windows, turned the place into a bedlam, drowned the voice of the dean and compelled a suspension of the service.

When the dean and the bishop came out of the church, decked in their prelatial plumes, they were in no small danger of being torn in pieces by the excited, outraged masses, and were followed through the streets with the cries —

"Pull them down! A pope — a pope! Antichrist — antichrist!"

The magistrates managed to keep the peace in the afternoon, but when the performance was over the tumult in the streets was greater than ever. The Earl of Roxborough, returning with the bishop in his carriage, was so pelted with stones and so pressed by the crowd that his life was in danger.

Thus the scene that opened with such pomp and circumstance closed in discomfiture and chagrin. The liturgy, prepared with such care and painstaking, and from which so much was hoped, went up like a rocket and came down as rockets are wont to descend. Here ended the first lesson.

Now, he would be marvellously astray who should suppose that this sudden hurricane at St. Giles was but a passing and unmeaning summer squall. It was in truth the outburst of a national feeling. A mighty ferment at this time pervaded the national mind. Great principles were at stake, and the Scottish masses, well comprehending their nature and the drift of events, were solemnly resolved to vindicate their settled religious convictions in the great controversy at whatever hazard and cost.

When that irregular band of patriots, dressed in Indian attire, marched through the streets of Boston and tossed those tea-chests into the bay, they at the same time virtually tossed British sovereignty overboard; and Jenny Geddes' party at St. Giles signed the death-warrant of civil and ecclesiastical tyranny in both Scotland and England! The storm had been gathering for nearly forty years, and this bursting of the cloud marked a crisis in a great national revolution. It was the first formidable outbreak against the tyranny of the Stuarts, and Jenny Geddes' stool was the first shell sent screaming through the air at those merciless oppressors of the two realms, and the echoes of that shell are reverberating to-day among the hills.

"Protestantism was a revolt against spiritual sovereignties, popes, and much else. Presbyterianism carried out the revolt against earthly sovereignties and despotisms. Protestantism has been called the grand root from which our whole subsequent European history branches out; for the spiritual will always body itself forth in the temporal history of men. The spiritual is the beginning of the temporal. And now, sure enough, the cry is everywhere for liberty, equality, independence, and so forth; instead of kings, ballot-boxes and electoral suffrages." ❀

The Blue Banner

A Publication of First Presbyterian Church Rowlett

P O Box 141084

Dallas, TX 75214

Return Postage Guaranteed

BULK RATE
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
ROWLETT, TX
Permit No. XXX

INSIDE THIS ISSUE	
1	<i>Daniel 4: Kings and Beasts</i> , by Richard Bacon
7	<i>Clark's 'God and Evil: The Problem Solved,'</i> by W. Gary Crampton
10	<i>The Importance of the Study of the Biblical Doctrine of the Church</i> , by Richard Bacon
18	Blue Banner Conference Tapes
19	Tapes, Catechism Cards, CdRom.
21	<i>Jenny Geddes</i>
24	Order Form. About <i>The Blue Banner</i> & FPCR

The First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett

The Blue Banner is published by The First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett, Texas (RPC) and is supported by gifts. The cost of an annual subscription is \$15.00 per year. If you are able, please consider giving a gift of \$30.00 to support your subscription and one other. All material in this issue Copyright © 1999 by *The Blue Banner*, a ministry of First Presbyterian Church Rowlett, unless otherwise noted. FPCR Session: Pastor Richard Bacon. Ruling Elders: David Seekamp, Carl Betsch, Thomas Allie. *The Blue Banner* Editor: Christopher Coldwell.

How to Contact us: Email: pastor@fpccr.org WEB: <http://www.fpccr.org> Church Mail: P O Box 141084, Dallas, TX. 75214. Phone: 972-475-9164 or 972-475-2184. Fax: 972-475-5317

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

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

Order Form

THE BLUE BANNER
P O BOX 141084
DALLAS, TX 75214
800-484-9377 ext. 3727

Item	Qty	Price Each	Total
1998 Sermon CD		25.00	
1999 Sermon CD		25.00	
1999 Blue Banner Conference		15.95	
Westminster Shorter Catechism Cards		4.95	
WSC Cards (5 sets)		14.95	
Add 10% for postage and handling (\$3.50 min)			
Total			

Canadian orders must send checks in U.S. Funds drawn on a U.S. bank, otherwise bank charges will be billed to purchaser. Canadian Money Orders in U.S. Dollars are also accepted.