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For Christ's Crown & Covenant

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In this Issue.

Selected Thoughts on the Temple  **The Mediatorial Kingdom and Glories of Jesus Christ** by Samuel Davies  **Comments from Our Readers** 


by Richard Bacon



Previous issues of *The Blue Banner* have contained excerpts from *A Pattern in the Heavens*, and this issue also contains an excerpt dealing with the ideal temple of Ezekiel chapters forty to forty-eight. The chapters speak importantly to our understanding of the constitution of Christ's church. Just as the temple of the Old Testament was built according to the eternal plan of God, so also the temple of Ezekiel is to be built according to God's commandment. The present day church, which is the fulfillment of Ezekiel's temple, is also today to build its constitution upon the Word of God *and nothing else*. Just as the temple was the dwelling place of God, so too is the church in our day the dwelling place of God.

The sermon beginning on page 19 is by Samuel Davies of Virginia. Davies (1724-61) was the fourth president of the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University). He was born in Delaware and became a Presbyterian pastor in the Virginia back-country. He was a circuit-rider, whose charge extended over five counties. He settled in Hanover County, VA where dissenters (i.e. non-Anglicans) were generally frowned upon. Soon, however, Davies became one of the leading proponents of civil and religious liberties in Virginia and North Carolina.

Davies accompanied Gilbert Tennant (one of the "Great Awakening" preachers) to Great Britain in 1753 in order to raise funds for the College of New Jersey. While in Great Britain, he preached over sixty sermons in Scotland and England. After Davies' return to Virginia, the Presbytery of Hanover was established in 1755. Davies became president of the College of New Jersey in 1759 and died of pneumonia less than two years later.

The sermon by Davies included in this issue of *The Blue Banner*, "The Mediatorial Kingdom and Glories of Jesus Christ," was preached in Hanover County, VA on May 9, 1756. It is not what today would be regarded as "politically correct" in places. The gospel has never been "politically correct." It was first published posthumously in London, England. 

Thoughts on the Temple

Extracted from 'A Pattern in the Heavens Part One: Ecclesiology.' Copyright © 2000 Richard E. Bacon.

by Rev. Richard Bacon



Reformed scholars, as opposed to Dispensationalists, understand Ezekiel chapters forty to forty-eight to constitute a prophesy of the restoration of the church of God under Messiah. This restoration is set forth by the prophet of the exile under the Old Testament symbol of the temple. Perhaps more to the point of this dissertation, the Westminster divines also so understood the prophecy of Ezekiel, for they included as the frontispiece of the Westminster Form of Church Government, the text of Ezekiel 43:11. The Westminster divines believed that there was a law governing the church. This dissertation¹ will attempt to set forth not only the fact that a law regarding the form of the Christian temple exists, but also it will attempt to demonstrate that the law of the temple is yet in force today as what may be termed Constitutional Presbyterianism or Presbyterian Minimalism.²

The temple of Ezekiel's prophecy is clearly an ideal structure and is not "the second temple" that the Jews who returned from the Babylonian exile built. The measurements of the place indicate to the reader that Ezekiel's temple cannot now and could never be built upon the physical Mount Moriah (the earthly Mount Zion).

¹ This article, as well as several others in this series, is adapted from Dr. Bacon's dissertation, *The Pattern in the Heavens*, which is a study of the underlying philosophy and theology of church polity.

² "Constitutional Presbyterianism" simply means that the church was founded upon the apostles and the prophets. Men are not free to add to the essence of church polity, no matter how admirable their motives may be. Regarding the circumstances of church polity that are necessary to each age or denomination, constitutional Presbyterianism simply maintains that people should do what they have promised to do. Thus a majority or even a super-majority of men in a particular assembly are not free to "suspend" the constitution of that body upon their own authority, because such authority does not reside in the majority.

Ezekiel's temple will be built, he claimed "upon a very high mountain" (Ezekiel 40:2).

Ezekiel's vision took place in the "five and twentieth year" (Ezekiel 40:1) of the exile, which would correspond roughly to 575 BC. Ezekiel adds that his prophecy or vision took place on the tenth day of the first month (literally the head of the months) of the year. If Ezekiel was following the civil calendar — which seems unlikely given everything we know of Ezekiel — then his vision took place on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:27 cp. Leviticus 16:29).

More likely, given the fact that this vision concerns the temple and was given by inspiration to a prophet who was himself of a priestly family (Ezekiel 1:3), is the idea that the vision came to Ezekiel in accord with the cultic calendar which began in the spring rather than in the autumn. Thus Exodus 12:2, "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year unto you" comprises or establishes Abib (Nisan) as the opening month of the cultic year.

Further, it was on that tenth day of the first month that the preparations for the Passover actually began. "The tenth day of this month was the day on which the preparations for the Passover, the feast of the elevation of Israel into the people of God, were to commence, and therefore was well adapted for the revelation of the new constitution of the kingdom of God."³

The very high mountain of Ezekiel 40:2 is not the physical Mount Zion, but the ideal heavenly

³Carl Freidrich Keil, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Ezekiel*, in C.F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch *Commentary on the Old Testament*, XXV volumes in X (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., repr. 1988), IX.2.184.

Mount Zion. It is exalted above the tops of all the surrounding mountains, indicating the honor and glory that God has determined to give the heavenly Mount Zion in its day. "But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people (literally peoples) shall flow unto it," (Micah 4:1).

Further confirmation of the idealized Mount Zion can be found in Isaiah's prophecy: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations (*kol-haggoyim*) shall flow unto it," (Isaiah 2:2). The lofty mountain or high mountain of Ezekiel's vision contained what he called a "frame of a city" or literally a city-edifice to the south. Keil rightly identified the city-edifice not as Jerusalem *per se*, but as the idealized temple. He opined, "Consequently what Ezekiel saw as a city-edifice can only be the building of the new temple, with its surrounding wall and its manifold court buildings."⁴

The lofty mountain of Ezekiel's prophecy has reference, at least in part, to the fact that the physical Mount Zion was not of sufficient size to accommodate the structures of his vision. The area of the temple with its two courts was 500 cubits square while the surrounding (holy) space was 500 reeds square (or 3,000 cubits square considering six cubits to the reed or rod). Finally there was a circuit of fifty cubits in breadth about the whole sanctuary (Ezekiel 45:2).⁵ As Keil noted, "This broad separation is peculiar to Ezekiel's temple, and serves, like many other arrangements in the new sanctuary and worship, to symbolize the inviolable holiness of that sanctuary."⁶

The ideal character of Ezekiel's latter day temple is further brought out by the fact that Ezekiel specifically refers to this prophecy as "the

visions of God" or *b^emar^e'oth*. As Fairbairn pointed out, "This alone marks it to be of an ideal character, as contradistinguished from anything that ever had been, or ever was to be found in actual existence, after the precise form given to it in the description. Such we have uniformly seen to be the character of the earlier visions imparted to the prophet.... They presented a vivid picture of what either then actually existed or was soon to take place, but in a form quite different from the external reality. Not the very image or the formal appearance of things was given, but rather a compressed delineation of their inward being and substance."⁷

The Westminster divine John Lightfoot concludes similarly from the size of the mountain, the city, and the temple that they must refer to something spiritual rather than physical. He maintained, "And now, if any one will take up the full circuit of the wall that encompassed the holy ground, according to our English measure, it will amount to half a mile and about 166 yards. And whosoever likewise will measure the square of Ezekiel xlii.20, he will find it six times as large as this, the whole amounting to three miles and a half and about 140 yards — a compass incomparably greater than Mount Moriah divers times over. And by this very thing is showed that it is spiritually and mystically to be understood...to signify the great enlarging of the spiritual Jerusalem and temple, the Church under the Gospel, the spiritual beauty and glory of it."⁸

Finally, the New Testament confirms and indeed canonizes the interpretation set forth in these pages. Most clearly, Hebrews 12:22ff proclaims, "But ye are come to Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly of the firstborn [masculine plural], which are written in heaven...." Additionally, we shall note other Scripture passages below in which the New Testament

⁴ *Ibid.*, 185.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 272.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Patrick Fairbairn, *Commentary on Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1989 repr. Of Zondervan 1960), 444.

⁸ John Lightfoot, *Description of the Temple*, 1605. Cited in Fairbairn, *op.cit.*, 445.

either directly or implicitly states that the present day Church is the fulfillment of God's covenant promises to dwell gloriously with his people.

The temple in the Old Testament was the visible sign of God's presence with his people; the place where God was said to dwell and where his glory was particularly manifested in the earth. Even before the temple was built and dedicated by Solomon, God was especially present with his people in the tabernacle that was prescribed in the days of Moses.

Ezekiel previously saw the departure of God's glory from the temple (Ezekiel 10:18ff.). In chapters forty to forty-eight the prophet described his vision of God's glory returning to the idealized temple. Just as there was a "blueprint" (*takhnith*) for the original tabernacle, so is there a law for the house of God in Ezekiel. Further, we should understand this law to be applicable to the church of Messiah's day (cf. Matthew 16:18). We can trace this theme of the temple/church of Christ through Scripture and see how it ripples from period to period in God's revelation of his plan of redemption: the outworking of the covenant of grace.

AN ARCHITECT'S PLAN

First, God insists that he alone is the architect of his house. In Exodus 25:8-9 the Lord said to Moses, "Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, so shall ye make it.... And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount" (verse 40).

The word translated "pattern" both in verse nine and again in verse 40 is the Hebrew word *tabhnit*. The idea in both places is that of an exemplar or what we might in modern parlance call a blueprint. The author of Hebrews further confirms this idea to us when he states in Hebrews 8:5, "who serve unto the example [*hupodeigma*, i.e. model or pattern] and shadow [*skia*, i.e. foreshadowing] 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 [*tupos*, i.e. form, figure, pattern] shewed to thee in the mount."

Significantly, God did not leave it to Moses' imagination or sanctified good will to determine what the Lord's house would be like. God had a blueprint in heaven and insisted that the blueprint be followed down to the hook and tack. This instruction to follow God's own blueprint in building his house will become increasingly important to us as we examine the idea of *ius divinum* (divine right) church polity in the pages that follow.

It will be this author's constant contention that God has not relinquished his right to be the sole architect of church polity and worship. Philosophically this doctrine might be called *sola scriptura*. This author shall maintain that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are sufficient for all of life and godliness; and that is specifically the case when it comes to the proper ordering of God's house.

In Ezekiel's vision of the future and glorious temple of Messiah the Prince, a similar blueprint was unfolded to him by "a man whose appearance was like the appearance of brass." The man of brass measured the slightest of details and described all the measurements to Ezekiel in chapters 40 to 42. He described for Ezekiel the materials as well as the measurements for the temple. The furnishings of the temple, as well as their measurements and composition, were similarly dictated to Ezekiel. Finally, after all the measurements were taken and recorded, the man of brass commanded, "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 [*takhnit*, i.e. blueprint]. And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, shew them the form [*tsurah*] of the house and the fashion [*tekhunah*, i.e. arrangement or structure] thereof, and the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof, and all the forms [*tsurah*] thereof, and all the laws thereof: and write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form [*tsurah*] thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them" (Ezekiel 43:10-11).

There are some commentators — mostly those of a Dispensational or at least Premillennial viewpoint — who regard the “man of brass” to be simply an angelic visitor or some other spiritual intermediary.⁹ However, given the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ is the Architect and Builder of His church, this author finds it far more likely that the man of brass in Ezekiel’s vision was the pre-incarnate Christ. This also seems to be the view of such Reformed commentators as Matthew Henry, who comments on this passage regarding the man of brass: “The particular discoveries of this city (which he had at first a general view of) were made to him by a man whose appearance was like the appearance of brass (v. 3), not a created angel, but Jesus Christ, who should be found in fashion as a man, that he might both discover and build the gospel-temple. He brought him to this city, for it is through Christ that we have both acquaintance with and access to the benefits and privileges of God’s house. He it is that shall build the temple of the Lord, Zec. 6:13. His appearing like brass intimates both his brightness and his strength. John, in vision, saw his feet like unto fine brass, Rev. 1:15.”¹⁰

The Reverend Henry makes an excellent point, especially with regard to Revelation 1:15. Although it must be conceded that the vision Ezekiel received in chapter one pertaining to the angelic creatures also had feet that sparkled like “the colour of burnished brass” (Ezekiel 1:7), later in that same chapter the one who was above the throne also had the color of amber and was bright like a fire (verse 27). Ezekiel’s contemporary, the prophet Daniel, had a similar vision of Christ in Daniel 10:5-6. Finally, we

⁹ Thus the *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible* refers to the man of brass as “some kind of celestial being.” *The Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* by Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown states simply “The Old Testament manifestations of heavenly beings as men prepared men’s minds for the coming incarnation.” *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, which insists that Ezekiel is describing the “millennial temple,” claims only “This tour was given by a man, probably an angel, whose appearance was like bronze.”

¹⁰ Henry, Matthew, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Bible*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997) *in loco*, underline in original.

must take into consideration the nature of apocalyptic literature. Ezekiel’s vision of the temple, Daniel’s vision of the man clothed in linen at the river Hiddekel, and John’s vision of Christ in Revelation 1:15 have such similarity it would be dangerous indeed to claim that one vision refers to the eternal Son of God while another nearly identical vision refers to some created being.

At the same time we cannot be absolute in our identification of this man of brass as the pre-incarnate Christ for the same reason given above. In Zechariah chapter two and in Revelation chapters eleven and twenty-one, beings that were specifically identified as angels performed actions and functions very similar to the man of brass of Ezekiel chapters forty and following. The angelic beings of those passages are described differently than Ezekiel describes the man of his vision, but we cannot discount completely the idea that it is sometimes an angelic task, and not always the task of the Anointed Architect, to measure the temple.

It was not simply and only in Mosaic times, then, that God’s pattern and form and structure were to be followed. The same must be said for the days of Ezekiel’s vision as well. But as Patrick Fairbairn well demonstrated in his *Commentary on Ezekiel*, it has been the prevailing view of the Christian church from the Fathers down to now that Ezekiel’s vision of the temple was “a grand, complicated symbol of the good God had in reserve for his church, especially under the coming dispensation of the gospel.”¹¹

But the question remains whether there is anything in the church in this present age that corresponds to the *tabhnit* or the *takhnit* or “blueprint” of the Old Testament temple. There are many today, including even some influential persons in conservative Presbyterian denominations who would argue that while there was significant form and structure in the Old Testament church, that has passed away in these present days of gospel “liberty.”

¹¹ Fairbairn, *op. cit.*, 443.

It is certainly true that the “form” or “blueprint” for the Christian temple is not identical with that of the Old Testament. However, when we have asserted that the blueprint today is not identical to the Old Testament blueprint, we have not asserted the absence of a New Testament blueprint. In fact, by claiming that the form is different we have actually presumed that a New Testament form exists. It will not be suggested in the pages that follow that the form of the Christian temple is as elaborate or ornate as was the temple of the Old Testament. The opposite is the case. The form of the New Covenant temple is, by God’s design, simpler and plainer (and according to Second Corinthians chapter three, more spiritual as well) than that of the Old Testament.

Key to our understanding of the modern-day blueprint for the Christian temple is Ephesians 2:20-22 and Ephesians 3:9-11. Clearly in the second chapter of Ephesians we see a sort of blueprint consisting of a cornerstone (that stone by which all else is placed so as to remain level, straight, and plumb). That cornerstone is none other than Christ himself. Christ is the rock upon which the church is built, about which more below in this dissertation. So, too, First Peter 2:6-8 refers to Christ as the rock that was rejected by the builders, but has become the chief cornerstone of the temple of God.

Not only is there a cornerstone, there is a foundation consisting of the apostles and prophets. If we consider that it is not so much the persons of the apostles and prophets in view, but their teachings, we realize that Scripture is the foundation and blueprint for Christ’s temple. Finally, we learn from this passage that the building is “fitly framed” to be built together for a habitation to God. The Greek word translated “fitly framed” seems to be limited primarily if not exclusively to the Christian literature. It consists of the prefix for “together” or “with” plus a form of the Greek word “*harmoge*” or “*harmos*,” the joint of a building where one stone touches another.

Not only is such a plan presupposed in Ephesians 2:20-22, it is mentioned more explicitly in Ephesians 3:9-11 as belonging to the eternal purpose [*prothesis*] of God. A *prothesis* is

not only a plan; it is also the presentation or setting forth of the plan. We might say, then, that the temple of God in all its forms — including the present age of Jew and Gentile being one church — is built upon the eternal blueprint or *prothesis* of God.

PREPARING THE MATERIALS OF THE TEMPLE

For any building to arrive at completion, there must be in addition to a plan or blueprint, a preparing and fitting of the materials for the house as well. This fact is as true for the house of Jehovah as for any other house. The tabernacle of God contains the material and ordinances necessary for his worship. God did not set a blueprint before Moses and then tell Moses to consider himself free to take or leave any parts of the *takhnit* as he saw fit. As we saw previously regarding God’s blueprint for his tabernacle, his instruction to Moses was “so shall ye make it” (Exodus 25:9) and “look that thou make them after their pattern” (Exodus 25:40).

We should not presume that the Old Testament builders of the house of God were furnished “by nature” to perform their tasks. Rather we must note that God called by name Bezaleel and Aholiab to the work (cf. Exodus 35:30-35). God specifically equipped these men by fitting them with the Spirit of God in wisdom, skill, and understanding. Each man had skill and understanding to build the tabernacle and we have specifically been informed by Scripture that the skill and wisdom that they had came from the Spirit of God as a result of their being filled with the Spirit. These skills constituted an Old Testament type or exemplar of the spiritual gifts of the New Testament by which Christ builds his church today.

Willing and skilled workmen were not sufficient in themselves to complete the task, however. It was also necessary that materials commensurate with God’s blueprint be obtained. Thus the materials of the original tabernacle were furnished by the free will offerings of God’s people (Exodus 35:4-29). The foundational heart attitude of worship was a willingness to do freely what God had commanded in his word. The Old Testament people of God were called upon to

serve God freely; but their freedom was not absolute. Their freedom was curtailed or bounded by the commandments of God.

Moses was able to say without self-contradiction that the Lord had commanded a particular form to his worship (Exodus 25:40) and at the same time that those who would participate properly in the ordinances of worship must do so from a willing and submissive mind. The reconciliation of these two ideas of a willing submission to commanded forms is found in Exodus 35:29, “The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the LORD, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all manner of work, *which the LORD had commanded to be made* by the hand of Moses.” [emphasis added]

We see something similar to this in Ezekiel chapters forty to forty-eight. In Ezekiel 44:9, God told Ezekiel, “No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that is among the children of Israel.” Only those who entered with circumcised or willing hearts were called to provide service in the temple of the Lord spoken of by Ezekiel the prophet. It is also significant that in Ezekiel’s temple, just as in Moses’ tabernacle, the materials of both the building and the offerings were prescribed by God.

As Bezaleel and Aholiab were called by name and furnished by God’s Spirit to minister to him, so also was the seed of Zadok in the day of Ezekiel’s prophesy (Ezekiel 43:19; 44:15). The seed of Zadok were chosen by God because “they kept the charge of my sanctuary.” God desired willing worshippers, but he required those willing worshippers to submit their wills to “the charge of my sanctuary.” An attempt on the part of the seed of Zadok to worship God in any manner of their own choosing would not have constituted their “keeping the charge of the sanctuary,” but of worshipping according to their own wills. From this we may learn that to worship God willingly is not to worship him as we will, but to submit our wills to the teachings of Scripture — the “blueprint from God.” This also helps us understand why Paul in Colossians 2:23 speaks negatively of will worship (*ethelothreskia*) not as

worshipping God voluntarily, but as a self-made or willful religion.

In the New Testament as Christ builds his church or temple we also see him using chosen materials, chosen craftsmen, etc. Once the prescribed foundation and cornerstone have been laid (Ephesians 2:20-22; First Peter 2:6ff; see above), Christ brings his house to completion by making it of living stones. Only Christ, the great master builder, is able to bring dead things to life, for he has life in himself (John 5:26) and gives that everlasting life to whom he will (John 5:21).

As dead stones and dead sacrifices were used to honor God in his appointment in the dispensation of stone (Second Corinthians 3:3) and ministration of death (Second Corinthians 3:7), so in the New Testament (Second Corinthians 3:6) Christ builds his house of living stones (*lithoi*) and spiritual sacrifices (First Peter 2:5). As the master craftsman as well as the heir to the house, Christ has the filling of God’s Spirit without measure (John 3:34). Further, Christ declared himself to be building according to God’s master plan or blueprint (John 4:34; 5:30; 17:4 cf. vv. 21, 25.).

Moses gathered the material for the tabernacle of God by the free-will offerings of God’s people. So, too, does Christ build his temple from free-will offerings. An oft-quoted verse, “thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power” (Psalm 110:3), has reference to the very willingness of heart to bring a free-will offering as discussed above in Exodus 35:5. This idea of Christ gathering the free-will offerings of his people finds New Testament fulfillment in such places as Second Corinthians 8:5 and Romans 12:1.

Speaking of the free-will monetary offerings of the Macedonian churches, Paul said “and this they did not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.” Paul commended those particular churches because of both the spirit *in which* they gave and the rule *by which* they gave. Just as in the days of Moses, Bezaleel, and Aholiab, God’s people in this day are called upon to give generously and biblically to the building of God’s spiritual house.

The people were commended in Moses' day for contributing generously and freely to the building of God's tabernacle and we see the same sort of commendation of the churches of Macedonia when Paul wrote to the Corinthians of their generosity.

We see, too, that New Testament sacrifice is characterized as living rather than dead animal sacrifice. So Paul relates to the Roman church at Romans 12:1, "present your bodies a *living* sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." [emphasis added] The word that the Authorized Version translated as "service" is the Greek word from which we get the English word "liturgy" (*leiturgia*) and means not just any kind of service, but service to God in an official capacity.

Moving on, in the same way the tabernacle was wisely framed by Bezaleel and Aholiab, Christ too framed and continues building his church. Not only is this fact evident in a passage we have previously examined (Ephesians 2:20-22), we see it taught in other passages as well. Ephesians 4:16 demonstrates that Christ, as head of his church, supplies everything the church needs by framing it such that every joint and part contributes effectually to the whole. In a similar manner as Bezaleel and Aholiab were given special wisdom to know how to frame the house of God properly, we understand Christ to *be* the very wisdom of God in building not only the church, but all things (Proverbs 8:22-31). This same teaching, though more under the similitude of a body than a building, is found in Colossians 2:19ff. We have previously alluded to the conclusion that Paul drew from Christ supplying both the blueprint and frame: we must worship God according to his blueprint and not according to the dictates of our own wills (Colossians 2:23).

When Moses oversaw the building of God's house, he made an atonement for the house and for all its furnishings. Even though the house was built according to God's plan and framed in accordance with spiritual wisdom and skill, yet it could not be dedicated to God without an atonement being made for it. So the author of Hebrews explained, Moses "sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the

ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:21-22).

It is important that we understand this principle. Even when we follow God's prescription, it is not our own obedience that brings us into right standing (justification) before the Lord. It is only by the blood that the Old Testament tabernacle was purged (or purified) and it is by his *own* blood that Christ makes the church acceptable to God. The author of Hebrews continued on, "but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many;..." (Hebrews 9:26-28). In our examination of the right way of building Christ's church, we can never think for one moment that Christ builds his church without viewing it as justified by his own blood. The church, in order to be built according to the blueprint of the eternal architect, must be sprinkled by the precious blood of Christ (Acts 20:28; First Peter 1:18-19).

Finally, we recognize that Moses anointed with oil the tabernacle, its furnishings and its priesthood to the service of God (Exodus 40:9-16). The anointing with prescribed oil was to sanctify or set apart for God's service. In the case of the tabernacle the only anointing was the unction. In the case of the Aaronic priesthood, there was first a washing followed by an anointing with oil. The anointing of oil was expressive in a typological way of the sanctification of God's Holy Spirit.

As Moses anointed the tabernacle, its furnishings, and the Aaronic priests with holy or sanctifying oil, so does Christ also sanctify and wash his church by sending the Holy Spirit. Christ explained to his disciples on the eve of his death, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him unto you" (John 16:7). The Comforter of whom Christ spoke was the Spirit of truth (John 16:13). Similarly in Ephesians 5:26-27 Paul informed us that Christ *washes* his church as Aaron and his sons were washed in Exodus chapter forty and Numbers

chapter eight. Christ gave himself for the church for the purpose “that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”

Moses anointed in order to sanctify typically and symbolically. Christ anoints his church to fulfill that which was foreshadowed by Moses’ anointing of the tabernacle. So the church has received an actual unction from Christ, to which John referred when he wrote “the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him” (First John 2:27). At first glance this passage in First John may appear to teach that no person should teach another. As we shall see below, however, it is the *church considered as the church* that is the habitation of God’s Spirit (the anointing).

ENTRANCE OF THE GLORY

As noted above, the point of Ezekiel’s vision in the chapters under discussion is that of the returning of the glory of the Lord to the temple (Ezekiel 43:4; 44:4). The glory of the Lord coming to fill the tabernacle was also the culmination of Moses’ overseeing the building of the tabernacle. “Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle” (Exodus 40:34-35). The verb translated as “abode” in verse 35 (*shakhan*) carries in its connotation the idea of a permanent dwelling and seems to form the lexical basis for what is sometimes called the “Shekinah Glory” of the Lord.

There is a similar progression in the building of the original temple in Solomon’s day. King David, the prophet, covenantal king, and type of Christ, explained to his son Solomon that God had given him understanding of the pattern [*tabhniit*] of the permanent house of God in Jerusalem. This

house would replace the tabernacle of Moses and would therefore also be subject to receiving its blueprint from heaven. Though David did not enjoy the privilege of actually gathering all the material and overseeing the building of the temple, he was nevertheless given the blueprint which was reduced to writing and then passed along to his son Prince Solomon who undertook the building after David’s death (First Chronicles 28:19-21).¹²

Additionally the progress of the building of Solomon’s temple included the free-will offerings of God’s people. “Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the LORD: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy” (First Chronicles 29:9). The bulk of chapters two through five of Second Chronicles is taken up with the building of Solomon’s temple; chapter six with the prayer Solomon prayed at the occasion; and finally in Second Chronicles 7:1-2 Scripture relates: “Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD filled the LORD’s house.” The same event described in Second Chronicles is mentioned also in First Kings 8:10-11 where we learn “the cloud filled the house of the LORD” and “the glory of the LORD had filled the house of the LORD.”

Appropriate to the study of church polity and worship in this present day, however, is the significant fact that Scripture continues to speak of the church as the dwelling place of the true and living God. As early in his earthly ministry as Matthew 18:20, Christ promised in conjunction with the key of church discipline, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” Christ there used a participle for “gathered together” that is

¹² See also Second Chronicles 3:3ff. for more details from the blueprint that was reduced to writing.

reminiscent of the Jewish church's synagogue.¹³ The keys of the Kingdom of God, which keys include church discipline, form an integral part of Christ's building of his church in this day (see Matthew 16:18-19).

The risen Christ, who from his incarnation made his tabernacle with men (John 1:14) such that we could behold his glory as the only-begotten of the Father, made a similar promise in the end of Matthew's Gospel where he stated, "and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:20). Based upon the mediatorial authority of Christ (verse 18), the church is to go by means of its representatives to all the nations and make disciples of them (verse 19). This task of making disciples of the nations the church should accomplish by the two ordinances of baptizing (washing) and teaching the commandments of Christ (verses 19-20).¹⁴ The church has no authority either to legislate (make new conscience-binding commandments) or to invent new ordinances of worship. The promise of Christ, then, is to inhabit (be with) his church until the end of time on the basis of the preaching of the true gospel and the right administration of his worship and sacraments.

A further confirmation of this doctrine can be found in the perhaps more explicit words of the Apostle to the Gentiles (nations). Paul told the Corinthian church, "ye [plural] are God's husbandry, God's building [singular]" (First Corinthians 3:9). Paul there referred to the fact that the Corinthian church, as a true church of Christ, was the temple of the living God. Paul asked in verse 16, "Know ye not that ye [plural]

are the temple [singular] of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" The significance of the Spirit of God dwelling within the Corinthian church is an important one, for it demonstrates the chief similarity between the church and the Old Testament temple: the church of the New Testament is the place where God has chosen to place his name and where he has chosen to dwell by his Spirit.

Paul continues in verse 17 of the same chapter to inform the Corinthians and us via them, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple [singular] ye [plural] are." In this place the inspired apostle reminds us of the chief law of the temple from Ezekiel 43:12, "this is the law of the house; upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy. Behold this is the law of the house." The temple of the Lord was most holy because it was the place where the holy God chose to make his covenantal presence known. Even in Isaiah's vision in chapter six of his prophecy he saw the pre-incarnate Christ high and lifted up. And in that vision the seraphim encircled Christ, crying out "holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts." John later referred to Isaiah's vision as "when he saw [Christ's] glory, and spake of him" (cf. John 12:38-41).

We should not profane the temple of the thrice-holy God by denying in our behavior the truth of the objective and covenantal presence of the holy God with his people.

Christ dwelt (literally, pitched his tabernacle) among us and we beheld his glory, claimed the Apostle John. Paul adds to that fact the incumbent duty all church members have to strive for holiness. When Isaiah beheld the glory and holiness of Christ his response was to cry out, "I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5). As we behold the glory and the holiness of the Lord dwelling amongst his people our response should certainly be no less than that of the prophet Isaiah.

The responsibility of God's people as the holy temple of God is further accentuated by Paul in

¹³ Concerning which, see the April-June 2000 issue of *The Blue Banner* in the article "Selected Thoughts on the Synagogue."

¹⁴ Clearly men cannot make true disciples by baptizing, teaching or any other physical and human activity. Only the Holy Spirit can make true disciples. Thus we must be baptized by the Holy Spirit and taught of him to be true disciples. But the church makes external disciples by baptizing and teaching. We wish to distance ourselves from the false teaching of Rome that disciples can be made by an *ex opere operato* use of the sacraments. See our discussion of the visible/invisible distinction in future issues of *The Blue Banner* for more details on this idea.

Second Corinthians 6:16-17, where he quoted from the precept found in Exodus 29:45 and Leviticus 26:11-12. The very essence of God's covenant, we might say, is found in the fact that God has chosen a people and has chosen to dwell amongst them. Thus the very name by which Isaiah called the Mediator of the Covenant of Grace was "Immanuel," which being interpreted is "God with us" (Isaiah 7:14 cf. Matthew 1:23).

In Second Corinthians 6:16 Paul asked the rhetorical question, "what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" Lest the Corinthian saints mistakenly assume that Paul wrote of the temple in Jerusalem, he added "for ye [plural] are the temple [singular] of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Because the church is the holy temple of the living God, it has a duty to reflect that holiness as the "law of the house" (Ezekiel 43:12). Corollary to this duty to be holy even as God is holy is the further responsibility to acknowledge Christ as the sole Lawgiver and King in his church (James 4:12; Matthew 28:18-20). This dissertation hopes to draw out some of the implications of the glory of Christ and the holiness of Christ inhabiting the holy temple of his church.

From the preceding considerations, we come to the following conclusions:

(1). Ezekiel 40:2 uses the symbolism of a high mountain to signify the church's future glory (Hebrews 12:22ff; cp. Ezekiel 17:22-23; Psalm 48:3, 43; 68:17; Revelation 21:10).

(2). Ezekiel 43 contains the entrance of the glory of the Lord into his new temple.

(3). Ezekiel 47:22-23 indicates that foreigners (strangers) will be placed on the same ecclesiastical footing with the Jews. For the fulfillment of this prophecy see Galatians 3:28 and Ephesians 2:14.

(4). Both the tabernacle and the temple were significant symbols in both the Old Testament and the New Testament for the glorious church of the Lord Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:22ff.; Psalm 22:6; 27:4; 84:4; Ephesians 2:19; First Timothy

3:15; Second Corinthians 6:16; First Corinthians 3:17).

THE PRINCE OF EZEKIEL

Ezekiel's vision of the temple of the latter days includes not only the entrance or return of the glory of the Lord; he also saw Christ coming to his church as the King, or Prince, of the church. Christ shall come indeed to the throne of his kingdom and central to this idea is Ezekiel's vision of the coming Prince. A portion of the land of inheritance (the idealized nation of God) shall be for the Prince in such a way that it surrounds and protects the holy mountain of God. "And a portion shall be for the Prince on the one side and on the other side of the oblation of the holy portion...and the length shall be over against one of the portions from the west border unto the east border" (Ezekiel 45:7).

IDENTIFYING EZEKIEL'S PRINCE/PRIEST

Moreover, this Prince will be one who not only occupies the throne of his kingdom, but unlike other kings or princes of Israel, he will prepare the various offerings "to make reconciliation for the house of Israel" (Ezekiel 45:17). We should understand this Prince of whom Ezekiel wrote as different from an "ordinary prince of the realm." He will be a Prince who is also a Priest. King Uzziah attempted to burn incense upon the altar of incense in God's house and was resisted both by the priests and by God (Second Chronicles 26:16ff.). The coming King will not only burn incense, as King Uzziah was prohibited from doing, Ezekiel reported that he will go so far as to make reconciliation (*piel* binyan of the Hebrew verb "*kaphar*"). The sanctuary will be so located, according to Ezekiel's prophetic geography that it will stand in the very midst of the Prince's house (Ezekiel 48:21).

We conclude, therefore, that the Prince of whom Ezekiel wrote prophetically is none other than the Prince of Peace himself. When the city and the temple and the land are restored in accordance with the meaning of Ezekiel's vision, the glory of the Lord will dwell there and the place will then be known as *Jehovah-Shammah* (the LORD is thither). This Prince can be none other than the

one who is a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4). Melchizedek, we recall, was not only Priest of the Most High God; he was also King of Salem (i.e. “King of Peace” or “King of Jerusalem” or both). See Genesis 14:18 and much of the book of Hebrews, to be discussed in greater detail below.

Earlier in his prophecies Ezekiel referred to Christ also under the symbolism of King David, another Old Testament “type” of Christ. Ezekiel in chapter thirty-four reported the words of Jehovah thus: “And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it” (Ezekiel 34:23-24).

Of course the reference in Ezekiel chapter thirty-four is not to the original King David, but to David’s greater son. We say “David’s greater son” in referring to the coming Prince because in the same Psalm in which Messiah was called “a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek,” David referred to him as “m’lord” (Hebrew *‘adonai*), a term not only of respect, but of actual and official superiority.

Christ, during his earthly ministry, referred Psalm 110 to Messiah the Prince and posed this very puzzle. He asked the Pharisees, who had previously confessed that Messiah was the son of David after the flesh (Matthew 22:42 cp. Romans 1:3), how David could by the Spirit of God call Messiah “m’lord.” Christ put the question this way, “If David then call him Lord, how is he his son” (Matthew 22:45). Christ set forth the importance of what has come to be known as the doctrine of Christ’s hypostatic union. Messiah is not merely a descendent of David; he is also the Son of God. As such, he is David’s greater Son and the Shepherd and Prince spoken of by Ezekiel.

Not only did Ezekiel characterize the greater David as a Shepherd (see John 10:11ff.), but also as the Prince Servant of Jehovah who will be the eternal Prince of his people. “And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in

my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them” (Ezekiel 37:24).

Both of the genealogies of Christ contained in the New Testament go to some pains to demonstrate that Jesus Christ, according to his humanity, was descended from King David (Matthew 1:1, 6; Luke 3:31-32). What is the significance of Christ’s genealogy at this point? It was given by the Holy Spirit in order to demonstrate that our Lord is that Prince promised in the Davidic covenant; viz., the Prince of Ezekiel; he is that greater David; he is that one of whom the Psalmist claimed, “I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah” (Psalm 89:3-4).

Peter also understood Jesus Christ to be Messiah the Prince spoken of prophetically throughout the Old Testament. Peter, in fact, claimed that Christ was the “David” of the Psalms, understood prospectively, for the Old Testament saint. In his inspired sermon on the day of Pentecost Peter proclaimed boldly, “Therefore [David] being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption” (Acts 2:30-31). The same Prince that Ezekiel and David foresaw sitting on the throne of his kingdom (Ezekiel 45:7), Peter declared by inspiration of the Holy Ghost to be Jesus Christ in his resurrection and ascension through the heavens to the holy of holies and his own throne (see also Hebrews 4:14-16).

Thus as Edward Mack rightly stated in his definitive work *The Christ of the Old Testament*, “So Ezekiel keeps in line with all the prophets in proclaiming ‘the sure mercies of David’; the inviolability of the Messianic Covenant, which Jehovah made with David,”¹⁵ and which was, of

¹⁵ Edward Mack, *The Christ of the Old Testament* (Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1926), 115.

course, fulfilled in the life, death, and ongoing session of Jesus Christ.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO EZEKIEL

Several considerations present themselves, then, from our brief consideration of Ezekiel chapters forty to forty-eight. A right understanding of the church and a right understanding of the gospel are nearly always tied together. On the other hand, false views of church government and the gospel have also gone together historically. As Professor Stuart Robinson insightfully stated in his nineteenth century work on the subject:

“Making all due allowance for exceptions arising out of the inconsistencies of individual minds, as a general rule, it is found true that bodies of men (always more consistent, and more apt to be governed by the necessities of an inexorable logic, than individual minds) if holding any special views in theology, have corresponding views, right or wrong, of the idea and nature of the Church; and, *vice versa*, if peculiar views of the Church, then also corresponding views of theology. Thus, a Rationalistic theology is most commonly found in connection with an Erastian or an Independent theory of the Church. On the other hand, a Prelatical theory of the Church almost uniformly stands in connection with a theology of mere sacramentalism. A Calvinistic theology seldom remains long incorrupt except as held in connection with a Presbyterian theory of the church.”¹⁶

Similar to Professor Robinson’s observation, there is also a close correlation between the church and the gospel in the visions of God contained in Ezekiel’s prophecies. It is only *as the church proclaims the gospel* of Messiah the Prince that she is or becomes the high mountain filled with the glory of the LORD. Because the Lord refuses to share his glory with any other (Isaiah 42:8; 48:11 cp. Isaiah 6:3), the glory of the Lord

fills his temple only as his people cast off the idols of human imaginations and proclaim the gospel of the true and living God faithfully and fervently. Thus we assert first of all that the glory of the LORD is present in the temple only when the gospel of Jesus Christ is preached faithfully. Otherwise a so-called church is no temple of Christ, but a Baal house.

Second, the full display of the glory of the LORD’s temple is from the holiness of the mount on which it sits. Thus the gospel that is preached in the temple of Ezekiel’s prophecy must be a gospel of repentance. As God grants repentance to his people and takes the supreme place in their lives, his glory is seen in their works of repentance (Matthew 5:16, 20).

This, in turn, leads to the important observation that the distinguishing character of the temple of God as it is restored in Christ is an all-pervading holiness and sanctity. The Scottish divine Patrick Fairbairn taught us as much in his Commentary on this place in Ezekiel. The law of the house “consisted in the whole region of the temple mount being most holy. Not, as hitherto, was this characteristic to be confined to a single apartment of the temple; it was to embrace the entire circumference occupied by the symbolical institutions of the kingdom.... All were to have one character of sacredness, because all connected with them were to occupy a like position of felt nearness to God, and equally to enjoy the privilege of access to him.”¹⁷

Carl F. Keil also expressed the same idea in his introduction to the section of Ezekiel’s prophecies that run from 43:13 through 46:24. In the section which Keil characterized under the title “The New Ordinances of Divine Worship,” he commented pointedly, “But if the abode of Jehovah in the midst of His people was to have an eternal duration, Israel must *turn in uprightness of heart* to its God, and suffer itself to be renewed and sanctified in heart, mind, and spirit from within the sanctuary, through the mercy of the Lord and His Spirit. It must entirely renounce the idols to which it was formerly

¹⁶ Stuart Robinson, *The Church of God as an Essential Element of the Gospel*, (Greenville, SC: GPTS Press, 1995 reprint of Philadelphia: Joseph M. Wilson, 1858), 33.

¹⁷ Fairbairn, *op. cit.*, 481-82.

attached, and cherish with willingness of heart fellowship with its God in the temple, through the faithful fulfillment of all that He required of His people.”¹⁸

Finally, this New Testament temple of Christ is a thoroughgoing theocracy — or perhaps more accurately said, it is a thoroughgoing “Christocracy.” It has a single lawgiver (legislator) and that legislator is the eternal Christ himself (James 4:12). The preaching of the gospel in this age is therefore represented in Scripture as the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom, which has as its foundational command “repent ye.” This was the gospel that began to be preached by the herald of the king (Matthew 3:1-2), “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” So too was it the gospel preached by the King himself after John was thrown in prison, “From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” (Matthew 4:17).

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* scripturally recognizes that the church is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ (or as Matthew reports it, the kingdom of heaven) at Confession 25:2.¹⁹ Fairbairn, too recognized this to be the case in Ezekiel when he commented, “So that the pattern delineated is that of a true theocracy, having God himself for king, with the community in all its members for true denizens (citizens) of the kingdom, and acceptable ministers of righteousness before the Lord.”²⁰

IMPLICATIONS FOR CHURCH POLITY

When God’s people repent and know the shamefulfulness of their sins, then God shows them the form of his house, as Ezekiel 43:11 states. It is the duty of His people, then, to become acquainted with the rules and duties of His house. God shows His people the ordinances of His house so that they may observe and do them (Deuteronomy 29:29 cf. Matthew 28:19). Matthew Henry has well expressed the privilege and duty

of believers who live in the day of Ezekiel’s temple and the relationship the privileges and duties bear to one another:

“1. The whole church shall have the privilege of the holy of holies, that of a near access to God. All believers have now, under the gospel, boldness to enter into the holiest (Hebrews x.19), with this advantage, that whereas the high priest entered in virtue of the blood of bulls and goats, we enter in the virtue of the blood of Jesus, and, wherever we are, we have through him access to the Father. 2. The whole church shall be under a mighty obligation to press toward the perfection of holiness, as he who has called us is holy. All must now be most holy. Holiness becomes God’s house for ever, and in gospel-times more than ever. Behold this is the law of the house; let none expect the protection of it that will not submit to this law.”²¹

The holiness of God’s house, then, consists primarily in a willing submissiveness and obedience to God’s commandments for the house and the people of the house. The holiness of God’s house is directly related to the law of the house because it is obedience to the law of the house that manifests its holy character and the sanctified character of its people. Surely it was this passage that gave Thomas Witherow the idea for the title of his large book on the subject of Presbyterian church government. He titled his volume *The Form of the Christian Temple*²² because the government of the Presbyterian Church, as it is *jus divinum*, is nothing less or more than an application of Ezekiel 43:11 to the Christian Temple.

However, constitutional Presbyterianism does not stop with the statement that the church must submit to and obey the law of the house. It goes on to insist that the church may do only what is contained in the law of the house. Because there is but one legislator in the church, the Lord

²¹ Matthew Henry, *A Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., n.d.), Volume 4 Isaiah to Malachi, 993. underline in original

²² Thomas Witherow, *The Form of the Christian Temple: Being A Treatise on the Constitution of the New Testament Church* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1889), 468 pp. Hereafter Temple.

¹⁸ Keil, *op. cit.*, 283. emphasis added

¹⁹ WCF XXV.2, *Confession*, 108.

²⁰ Fairbairn, *op. cit.*, 482.

Jesus Christ Himself, the officers of the church may not bind the consciences of God's people with their own commandments, doctrines, or traditions. The southern Presbyterian theologian James Henley Thornwell has explained this principle of church government as clearly and succinctly as anyone:

“As under the old dispensation nothing connected with the worship or discipline (or government) of the church of God was left to the wisdom or discretion of man, but everything was accurately prescribed by the authority of God, so, under the new, no voice is to be heard in the household of faith but the voice of the Son of God. The power of the church is purely ministerial and declarative. She is only to hold forth the doctrine, enforce the laws, and execute the government which Christ has given her. She is to add nothing of her own to, and to subtract nothing from, what her Lord has established. Discretionary power she does not possess.”²³

By the law of the house Christ the king and legislator, whose glory fills his house, governs everything in his house — its structure, the entrances and exits and where they shall be, all the house's designs, its statutes and all its laws. The law of God's house is written in the Bible as the infallible and all-sufficient revelation of the will and character of God. The entire church throughout all ages, therefore, may observe its whole design and all its statutes, and do them. It is the law of the house.

THE POINT OF THIS EXPOSITION

The point of this dissertation is that a church that is faithful to God and to his Word is a church that is Reformed in her theology and Presbyterian in her government and organization. To the extent that Presbyterianism is found in the pages of Scripture, it must be obeyed. Everything in Scripture — every doctrine and precept — is a matter of faith and must therefore be believed and obeyed. The government of the church is no

²³ James H. Thornwell, *The Collected Writings of James Henley Thornwell*, John B. Adger and John L. Girardeau, eds. (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publications, 1873), IV.163. Hereafter *Thornwell*.

exception to the rule. We must not think that God has taken the trouble to inspire the record of such small details as the very gestures of the men who preached the gospel in Bible times, but has left out something so critical as the law of his own house. That would not only be an unwarranted presumption, it will be the purpose of this dissertation to demonstrate that it is a false one as well.²⁴

We do not claim that the form of church government must be believed unto salvation (though we do claim that saving faith does not reject any clear teaching of Scripture and that it is a sinful avoiding of Scripture teaching that leads to false views of church government).²⁵ We do understand that there is a difference between those essentials of the faith that are necessary to be believed to the saving of the soul and those less fundamental and less foundational building blocks of doctrine that are not directly related to our salvation. We agree with Thomas Witherow's statement in his booklet *The Apostolic Church: Which Is It?*: “There is such a thing as being a Presbyterian without being a Christian, as it is possible to be a Christian without being a Presbyterian. Depend upon it, it is best to be both.”²⁶

More shall be said below on the subject of the importance of our study. But surely it is clear that anything that God has revealed in his Word has an importance attached to it by virtue of being divine revelation. As Witherow pointed out nearly a century and a half ago, “Let a man once persuade himself that importance attaches only to what he is pleased to call essentials, whatever their number, and he will, no doubt, shorten his creed and cut away the foundation of many controversies; but he will practically set aside all except a very small part of the Scriptures. If such

²⁴ This dissertation covers the basic philosophy and theology of ecclesiology. It is the author's hope to follow this work with a second volume covering the details of “ecclesiology” or the polity of Scripture in its particulars.

²⁵ See WCF XIV:2, *Confession*, 63-64.

²⁶ Thomas Witherow, *The Apostolic Church: Which Is It?* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1990), 61. (Hereafter *The Apostolic Church*)

a principle does not mutilate the Bible, it stigmatizes much of it as trivial. Revelation is all gold for preciousness and purity, but the very touch of such a principle would transmute the most of it into dross.”²⁷

CONSTITUTIONAL PRESBYTERIANISM

This series of articles on church polity previously used the term “*jus divinum*.” We should not understand by that term that every last nuance of the exercise of church government is by divine right; nor should we understand that literally everything that all Presbyterian bodies have done has the stamp of approval of God’s authority. The constitutional Presbyterian maintains, as does his constitution, “that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed,” (Westminster Confession of Faith, I.6).²⁸ Nevertheless, while some circumstances such as the number of elders in a local congregation or the bounds of a presbytery may be ordered such, the church has no authority in herself to invent new offices not contained in Scripture nor to secure for herself any authority over the consciences of God’s people apart from the Word of God.

Further, this dissertation will be proposing in a subsequent installment a view of church government that might be characterized as either Constitutional Presbyterianism or Presbyterian Minimalism. Basically, Presbyterian Minimalism is the view that the church may only claim a *jus divinum* for acts that are specifically (whether by explicit or implicit warrant) designated as proper church acts by Scripture alone. One simple example would be the existence of a standing moderator of a church assembly (court). There is no basis scripturally to think that the moderator of a presbytery or a synod should continue to be the moderator of something that is not meeting

and hence requires no moderating or presiding. It is precisely in failing to follow this simple rule of minimalism that much of the mischief in American Presbyterianism has arisen. This dissertation does not claim that nothing may be regarded in a circumstantial way without Scripture warrant. It claims, rather, that such circumstances may not be imposed with the authority of a *jus divinum*, but can only claim for themselves the same place as any historical or circumstantial edict that is subject to change as the case or need changes.²⁹

This author recognizes that there are conservative denominations in this country that maintain not only standing moderators but even permanent committees. Such committees have become generally indistinguishable from independent or quasi-independent boards, however. It is the position of this dissertation that such practices as standing moderators and committees detract from a truly biblical Presbyterianism. They are at best merely circumstances of government and at worst undermine biblical polity. They have historically been precursors to one level and degree or another of apostasy. Rather, all the authority that Christ has given his church — which will be discussed in some detail in the pages to follow — resides in the *jus divinum* and not in the circumstances of church government. The circumstances of government may be useful for a season, but where a particular circumstance has outlived its usefulness it should be discarded: discarded with some considerable honor and respect no doubt, but discarded nonetheless.

THREE FUNDAMENTAL IDEAS

Three ideas surface repeatedly through discussions of church polity because they belong to the very fundamentals (the *sine qua non*) of biblical or constitutional Presbyterian church government. The first idea is that of the parity or equality of all the ministers of the Word and

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁸ WCF I.6, *Confession*, 22-23.

²⁹ See the present author's work against the Steelite error, entitled *A Defense Departed: Being a Refutation of 'A Brief Defence of Dissociation in the Present Circumstances,'* available at The Blue Banner website, <http://www.fpcr.org>.

sacraments. Biblical Presbyterianism rejects as destructive of church polity the unbiblical idea of one minister having a greater authority of office than any other. Whether we find it in Romanism, Prelacy, or Methodism, the principle of one minister being “a pastor of pastors” is foreign and even *anathema* to constitutional Presbyterianism. There are no “bishops” in the prelatic sense of that word in the Presbyterian churches. A man who ministers in a small country church has the same standing in his presbytery as does the minister of a large city congregation. Thus diocesan bishops have no place at all in a Presbyterian system.

A second important and fundamental *jus divinum* feature of constitutional Presbyterianism is the fact that the government of the church is vested in ruling elders. This biblical form of church government helps to insure the church against the encroachments of ministerial ambitions. In a perfect world with perfect people ministers would constantly remember their role as servants of Christ and his church. But, alas, we live in a world much affected by the fall of man. God has therefore, in his wisdom, not deposited church authority in the hands of a single man or the hands of men who might think there is some advantage to themselves in abusing the authority. Ecclesiastical authority is from Christ via representatives of his people. While other forms of church government may have men in office whom they designate as ruling elders or “lay” elders, it is a part of the genius of Presbyterian church government that has these biblical officers as active participants in church government at every “level” of its government. Ideally, biblical Presbyterianism would be governed in such a way that ruling elders would normally outnumber ministers in any given governing assembly.

A third and final principle of biblical Presbyterianism is that of the confederacy of like-minded churches. As much as possible Presbyterian churches attempt to demonstrate the unity of the church by connection with other churches. However, in order to be true to the first principle — that the church is finally to be governed by the Word of God alone —

connectionalism must arise from unity and not the other way around. Many well-meaning Presbyterians in our history have regarded connectionalism to be an end in itself rather than a spiritual by-product of doctrinal and practical unity. The result has been tyranny even in a church system that is designed by the Lord to exclude all tyranny. As Thomas M’Crie, the Constitutional Presbyterian, maintained in his foundational work on church unity,

“A vague and erratic charity, which soars above fixed principles of belief, looks down with neglect on external ordinances, and spurns the restraint of ordinary rules, whether it seeks to include all Christians within its catholic embrace, or confines itself to those of a favorite class, is a very feeble and precarious bond of union. True Christian charity is the daughter of truth, and fixes her objects ‘for the truth’s sake which dwells in them.’”³⁰

While this idea of church government may sound foreign to the ears of those used to hearing of permanent committees, boards, or stated moderators, it is actually the historical understanding of Presbyterianism. As Samuel Miller has well stated in his monumental *Presbyterianism: The Truly Primitive and Apostolical Constitution of the Church*, “The Presbyterian Church claims to derive her form of government from the Holy Scriptures.”³¹ It is only as the Presbyterian Church forgets that she is to derive all her government from Scripture that she gets into trouble. And at that very point, this author would claim, she also ceases to be Presbyterian. Miller further agrees on the three fundamental distinctive ideas of Presbyterianism as well and that all three are derived from Scripture: “She is persuaded that the New Testament most distinctly presents, as existing in the Apostolic Church, all the three features which constitute the peculiarities (distinctives) of her

³⁰ Thomas M’Crie, *The Unity of the Church* (Dallas: Presbyterian Heritage Publications, 1989 edition of Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1821), 25.

³¹ Samuel Miller, *Presbyterianism: The Truly Primitive And Apostolical Constitution Of The Church Of Christ*, (Dallas: Presbyterian Treasury, 1998 reprint of Presbyterian Board of Publications, 1835), 45.

ecclesiastical polity, (church government), *viz.* the parity (equality) of her ministers; the government of the church by ruling elders (representative); and the attainment of the unity and cooperation by courts of review and control (connectionalism and confederacy). She aims to avoid the unauthorized pretensions of prelacy (Episcopal church government) on the one hand, and the lax, inadequate scheme of independency (congregational church government) on the other; and to adopt that system of ministerial equality, and efficient representation in the government of the church, which at once guards, as far as possible, against the encroachments of clerical (ministerial) ambition; secures the rights of the people, and provides for the exercise of pure and wholesome discipline in the most edifying manner.”³²

This constitutional idea of *jus divinum* or Presbyterian Minimalism is not much practiced today, it is true. One important purpose in writing this dissertation is to demonstrate that modern Presbyterianism has to a great extent lost sight of its roots and then to recall it to the principle of *Scripture alone being the law of the house*. We desire to see the glory of the Lord once again fill his temple, but it also is our conviction that this will not happen until such time as Presbyterian office holders become “ashamed of their iniquities,” in adding to the Word of God and learn once again to “measure the pattern” of the house of Jehovah in accordance with the law of the house — *Sola Scriptura* (Ezekiel 43:10). ☞

Correspondence Regarding FPCR’s Ministries

Thanks so much for sending the sermon tapes. They really were edifying. I learned a lot about Calvinism and Arminianism and also about the Westminster Catechism. G.I. Palm Coast FL

I just received my first copy of *The Blue Banner*, and, after a quick perusal, would say that you give *The Standard Bearer* a run for the money in productive use of trees. Email: V.K.

Thanks for such a terrific website. Also for the 2 fine audio tapes you sent me some time ago. Email: M.H., San Diego, CA

I appreciate FPCR and *The Blue Banner*. Thank you for your service in the Lord. Email: P.O.

I want to let you know that I think your reasoning on headcoverings is the plainest explanation I have seen or heard. It just makes sense. Email: A.D., McDonough GA

I was turned on to your email discussions by one of my elders. He has expressed deep appreciation for your cogent and Scriptural arguments for the historic Reformed faith. I must say that I too am thankful to God for the wisdom and insight that He has blessed you with.. Email: B.W., Ohio

I have appreciated your contributions to several e conferences over the last 2 or 3 years....On numerous occasions I have forwarded your comments to the members of our congregations. Email: T.P.

I greatly benefited from the two free tapes that were sent to me. Thanks! Email: B.R. Lancaster SC

I have been uncomfortable with ‘theonomist’ type postings of others in the past. Thank you for responding in a clear Biblical manner to those who mistakenly are rendering unto Cæsar the things of God. Email: W.V.W.,

I connected with *Blue Banner* on the web, and have received this second issue on Daniel 4; Clark’s *God and Evil*; and the biblical doctrine of the church. I just wanted to drop a note to say thanks for a job well done. I thought the article (review?) on Clark was excellent. The article was concise and clear and helpful to those of us who continue to explore those difficult issues. *Kings and Beasts* was very practical, well-exegeted, and insightful. A really good study. I have also much to learn regarding the Church and how it functions in Biblical doctrine, so thanks for that article as well. I look forward to receiving other issues in the future. Keep up the great work. Email: R.B.

This [contribution] is to help fund the continuation of *The Blue Banner* ministry. The sermons on the web have really been a blessing to our family. Keep up the good work! S.T., Portland OR

Thanks for the free tapes I ordered from your website. I am greatly encouraged by Pastor Bacon’s teaching. In fact, I’ve got to have more. [Here is] the tapes I am requesting. I thank the great God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for your wonderful ministry and rejoice in his directing me to you. T.R., Bakersfield, CA


Let me say, that your ministry at FPCR (your web-site, at least) has been a great help and aid – a refuge for me for over two years. Before I came to certain conclusions about what reformation really meant and included, your articles helped bring me to sure convictions. Email: W.S., Branchville, NJ

³² *Ibid.*

The Mediatorial Kingdom and Glories of Jesus Christ

Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a King then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth (John 18:37).

by Samuel Davies

ings and kingdoms are the most majestic sounds in the language of mortals, and have filled the world with noise, confusions, and blood, since mankind first left the state of nature, and formed themselves into societies.¹ The disputes of kingdoms for superiority have set the world in arms from age to age, and destroyed or enslaved a considerable part of the human race; and the contest is not yet decided. Our country has been a region of peace and tranquility for a long time, but it has not been because the lust of power and riches is extinct in the world, but because we had no near neighbors, whose interest might clash with ours, or who were able to disturb us. The absence of an enemy was our sole defense. But now, when the colonies of the sundry European nations on this continent begin to enlarge, and approach towards each other, the scene is changed: now encroachments, depredations, barbarities, and all the terrors of war begin to surround and alarm us. Now our country is invaded and ravaged, and bleeds in a thousand veins. We have already, so early in the year, received alarm upon alarm: and we may expect the alarms to grow louder and louder as the season advances.

These commotions and perturbations have had one good effect upon me, and that is, they have carried away my thoughts of late into a serene and peaceful region, a region beyond the reach of confusion and violence; I mean the kingdom of the Prince of Peace. And thither, my brethren, I would also transport your minds this day, as the best refuge from this boisterous world, and the most agreeable mansion for the lovers of peace

¹ [Ed. From *The Works of Samuel Davies*. This sermon was preached in Hanover, Virginia, May 9, 1756.]

and tranquility. I find it advantageous both to you and myself, to entertain you with those subjects that have made the deepest impression upon my own mind: and this is the reason why I choose the present subject. In my text you hear one entering a claim to a kingdom, whom you would conclude, if you regarded only his outward appearance, to be the meanest and vilest of mankind. To hear a powerful prince, at the head of a victorious army, attended with all the royalties of his character, to hear such a one claim the kingdom he had acquired by force of arms, would not be strange. But here the despised Nazarene, rejected by his nation, forsaken by his followers, accused as the worst of criminals, standing defenseless at Pilate's bar, just about to be condemned and hung on a cross, like a malefactor and a slave, here he speaks in a royal style, even to his judge. *I am a King: for this purpose was I born; and for this cause came I into the world.* Strange language indeed to proceed from his lips in these circumstances! But the truth is, a great, a divine personage is concealed under this disguise; and his kingdom is of such a nature, that his abasement and crucifixion were so far from being a hindrance to it, that they were the only way to acquire it. These sufferings were meritorious; and by these he purchased his subjects, and a right to rule them.

The occasion of these words was this: the unbelieving Jews were determined to put Jesus to death as an imposter. The true reason of their opposition to him was, that he had severely exposed their hypocrisy, claimed the character of the Messiah, without answering their expectations as a temporal prince and a mighty conqueror; and introduced a new religion, which superseded the law of Moses, in which they had

been educated. But this reason they knew would have but little weight with Pilate the Roman governor, who was a heathen, and had no regard to their religion. They therefore bring a charge of another kind, which they knew would touch the governor very sensibly, and that was, that Christ had set himself up as the King of the Jews; which was treason against Cæsar the Roman emperor, under whose yoke they then were. This was all pretence and artifice. They would now seem to be very loyal to the emperor, and unable to bear with any claims inconsistent with his authority; whereas, in truth, they were impatient of a foreign government, and were watching for any opportunity to shake it off. And had Christ been really guilty of the charge they alleged against him, he would have been the more acceptable to them. Had he set himself up as King of the Jews, in opposition to Cæsar, and employed his miraculous powers to make good his claim, the whole nation would have welcomed him as their deliverer, and flocked round his standard. But Jesus came not to work a deliverance of this kind, nor to erect such a kingdom as they desired, and therefore they rejected him as an impostor. This charge, however, they bring against him, in order to carry their point with the heathen governor. They knew he was zealous for the honor and interest of Cæsar his master; and Tiberius, the then Roman emperor, was so jealous a prince, and kept so many spies over his governors in all the provinces, that they were obliged to be very circumspect, and show the strictest regard for his rights, in order to escape degradation, or severer punishment. It was this that determined Pilate, in the struggle with his conscience, to condemn the innocent Jesus. He was afraid the Jews would inform against him, as dismissing one that set up as the rival of Cæsar; and the consequence of this he well knew. The Jews were sensible of this, and therefore they insist upon this charge, and at length plainly tell him, *If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend* (John 19:12). Pilate therefore, who cared but little what innovations Christ should introduce into the Jewish religion, thought proper to inquire into this matter, and asks him, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" dost thou indeed claim such a character, which may interfere with

Cæsar's government? Jesus replies, *My kingdom is not of this world* (John 18:36); as much as to say, "I do not deny that I claim a kingdom, but it is of such a nature, that it need give no alarm to the kings of the earth. Their kingdoms are of this world, but mine is spiritual and divine,² and therefore cannot interfere with theirs. If my kingdom were of this world, like theirs, I would take the same methods with them to obtain and secure it; my servants would fight for me, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now, you see I use no such means for my defense, or to raise me to my kingdom: therefore you may be assured, my kingdom is not from hence, and can give the Roman emperor no umbrage for suspicion or uneasiness." Pilate answers to this purpose: Thou dost, however, speak of a kingdom; and *art thou a king then?* Dost thou in any sense claim that character? The poor prisoner boldly replies, *Thou sayest that I am a king;* that is, "Thou hast struck upon the truth: I am indeed a king in a certain sense, and nothing shall constrain me to renounce the title." *To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth;* "particularly to this truth, which now looks so unlikely, namely, that I am really a king. I was born to a kingdom and a crown, and came into the world to take possession of my right" (John 18:37-38). This is the great confession which St. Paul tells us our Lord witnessed before Pontius Pilate (1 Timothy 6:13). Neither the hopes of deliverance, nor the terrors of death, could cause him to retract it, or renounce his claim.

In prosecuting this subject I intend only to inquire into the nature of properties of the kingdom of Christ. And in order to render my discourse more familiar, and to adapt it to the present state of our country, I shall consider this kingdom in contrast with the kingdoms of the earth, with which we are better acquainted.

² Domitian, the Roman emperor, being apprehensive that Christ's earthly relations might claim a kingdom in his right, inquired of them concerning the nature of his kingdom, and when and where it should be set up. They replied, "It is not earthly, but heavenly and angelical, and to be set up at the end of the world." Euseb. *Eccl. Hist.* Lib. iii. Chap. 20.

The scriptures represent the Lord Jesus under a great variety of characters, which, though insufficient fully to represent him, yet in conjunction assist us to form such exalted ideas of this great personage, as mortals can reach. He is a surety, that undertook and paid the dreadful debt of obedience and suffering, which sinners owed to the divine justice and law: He is a priest, a great high priest, that once offered himself as a sacrifice for sin; and now dwells in his native heaven, at his Father's right hand, as the advocate and intercessor of his people: He is a prophet, who teaches his church in all ages by his word and spirit: He is the supreme and universal Judge, to whom men and angels are accountable; and his name is Jesus, a savior, because he saves his people from their sins. Under these august and endearing characters he is often represented. But there is one character under which he is uniformly represented, both in the Old and New Testament, and that is, that of a king, a great king invested with universal authority. And upon his appearance in the flesh, all nature, and especially the gospel-church, is represented as placed under him as his kingdom. Under this idea the Jews were taught by their prophets to look for him; and it was their understanding these predictions of some illustrious king that should rise from the house of David, in a literal and carnal sense, that occasioned their unhappy prejudices concerning the Messiah as a secular prince and conqueror. Under this idea the Lord Jesus represented himself while upon the earth, and under this idea he was published to the world by his apostles. The greatest kings of the Jewish nation, particularly David and Solomon, were types of him; and many things are primarily applied to them, which have their complete and final accomplishment in him alone. It is to him ultimately we are to apply the second psalm: *I have set my king*, says Jehovah, *upon my holy hill of Zion. Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thy inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession* (Psalm 2:6, 8). If we read the seventy-second psalm we shall easily perceive that one greater than Solomon is there. *In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. All kings*

shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him. His name shall continue for ever; his name shall endure as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him; and all nations shall call him blessed (Psalm 72: 7, 11, 17). The hundred and tenth psalm is throughout a celebration of the kingly and priestly office [sic] of Christ united. *The Lord*, says David, *said unto my Lord*, unto that divine person who is my Lord, and will also be my Son, *sit thou at my right hand*, in the highest honor and authority, *until I make thine enemies thy footstool... Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power*, and submit to thee in crowds as numerous as the drops of morning dew (Psalm 110:1-3). The evangelical prophet Isaiah is often transported with the foresight of this illustrious king, and the glorious kingdom of his grace: *Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and he shall be called...the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever* (Isaiah 9:6, 7). This is he who is described as another David in Ezekiel's prophecy, *Thus, saith the Lord, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen... And I will make them one nation... and one king shall be king to them all...even David my servant shall be king over them...* (Ezekiel 37:21, 22, 24). This is the kingdom represented to Nebuchadnezzar in his dream, as *a stone cut out without hands...* which *...became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth*. And Daniel, in expounding the dream, having described the Babylonian, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman empires, subjoins, *In the days of these kings, that is, of the Roman emperors, shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not, like the former, be left to other people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdom, and it shall stand for ever* (Daniel 2:34, 35, 44). There is no character which our Lord so often assumed in the days of his flesh as that of the Son of Man; and he no doubt alludes to a majestic vision in Daniel, the only place where this character is given him in the Old

Testament: *I saw in the night visions, says Daniel, and behold, one like the Son of Man came to the Ancient of Days, and there was given to him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed,* (Daniel 7:13, 14) like the tottering kingdoms of the earth, which are perpetually rising and falling. This is the king that Zechariah refers to when, in prospect of his triumphant entrance into Jerusalem, he calls the inhabitants to give a proper reception to so great a prince. *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy King coming unto thee,* etc. (Zechariah 9:9). Thus the prophets conspire to ascribe royal titles and a glorious kingdom to the Messiah. And these early and plain notices of him raised a general expectation of him under this royal character. It was from these prophecies concerning him as a king, that the Jews took occasion, as I observed, to look for the Messiah as a temporal prince; and it was a long time before the apostles themselves were delivered from these carnal prejudices. They were solicitous about posts of honor in that temporal kingdom which they expected he would set up: and even after his resurrection they cannot forbear asking him, *Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?* (Acts 1:6). That is, “Wilt thou now restore the Jews to their former liberty and independency, and deliver them from their present subjection to the Romans?” It was under this view that Herod was alarmed at his birth, and shed the blood of so many innocents, that he might not escape. He was afraid of him as the heir of David’s family and crown, who might dispossess him of the government; nay, he was expected by other nations under the character of a mighty king; and they no doubt learned this notion of him from the Jewish prophecies, as well as their conversation with that people. Hence the Magi, or eastern wisemen, when they came to pay homage to him upon his birth, inquired after him in this language, *Where is he that is born King of the Jews?* (Matthew 2:2). And what is still more remarkable, we are told by two heathen historians, that about the time of his appearance

a general expectation of him under this character prevailed through the world. “Many,” says Tacitus, “had a persuasion that it was contained in the ancient writings of the priest, that at that very time the east should prevail, and that some descendant from Judah should obtain the universal government.”³ Suetonius speaks to the same purpose: “An old and constant opinion,” says he, “commonly prevailed through all the east, that it was in the fates, that some should rise out of Judea who should obtain the government of the world.”⁴ This royal character Christ himself assumed, even when he conversed among mortals in the humble form of a servant. *The Father, says he, has given me power over all flesh.* (John 17:2). *Yea, all power in heaven and earth is given to me.* (Matthew 28:18). The gospel-church which he erected is most commonly called the kingdom of heaven or of God, in the evangelists: and when he was about to introduce it, this was the proclamation: *The kingdom of heaven is at hand* (Matthew 4:17). Under this character also his servants and disciples celebrated and preached him. Gabriel led the song in foretelling his birth to his mother. *He shall be great, and the Lord shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever: and of his kingdom there shall be no end* (Luke 1:32, 33). St. Peter boldly tells the murderers of Christ, *God hath made that same Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ* (Acts 2:36), *and exalted him, with his own right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour* (Acts 5:31). And St. Paul repeatedly represents him as advanced *far above principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this*

³ Fluribus persuasion inerat, antiquis sacerdotum literis contineri, eo ipso tempore fore, ut valescerat oriens, profectique Judeâ rerum potirentur. Tacit., Hist. 1. 5. p. 621.

⁴ Percrebuerat oriente toto vetus & constans opinio, effe in satis, ut eo tempore Judeâ profecti rerum potirentur. Suet., in Vesp. c. 4.

The sameness of the expectation is remarkably evident, from the sameness of the words in which these two historians express it. *Judeâ profecti rerum potirentur*. It was not only a common expectation, but it was commonly expressed in the same language.

world, but also in that which is to come: and that God hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be head over all things to his church (Ephesians 1:21, 22; Philippians 2:9-11). Yea, to him all the hosts of heaven, and even the whole creation in concert, ascribe *power and strength, and honor and glory*. (Revelation 5:12). Pilate the heathen was overruled to give a kind of accidental testimony to this truth, and to publish it to different nations, by the inscription upon the cross in the three languages then most in use, the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew: *This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews*: and all the remonstrances of the Jews could not prevail upon him to alter it. Finally, it is he that wears *upon his vesture, and upon his thigh, this name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords* (Revelation 19:16). And as his name is, so is he.

Thus you see, my brethren, by these instances, selected out of many, that the kingly character and dominion of our Lord Jesus runs through the whole Bible. That of a king is his favorite character in which he glories, and which is the most expressive of his office. And this consideration alone may convince you that this character is of the greatest importance, and worthy of your most attentive regard.

It is the mediatorial kingdom of Christ that is here intended, not that which as God he exercises over all the works of his hands: it is that kingdom which is an empire of grace, and administration of mercy over our guilty world. It is the dispensation intended for the salvation of fallen sinners of our race by the gospel; and on this account the gospel is often called the kingdom of heaven; because its happy consequences are not confined to this earth, but appear in heaven in the highest perfection, and last through all eternity. Hence, not only the church of Christ on earth, and the dispensation of the gospel, but all the saints in heaven, and that more finished economy under which they are placed, are all included in the kingdom of Christ. Here his kingdom is in its infancy, but in heaven is arrived to perfection; but it is substantially the same. Though the immediate design of this kingdom is the salvation of believers of the guilty race of man, and such are its subjects in a

peculiar sense; yet it extends to all worlds, to heaven, and earth, and hell. The whole universe is put under a mediatorial head; but then, as the apostle observes, *he is made head over all things to his church* (Ephesians 1:22), that is, for the benefit and salvation of his church. As Mediator he is carrying on a glorious scheme for the recovery of man, and all parts of the universe are interested or concern themselves in this grand event; and therefore they are all subjected to him, that he may so manage them as to promote this end, and baffle and overwhelm all opposition. The elect angels rejoice in so benevolent a design for peopling their mansions, left vacant by the fall of so many of their fellow-angels, with colonies transplanted from our world, from a race of creatures that they had given up for lost. And therefore Christ, as a Mediator, is made the head of all the heavenly armies, and he employs them as *his ministering spirits, to minister to them that are heirs of salvation* (Hebrews 1:14). These glorious creatures are always on the wing ready to discharge his orders in any part of his vast empire, and delight to be employed in the services of his mediatorial kingdom. This is also an event in which the fallen angels deeply interest themselves; they have united all their force and art for near six thousand years to disturb and subvert his kingdom, and blast the designs of redeeming love; they therefore are all subjected to the control of Christ, and he shortens and lengthens their chains as he pleases, and they cannot go a hair's breath beyond his permission. The scriptures represent our world in its state of guilt and misery as the kingdom of Satan; sinners, while slaves to sin, are his subjects; and every act of disobedience against God is an act of homage to this infernal prince. Hence Satan is called *the God of this world*, (2 Corinthians 4:4), *the prince of this world* (John 12:31), *the power of darkness* (Luke 22:53), *the prince of the power of the air, the Spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience* (Ephesians 2:2). And sinners are said to be *taken captive by him at his will* (2 Timothy 2:26). Hence also the ministers of Christ, who are employed to recover sinners to a state of holiness and happiness, are represented as soldiers armed for war; not indeed with carnal weapons, but with

those which are spiritual, plain truth arguments, and miracles; and *these are made mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ* (2 Corinthians 10: 3-5). And Christians in general are represented as *wrestling, not with flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places* (Ephesians 6:12). Hence also in particular it is that the death of Christ is represented not as a defeat, but as an illustrious conquest gained over the powers of hell; because, by this means a way was opened for the deliverance of sinners from under their power, and restoring them into liberty and the favor of God. By that strange contemptible weapon, the cross, and by the glorious resurrection of Jesus, he *spoiled principalities and powers, and made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them* (Colossians 2:15). *Through death*, says the apostle, *he destroyed him that had the power of death; that is, the devil* (Hebrews 2:14). Had not Christ by his death offered a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of men, they would have continued for ever under the tyranny of Satan; but he has purchased liberty, life, and salvation for them; and thus he hath destroyed the kingdom of darkness, and translated multitudes from it into his own gracious and glorious kingdom.

Hence, upon the right of redemption, his mediatorial authority extends to the infernal regions, and he controls and restrains those malignant, mighty, and turbulent potentates, according to his pleasure. Farther, the inanimate world is connected with our Lord's design to save sinners, and therefore is subjected to him as Mediator. He causes the sun to rise, the rain to fall, and the earth to yield her increase, to furnish provision for the subjects of his grace, and to raise, support and accommodate heirs for his heavenly kingdom. As for the sons of men, who are more immediately concerned in this kingdom, and for whose sake it was erected, they are all its subjects; but then they are of different

sorts, according to their characters. Multitudes are rebels against his government; that is, they do not voluntarily submit to his authority, nor choose they to do his service: they will not obey his laws. But they are his subjects notwithstanding; that is, he rules and manages them as he pleases, whether they will or not. This power is necessary to carry on successfully his gracious design towards his people; for unless he had the management of his enemies, they might baffle his undertaking, and successfully counteract the purposes of his love. The kings of the earth, as well as vulgar rebels of a private character, have often set themselves against his kingdom, and sometimes they have flattered themselves they had entirely demolished it.⁵ But Jesus reigns absolute and supreme over the kings of the earth, and overrules and controls them as he thinks proper; and he disposes all the revolutions, the rises and falls of kingdoms and empires, so as to be subservient to the great designs of his mediation; and their united policies and powers cannot frustrate the work which he has undertaken. But besides these rebellious involuntary subjects, he has (blessed be his name!) gained the consent of thousand, and they have become his willing subjects by their own choice. They regard his authority, they love his government, they make it their study to please him, and to do his will. Over these he exercises a government of special grace here, and he will make them the happy subjects of the kingdom of his glory hereafter. And it is his government over these that I intend more particularly to consider. Once more, the kingdom of Jesus is not confined to this world, but all the millions of mankind in the invisible world are under his dominion, and will continue so to everlasting ages, *He is the Lord of the dead and the living* (Romans 14:9), and has the keys of Hades, the vast invisible world (including heaven as well as hell) and of death (Revelation 1:18). It is he that turns the key, and opens the door of death for mortals to pass from world to world: it is he that opens the gates of heaven, and

⁵In the 10th and last Roman persecution, Dioclesian had a medal struck with this inscription, "The Christian name demolished, and the worship of the gods restored."

welcomes and admits the nations that keep the commandments of God: and it is he that opens the prison of hell, and locks it fast upon the prisoners of divine justice. He will for ever exercise authority over the vast regions of the unseen world, and the unnumbered multitudes of spirits with which they are peopled. You hence see, my brethren, the universal extent of the Redeemer's kingdom; and in this respect how much does it differ from all the kingdoms of the earth? The kingdoms of Great Britain, France, China, Persia, are but little spots of the globe. Our world has indeed been oppressed in former times with what mortals call universal monarchies; such were the Babylonian, the Persian, the Grecian, and especially the Roman. But in truth, these were so far from being strictly universal, that a considerable part of the habitable earth was not so much as known to them. But this is an empire strictly universal. It extends over land and sea; it reaches beyond the planetary worlds, and all the luminaries of heaven; nay, beyond the throne of the most exalted archangels, and downward to the lowest abyss in hell. A universal empire in the hands of a mortal is a huge, unwieldy thing; a heap of confusion; a burden to mankind; and it has always rushed headlong from its glory, and fallen to pieces by its own weight. But Jesus is equal to the immense province of an empire strictly universal: his hand is able to hold the reins; and it is the blessing of our world to be under his administration. He will turn what appears to us scenes of confusion into perfect order, and convince all worlds that he has not taken one wrong step in the whole plan of his infinite government.

The kingdoms of the world have their laws and ordinances, and so has the kingdom of Christ. Look into you Bibles, and there you will find the laws of this kingdom, from its first foundation immediately upon the fall of man. The laws of human governments are often defective or unrighteous; but these are perfect, holy, just, and good. Human laws are enforced with sanctions; but the rewards and punishments can only affect our mortal bodies, and cannot reach beyond the present life: but the sanctions of these divine

laws are eternal, and there never shall be an end to their execution. Everlasting happiness and everlasting misery, of the most exquisite kind and the highest degree, are the rewards and punishments which the immortal King distributes among his immortal subjects; and they become his character and are adapted to their nature.

Human laws extend only to outward actions, but these laws reach the heart, and the principle of action within. Not a secret thought, not a motion of the soul, is exempted from them. If the subjects of earthly kings observe a decorum in their outward conduct, and give no visible evidence of disloyalty, they are treated as good subjects, though they should be enemies in their hearts. "But Jesus is the Lord of souls;" he makes his subjects bow their hearts as well as the knee to him. He sweetly commands their thoughts and affections as well as their external practice, and makes himself inwardly beloved as well as outwardly obeyed. His subjects are such on whom he may depend: they are all ready to lay down their lives for him. Love, cordial, unfeigned, ardent love, is the principle of all their obedience; and hence it is that his commandments are not grievous, but delightful to them.

Other kings have their ministers and officers of state. In like manner Jesus employs the armies of heaven as ministering spirits in his mediatorial kingdom: besides these he has ministers, of a humbler form, who negotiate more immediately in his name with mankind. These are entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation, to beseech men, in his stead, to be reconciled to God. These are appointed to preach his word, to administer his ordinances, and to manage the affairs of his kingdom. This view gives a peculiar dignity and importance to this office. These should be adorned, not like ministers of earthly courts, with the trappings of gold and silver, but with the beauties of holiness, the ornament of a meek and quiet, zealous and faithful spirit, and a life becoming the gospel of Christ.

Other kings have their soldiers; so all the legions of the elect angels, the armies of heaven, are the soldiers of Jesus Christ, and under his command. This he asserted when he was in such

defenseless circumstances, that he seemed to be abandoned by heaven and earth. I could pray to my Father, says he, and he would send *me more than twelve legions of angels* (Matthew 26:53). I cannot forbear reading to you one of the most majestic descriptions of this all-conquering hero and his army, which the language of mortality is capable of (Revelation 19:11-16). *I saw heaven open*, says St. John, *and behold a white horse*, an emblem of victory and triumph, *and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True*. How different a character from that of mortal conquerors! *And in righteousness he doth judge and make war*. War is generally a scene of injustice and lawless violence; and those plagues of mankind we call heroes and warriors, use their arms to gratify their own avarice or ambition, and make encroachments upon others. Jesus, Prince of Peace, makes war too, but it is in righteousness; it is in the cause of righteousness he takes up arms. The divine description proceeds: *His eyes were as a flame of fire; and on his head were many crowns*, emblems of his manifold authority over the various kingdoms of the world, and the various regions of the universe. *And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood*, in the blood of his enemies; *and his name was called, The Word of God: and the armies which were in heaven, followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean*: the whitest innocence and purity, and the beauties of holiness are, as it were, the uniform, the regimentals of these celestial armies. *And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God; and he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords*. In what manner the war is carried on between the armies of heaven and the powers of hell, we know not; but that there is really something of this kind, we may infer from Revelation 12:7-9. *There was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent called the Devil and Satan*.

Thus you see all the host of heaven are volunteers under the Captain of our salvation. Nay, he marshals the stars, and calls them by their names. *The stars in their courses*, says the sublime Deborah, *fought against Sisera*, the enemy of God's people (Judges 5:20). Every part of the creation serves under him, and he can commission a gnat, or a fly, or the meanest insect, to be the executioner of his enemies. Fire and water, hurricanes and earthquakes; earthquakes which have so lately shattered so great a part of our globe, now tottering with age, and ready to fall to pieces, and bury the guilty inhabitants in its ruins, all these fight under him, and conspire to avenge his quarrel with the guilty sons of men. The subjects of his grace in particular are all so many soldiers; their life is a constant warfare; and they are incessantly engaged in hard conflict with temptations from without, and the insurrections of sin from within. Sometimes, alas! they fall; but their General lifts them up again, and inspires them with strength to renew the fight. They fight most successfully upon their knees. This is the most advantageous posture for the soldiers of Jesus Christ; for prayer brings down recruits from heaven in the hour of difficulty. They are indeed but poor weaklings and invalids; and yet they overcome, through the blood of the Lamb; and he makes them conquerors, yea more than conquerors. It is the military character of Christians that gives the apostle occasion to address them in the military style, like a general at the head of his army (Ephesians 6:10, 11, 14-18). *Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil... Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication*. The ministers of the gospel in particular, and especially the apostles, are soldiers, or officers, in the spiritual army. Hence St. Paul speaks of his office, in the military style;

I have, says he, fought the good fight (2 Timothy 4:7). *We war, says he, though it be not after the flesh.* The humble doctrines of the cross are our weapons, and these are mighty through God, *to demolish the strong holds* of the prince of darkness, and to bring every thought into a joyful captivity to the obedience of faith (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). *Fight the good fight,* says he to Timothy (1 Timothy 6:12). And again, *thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ* (2 Timothy 2:3). The great design of the gospel ministry is to rescue enslaved souls from the tyranny of sin and Satan, and to recover them into a state of liberty and loyalty to Jesus Christ; or, in the words of the apostle, *to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God* (Acts 26:18). Mortals indeed are very unequal for the conflict; but their success more conspicuously shows that the *excellency of the power is of God* (2 Corinthians 4:7): and many have they subdued, through his strength, to the obedience of faith, and make the willing captives of the cross of our divine Immanuel. Other kingdoms are often founded in blood, and many lives are lost on both sides in acquiring them. The kingdom of Christ, too, was founded in blood; but it was the blood of his own heart: life was lost in the conflict; but it was his own; his own life lost, to purchase life for his people. Others have waded to empire through the blood of mankind, and even of their own subjects, but Christ shed only his own blood to spare that of his soldiers. The general devotes his life as a sacrifice to save his army. The Fabii and Decii of Rome, who devoted themselves for their country, were but faint shadows of this divine bravery. O! the generous patriotism, the ardent love of the Captain of our salvation! How amiable does his character appear, in contrast with that of the kings of earth! They often sacrifice the lives of their subjects, while they keep themselves out of danger, or perhaps are rioting at ease in the pleasures and luxuries of a court; but Jesus engaged the conflict with death and hell alone. He stood a single champion in a field of blood. He conquered for his people by falling himself: he subdued his and their enemies by resigning himself to their power. Worthy is such a general to be commander in chief of the hosts of God,

and to lead the armies of heaven and earth! Indeed much blood has been shed in carrying on this kingdom. The earth has been soaked with the blood of the saints; and millions have resisted even unto blood, striving against sin, and nobly laid down their lives for the sake of Christ and a good conscience. Rome has been remarkably the seat of persecution; both formerly under the heathen emperors, and in latter times, under a succession of popes, still more bloody and tyrannical. There were no less than ten general persecutions under the heathen emperors, through the vast Roman empire, in a little more than two hundred years, which followed one another in a close succession; in which innumerable multitudes of Christians lost their lives by an endless variety of tortures. And since the church of Rome has usurped her authority, the blood of the saints has hardly every ceased running in some country or other, though, blessed be God, many kingdoms shook off the yoke at the every-memorable period of the Reformation, above two hundred years ago; which has greatly weakened that persecuting power. This is that mystical Babylon which was represented to St. John as *drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus* (Revelation 17:6). *In her was found the blood of the prophets, and of the saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth* (Revelation 18:24). And these scenes of blood are still perpetrated in France, that plague of Europe, that has of late stretched her murderous arm across the wide ocean to disturb us in these regions of peace. There the Protestants are still plundered, chained to the galleys, broken alive upon the torturing wheel, denied the poor favor of abandoning their country and their all, and flying naked to beg their bread in other nations. Thus the harmless subjects of the Prince of Peace have ever been slaughtered from age to age, and yet they are represented as triumphant conquerors. Hear a poor persecuted Paul on this head: In tribulation, in distress, in persecution, in nakedness, in peril and sword, we are conquerors, *we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us* (Romans 8:35, 37).

Thanks be to God who always causeth us to triumph in Christ. (2 Corinthians 2:14). *Whatsoever is born of God,* says the Evangelist, *overcometh the world* (1 John 5:4). Whence came that glorious army which we so often see in the Revelation? We are told, *they came out of great tribulation* (Revelation 7:14). *And they overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death* (Revelation 12:11). They that suffered tortures and death under the beast, are said to *have gotten the victory over him* (Revelation 15:2). Victory and triumph sound strange when thus ascribed; but the gospel helps us to understand this mystery. By these sufferings they obtained the illustrious crown of martyrdom, and peculiar degrees of glory and happiness through an endless duration. Their death was but a short transition from the lowest and more remote regions of their Redeemer's kingdom into his immediate presence and glorious court in heaven. A temporal death is rewarded with an immortal life; and *their light afflictions, which were but for a moment, wrought out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory* (2 Corinthians 4:17). Even in the agonies of torture their souls were often filled with such delightful sensations of the love of God, as swallowed up the sensations of bodily pain; and a bed of flames was sweeter to them than a bed of roses. Their souls were beyond the reach of all the instruments of torment; and as to their bodies they shall yet have a glorious resurrection to a blessed immortality. And now I leave you to judge, whether they or their enemies got the victory in the conflict; and which had most cause to triumph. Like their Master, they rose by falling; they triumphed over their enemies by submitting, like lambs, to their power. If the soldiers of other generals die in the field, it is not in the power of their commanders to reward them. But the soldiers of Jesus Christ, by dying, are, as it were, carried in triumph from the field of blood into the presence of their Master, to receive his approbation, and a glorious crown. Death puts them into a capacity of receiving and enjoying greater rewards than they are capable of in the present state. And thus it appears, that his soldiers always win the day; or, as the apostle

expresses it, *he causes them always to triumph;* and not one of them has ever been or every shall be defeated, however weak and helpless in himself, and however terrible the power of his enemies. And O! when all these warriors meet at length from every corner of the earth, and, as it were, pass in review before their General in the fields of heaven, with their robes washed in his blood, with palms of victory in their hands, and crowns of glory on their heads, all dressed in uniform with garments of salvation, what a glorious army will they make! and how will they cause heaven to ring with shouts of joy and triumph!

The founders of earthly kingdoms are famous for their heroic actions. They have braved the dangers of sea and land, routed powerful armies, and subjected nations to their will. They have shed rivers of blood, laid cities in ruins, and countries in desolation. These are the exploits which have rendered the Alexanders, the Cæsars, and other conquerors of this world, famous through all nations and ages. Jesus had his exploits too; but they were all of the gracious and beneficent kind. His conquests were so many deliverances, and his victories salvations. He subdued, in order to set free; and made captives to deliver them from slavery. He conquered the legions of hell, that seemed let loose at that time, that he might have opportunity of displaying his power over them, and that mankind might be sensible how much they needed a deliverer from their tyranny. He triumphed over the temptations of Satan in the wilderness, by a quotation from his own word. He rescued wretched creatures from his power by an almighty command. He conquered the most inveterate and stubborn diseases, and restored health and vigor with a word of his mouth. He vanquished stubborn souls with the power of his love, and made them his willing people. He triumphed over death, the king of terrors, and delivered Lazarus from the prison of the grave, as an earnest and firstfruits of a general resurrection. Nay, by his own inherent powers he broke the bonds of death, and forced his way to his native heaven. He destroyed him that had the power of death, *i.e.*, the devil, by his own death, and laid the

foundation in his own blood for destroying his usurped kingdom, and forming a glorious kingdom of willing subjects redeemed from his tyranny.

The death of some great conquerors, particularly of Julius Cæsar, is said to be prognosticated or attended with prodigies: but none equal to those which solemnized the death of Jesus. The earth trembled, the rocks were burst to pieces, the veil of the temple was rent, the heavens were clothed in mourning, and the dead started into life. And no wonder, when the Lord of nature was expiring upon a cross. He subdued and calmed the stormy wind, and the boisterous waves of the sea. In short, he showed an absolute sovereignty over universal nature, and managed the most unruly elements with a single word. Other conquerors have gone from country to country, carrying desolation along with them; Jesus went about doing good. His miraculous powers were but powers of miraculous mercy and beneficence. He could easily have advanced himself to a temporal kingdom, and routed all the forces of the earth, but he had no ambition of this kind. He that raised Lazarus from the grave could easily restore his soldiers to vigor and life, after they had been wounded or killed. He that fed five thousand with five loaves and two fishes, could have supported his army with plenty of provision in the greatest scarcity. He that walked upon the boisterous ocean, and enabled Peter to do the same, could easily have transported his forces from country to country, without conveyance of ships. Nay, he was capable by his own single power to have gained universal conquest. What could all the armies of the earth have done against him, who struck an armed company down to the earth with only a word of his mouth? But these were not the victories he affected: Victories of grace, deliverances for the oppressed, salvation for the lost; these were his heroic actions. He glories in his being mighty to save (Isaiah 63:1). When his warm disciples made a motion that he should employ his miraculous powers to punish the Samaritans who ungratefully refused him entertainment, he rebuked them and answered like the Prince of Peace, *The Son of man is not*

come to destroy men's lives, but to save (Luke 9:56). *He came to seek and to save that which was lost* (Luke 19:10). O how amiable a character this! How much more lovely the Savior of sinners, the Deliverer of souls, than the enslavers and destroyers of mankind; which is the general character of the renowned heroes of our world? Who has ever performed such truly heroic and brave actions as this almighty conqueror? He has pardoned the most aggravated crimes, in a consistency with the honors of the divine government: he has delivered an innumerable multitude of immortal souls from the tyranny of sin and powers of hell, set the prisoners free, and brought them into the liberty of the Son of God; he has peopled heaven with redeemed slaves, and advance them to royal dignity. *All his subjects are kings* (Revelation. 1:6). *To him that overcometh, says he, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my father in his throne* (Revelation 3:21). They shall all be adorned with royal robes and crowns of unfading glory. They are advanced to empire over their lusts and passions, and all their enemies. Who ever gave such encouragement to his soldiers as this, *If we suffer with him, we know we shall also reign with him?* (2 Timothy 2:12). What mortal general could bestow immortality and perfect happiness upon his favorites? But these boundless blessings Jesus has to bestow. In human governments merit is often neglected, and those who serve their country best are often rewarded with degradation. But none have ever served the King of kings in vain. The least good action, even the giving a cup of water to one of his necessitous saints, shall not pass unrewarded in his government.

Other kings have their arms, their swords, their cannon, and other instruments of destruction; and with these they acquire and defend their dominions. Jesus, our king, has his arms too, but O! of how different a kind! The force of evidence and conviction in his doctrine, attested with miracles, the energy of his dying love, the gentle, and yet efficacious influence of his Holy Spirit; these are the weapons with which he conquered the world. His gospel is the great

magazine from whence his apostles, the first founders of his kingdom, drew their arms; and with these they subdued the nations to the obedience of faith. *The gospel*, says St. Paul, *is the power of God unto salvation*. (Romans 1:16). The humble doctrines of the cross became almighty, and bore down all before them, and after a time subdued the vast Roman empire which had subdued the world. The Holy Spirit gave edge and force to these weapons; and, blessed be God, though they are quite impotent without his assistance, yet when he concurs they are still successful. Many stubborn sinners have been unable to resist the preaching of Christ crucified: they have found him indeed the power of God. And is it not astonishing that anyone should be able to stand it out against his dying love, and continue the enemy of his cross? *I*, says he, *if I be lifted up from the earth*, i.e. if I be suspended on the cross, *will draw all men unto me* (John 12:32). You see he expected his cross would be an irresistible weapon. And O! blessed Jesus, who can see thee expiring there in agonies of torture and love; who can see thy blood gushing in streams from every vein, who can hear thee there, and not melt into submission at thy feet! Is there one heart in this assembly proof against the energy of this bleeding, agonizing, dying love? Methinks such a sight must kindle a correspondent affection in your hearts towards him; and it is an exploit of wickedness, it is the last desperate effort of an impenetrable heart, to be able to resist.

Other conquerors march at the head of their troops, with all the ensigns of power and grandeur, and their forces numerous, inured to war, and well armed: and from such appearances and preparations who is there but what expects victory? But see the despised Nazarene, without riches, without arms, without forces, conflicting with the united powers of earth and hell; or see a company of poor fishermen and a tentmaker, with no other powers but those of doing good, with no other arms but those of reason, and the strange unpopular doctrines of a crucified Christ! see the professed followers of a master that was hung like a malefactor and a slave, see these men marching out to encounter the powers of

darkness, the whole strength of the Roman empire, the lusts, prejudices, and interests of all nations, and traveling from country to country, without guards, without friends, exposed to insult and contempt, to the rage of persecution, to all manner of tormented deaths which earth or hell could invent: see this little army marching into the wide world, in these circumstances, and can you expect they will have any success? Does this appear a promising expedition? No; human reason would forebode they will soon be cut in pieces, and the Christian cause buried with them. But these unpromising champions, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, conquered the world, and spread the religion of the crucified Jesus among all nations. It is true they lost their lives in the cause, like brave soldiers; but the cause did not die with them. Their blood proved the seed of the church. Their cause is immortal and invincible. Let devils in hell, let heathens, Jews, and Mahometans, let atheists, free-thinkers, papists, and persecutors of every character, do their worst; still this cause will live in spite of them. All the enemies of Christ will be obliged to confess at last, with Julian the apostate Roman emperor, who exerted all his art to abolish Christianity; but, when mortally wounded in battle, outrageously sprinkled his blood towards heaven, and cried out, *Vicisti, O Galilæe!* "Thou hast conquered, O Galilean!" Yes, my brethren, Jesus, the Prophet of Galilee, will push his conquests from country to country, until all nations submit to him. And, blessed be his name, his victorious arm has reached to us in these ends of the earth: here he has subdued some obstinate rebels, and made their reluctant souls willingly bow in affectionate homage to him. And may I not produce some of you as the trophies of his victory? Has he not rooted out the enmity of your carnal minds, and sweetly constrained you to the most affectionate obedience? Thus, blessed Jesus! thus go on conquering, and to conquer. *Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty!* (Psalm 45:3, 4), and in thy glory and *majesty ride prosperously* through our land, and make this country a dutiful province of the dominion of thy grace. My brethren, should we all become his willing subjects, he would no longer suffer the perfidious slaves of France, and their savage

allies, to chastise and punish us for our rebellion against him; but *peace should again run down like a river, and righteousness like a mighty stream.*⁶

The kingdoms of the world have their rise, their progress, perfection, declension, and ruin. And in these things, the kingdom of Christ bears some resemblance to them, excepting that it shall never have an end.

Its rise was small at first, and it has passed through many revolutions in various ages. It was first founded in the family of Adam, but in about 1600 years, the space between the creation and the flood, it was almost demolished by the wickedness of the world; and at length confined to the little family of Noah. After the flood, the world soon fell into idolatry, but, that his kingdom of Christ might not be destroyed quite, it was erected in the family of Abraham; and among the Jews it continued until the coming of Christ in the flesh. This was indeed but the infancy of his kingdom, and indeed is seldom called by that name. It is the gospel constitution that is represented as the kingdom of Christ, in a special sense. This was but very small and unpromising at first. When its founder was dying upon Calvary, and all his followers had forsaken him and fled, who would have thought it would ever have come to any thing, every have recovered? But it revived with him; and, when he furnished his apostles with gifts and graces for their mission, and sent them forth to increase his kingdom, it made its progress through the world with amazing rapidity, notwithstanding it met with very early and powerful opposition. The Jews set themselves against it, and raised persecutions against its ministers, wherever they went. And presently the tyrant Nero employed all the power of the Roman empire to crush them. Peter, Paul, and thousands of the Christians fell a prey to his rage, like sheep for the slaughter. This persecution was continued under his successors, with but little interruption, for about two hundred years.

⁶ [Ed. Davies likely has Amos 5:24 in mind, where the prophet states "let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream."]

But, under all these pressures, the church bore up her head; yea, the more she was trodden, the more she spread and flourished; and at length she was delivered from oppression by Constantine the Great, about the year 320. But now she had a more dangerous enemy to encounter, I mean prosperity: and this did her much more injury than all the persecutions of her enemies. Now the kingdom of Christ began to be corrupted with heresies: the ministry of the gospel, formerly the most dangerous posts in the world, now became a place of honor and profit, and men began to thrust themselves into it from principles of avarice and ambition; superstition and corruption of morals increased; and at length the bishop of Rome set up for universal head of the church in the year 606, and gradually the whole monstrous system of popery was formed and established, and continued in force for near a thousand years. The kingdom of Christ was now at low ebb; and tyranny and superstition reigned under that name over the greatest part of the Christian world. Nevertheless our Lord still had his witnesses. The Waldenses and Albigenses, John Hus, and Jerome of Prague, and Wickliffe in England, opposed the torrent of corruption; until at length, Luther, Calvin, Zuinglius, and several others, were made the honored instruments of introducing the Reformation from popery; when sundry whole kingdoms, which had given their power to the beast, and particularly our mother-country, shook off the papal authority, and admitted the pure light of the gospel. Since that time the kingdom of Christ has struggled hard, and it has lost ground in several countries; particularly in France, Poland, Bohemia, etc. where there once were many Protestant churches; but they are now in ruins. And, alas! those countries that still retain the Reformed religion, have too generally reduced it into a mere formality; and it has but little influence upon the hearts and lives even of its professors. Thus we find the case remarkably among us. This gracious kingdom makes but little way in Virginia. The calamities of war and famine cannot, alas! draw subjects to it; but we seem generally determined to perish in our rebellion rather than submit. Thus it has been in this country from its first settlement; and how

long it will continue in this situation is unknown to mortals; however, this we may know, it will not be so always. We have the strongest assurances that Jesus will yet take to him his great power, and reign in a more extensive and illustrious manner than he has ever yet done; and that the kingdoms of the earth shall yet become *the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ* (Revelation 11:14). There are various parts of the heathen world where the gospel has never yet been; and the Jews have never yet been converted as a nation; but both the calling of the Jews and the fullness of the Gentiles, you will find plainly foretold in the 11th chapter to the Romans; and it is, no doubt, to render the accomplishment of this event the more conspicuous, that the Jews, who are dispersed all over the world, have, by a strange, unprecedented, and singular providence, been kept a distinct people to this day, for 1700 years; though all other nations have been so mixed and blended together, who were not half so much dispersed into different countries, that their distinct original cannot be traced. Posterity shall see this glorious event in some happy future period. How far it is from us, I will not determine: though, upon some grounds, I apprehend it is not very remote. I shall live and die in the unshaken belief that our guilty world shall yet see glorious days. Yes, my brethren, this despised gospel, that has so little effect in our age and country, shall yet shine like lightning, or like the sun, through all the dark regions of the earth. It shall triumph over heathenism, Mahometism, Judaism, Popery, and all those dangerous errors that have infected the Christian church. This gospel, poor Negroes, shall yet reach your countrymen, whom you left behind you in Africa, in darkness and shadow of death, and bless your eyes with the light of salvation: and the Indian savages, that are now ravaging our country, shall yet be transformed into lambs and doves by the gospel of peace. The scheme of Providence is not yet completed, and much remains to be accomplished of what God has spoken by his prophets, to ripen the world for the

universal judgment; but when all these things are finished, then proclamation shall be made through all nature, *That Time shall be no more* (Revelation 10:6): then the Supreme Judge, the same Jesus that ascended the cross, will ascend the throne, and review the affairs of time: then will he put an end to the present course of nature, and the present form of administration. Then shall heaven and hell be filled with their respective inhabitants: then will time close, and eternity run on in one uniform tenor, without end. But the kingdom of Christ, though altered in its situation and form of government, will not then come to a conclusion. His kingdom is strictly the kingdom of heaven; and at the end of this world, his subjects will only be removed from these lower regions into a more glorious country, where they and their King shall live together for ever in the most endearing intimacy; where the noise and commotions of this restless world, and the revolutions and perturbations of kingdoms, the errors of war and persecution, shall no more reach them, but all will be perfect peace, love, and happiness, through immeasurable duration. This is the last and most illustrious state of the kingdom of Christ, now so small and weak in appearance: this is the final grand result of his administration; and it will appear to admiring worlds wisely planned, gloriously executed, and perfectly finished.

What conqueror ever erected such a kingdom!
What subjects so completely, so lastingly happy,
as those of the blessed Jesus! ☞

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Westminster Larger Catechism 7

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"God is a Spirit, in and of himself infinite in being, glory, blessedness, and perfection; all-sufficient, eternal, unchangeable, incomprehensible, everywhere present, almighty, knowing all things, most wise, most holy, most just, most merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth."

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G I Williamson

Defense of the Regulative Principle of Worship

A Critique of Pastor Steve Schlissel's "All I Really Need to Know About Worship — I Don't Learn From the Regulative Principle"

An Elder Statesman of the Reformed Faith, G I Williamson responds to the series of articles that Pastor Steve Schlissel recently published that was seemingly intended to undermine the principle of *sola Scriptura* as it applies to our worship, commonly called in our day, the *Regulative Principle of Worship*.

This critique was published in our January/March 2000 issue. If you missed it or if you want more copies to distribute, they are now available.

Pricing: 1-9 \$1.25 each, 10 for \$6.00, 25 or more for 0.40/each. Postage extra

A New Psalter!

The Comprehensive Psalter The Psalms of David

Divided into settings for use in Private and Public Worship

Special Prepublication Price: \$10.00

The lack of a well-built, affordable, comprehensive Psalter, true to the Hebrew Text, has long been the bane of the Reformed community. There are other Psalters that can most charitably be described as “paraphrastic,” but often the Psalms are unrecognizable. Others have words only, with no music available. Some have words and music, but are not sturdy enough to stand up to frequent use, and therefore are not appropriate as pew Psalters. Some have only a few Psalms or a few tunes and miss out on the richness of the entire Psalter. A good Psalter, when available, is often priced too high to be affordable for many congregations and individuals. Blue Banner Books has tried to address these problems as we developed our soon-to-be-published *Comprehensive Psalter*.

The Comprehensive Psalter is both old and new. It is old because the versification actually dates from 1650. It is new because the layout of the Psalm settings has never before been as *useful* as it is in this Psalter. This layout is designed to make the Psalter more helpful to those who desire to sing the Psalms every day of their lives.

There are 312 standard Psalm settings. This gives the user of *The Comprehensive Psalter* six Psalm settings (or “Psalter selections”) — one for each weekday plus Saturday — for the 52 weeks in one year. Using this plan, one can sing entirely through the Psalter once every year. At First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett, we sing those same six Psalm selections in our public worship the following Sunday. Utilizing this plan, one can sing entirely through the Psalter twice every year: once during the week in family or personal worship, and then again on Sundays in public worship.

The overwhelming majority of Psalm selections in *The Comprehensive Psalter* are in common meter. One could actually sing the entirety of the Book of Psalms knowing only a few common tunes. However, nearly 200 tunes were selected for the Psalm settings in *The Comprehensive Psalter*. Most are easily learned and sung. There are additional tunes, along with alternative versifications of some of the Psalms, in the back of the Psalter, giving the Psalm-singer numerous options to find an easier, or more familiar, tune.

The Psalter Committee of FPCR and Blue Banner Books complete this work with the desire that many of God’s people will have His Word in their mouths day by day and week by week. There are numerous reasons for singing the Psalms. At the top of the list is the simple reason that these are the very songs written by God the Holy Spirit. Further, Christ has promised to sing them together with his people in the midst of the great congregation (Hebrews 2:12 cf. Psalm 22:22). Finally, we should sing the Psalms because they are the Word of God. We rejoice to hear the very words of God found in our mouths, and the mouths of our seed and our seed’s seed, just as God promised in Isaiah 59:21. It is our earnest desire that more of the Reformed community can experience this covenantal, generational promise as a result of our work on *The Comprehensive Psalter*.

PRICING:

Prepublication Price of \$10.00 will be good until Oct. 31, 2000. That is a nearly 60% discount from the estimated retail value of the Psalter of \$24.95. At press time *The Blue Banner* still did not have definitive information on case pricing for the new Psalter. When case pricing is available, it will be posted on our website at <http://www.fpcr.org>. Use order form on page 36.

More From Our Readers

Mail in response to our recent request to hear from interested readers of *The Blue Banner*.

Please continue sending *The Blue Banner*.

J.P., Bel Air, MD.

Enjoy the scholarly articles. Please keep me on your mailing list.

R.V.B., Grandville, MI.

I enjoy reading *The Blue Banner*.

J.M., Cumming, GA.

Great literature. Do you affirm or deny that there are saved people outside your specific organization?

M.R., Las Vegas, NV.

Dr. Bacon responds: This seems to me to be a somewhat “loaded” question, but I shall do my best to answer it:

First, I shall affirm that First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett is not “our organization.” It is a church of the Lord Jesus Christ, built upon that Rock and that Rock alone. In that sense, there is no ordinary salvation outside the visible church (*Westminster Confession of Faith* XXV.2 cf. Acts 2:46).

However, in the sense that First Presbyterian Church is simply one true visible church of Christ, we also affirm that there are those in many places who profess the true gospel and are therefore saved. It is important to note that salvation is not by belonging to *any* organization, but by faith in Christ alone (Eph. 2:8-9) and grounded upon the imputed righteousness of Christ alone (Romans 9:30; Philippians 3:9).

First Presbyterian Church is, as our name implies, a Presbyterian church. We are not Presbyterians simply because our fathers were, but because we believe that Presbyterianism, properly understood, is nothing more or less than biblical Christianity. We agree with the sentiment of Thomas Witherow, who affirmed that it is possible to be a Christian and not be a Presbyterian; and that it is possible to be a Presbyterian and not be a Christian; but that it is best to be both.

Thank you for this wonderful ministry! The articles are well documented and very thought provoking! God bless you!

D.C., Columbia SC.

Especially appreciate quotes from Puritan and Old School Presbyterian sources; and am grateful to be on your mailing list.

R.N., Hanford, CT.

The Blue Banner is Excellent! The whole FPCR is just amazing. To God be the glory!

M.S., Southhaven, MS.

Keep up the good work!

R.R., Katy, TX.

Very enriching – thank you for prompt response to my request. Keep it coming please!

G.B., Susanville, CA.

I enjoy each issue.

B.S., Hampton, VA.

I appreciate receiving *The Blue Banner* and find some of the articles very interesting.

L.D., Saundertown RI

I will be giving you a gift shortly. I enjoy *The Blue Banner*. No scriptural Presbyterian churches in my area. Central PA very weak in the Word. Pray for us.

R. N., Lemoyne PA.

This is my 3rd issue – I have enjoyed them very much. Please keep me on the mailing list.

R.B., Springfield, OR.

I wanted to say thanks for the latest issue of *The Blue Banner*. All of it was a blessing, and especially the excellent reply to the letter from Mr. K. F. Please keep me on the mailing list, and my regards to Chris for his fine editorial work.

B.H., San Diego CA

I appreciate the carefully written and well-documented articles that confirm the doctrines of the Reformed Faith.

J.W. Ocoee FL

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The First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett

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Contact Information: Email: pastor@fpcr.org WEB: <http://www.fpcr.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.

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