

## REVIEWS & RESPONSES

REVIEW: J. Mark Beach. *Christ and the Covenant: Francis Turretin's Federal Theology as a Defense of the Doctrine of Grace*. Vol. 1 in *Reformed Historical Theology*, ed. by Herman J. Selderhuis (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007). 372 pages. ISBN 978-3-525-56911-5. 64.90 €. At press date the book is also available from the Mid-America Reformed Seminary Bookstore for \$59.00. Reviewed by J. Wesley White, New Covenant PCA, Spearfish, South Dakota.

There are few doctrines in Reformed theology that are as intriguing for historical theology as the Reformed doctrine of the covenants or federal theology. In Reformed federal theology, we have a genuine example of theological development. You will not find the verbal formulation of a covenant of works contrasted with the covenant of grace in Calvin. It is really not until the late 16<sup>th</sup> century that this terminology becomes widespread. Additionally, the specific terms employed to define covenant theology are not found in Scripture in the *ipsissima verba*. In Mark Beach's work on Francis Turretin's doctrines of the covenants, we delve into the issues surrounding covenant theology. Beach's basic thesis on Reformed covenant theology in general and Turretin's doctrine in particular is that it is all about the Gospel. Covenant theology is a theology of divine grace (13).

In spite of the interest generated in covenant theology, there is little consensus on its significance, meaning, or development. For example, Beach explains that Perry Miller sees this doctrine as intended to mitigate the weaknesses of Calvin's predestinarian doctrine. Miller writes, "The development of the theory [covenant theology] must be viewed as a part of that seventeenth century systematization of Calvinism and was designed to counteract certain weaknesses in the original creed" (25). On the other side, you have men like James Torrance who see it as a deviation from Calvin's view and a loss of Calvin's doctrine of grace. Torrance thinks that there is ...

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RESPONSES critical of articles and reviews may be submitted for consideration for publication by sending drafts to the editorial address. Please contact the editor beforehand to obtain submission requirements and preferences. When possible, the subject of a negative or possibly controversial review will be contacted beforehand for any appropriate response for publication along with the review, and the reviewer will be given an opportunity for a response. If required, responses and replies may continue in subsequent issues.

... a shift of emphasis from what God has so freely and unconditionally done for all men in Christ, to a more subjective interest in what we have to do... For Calvin, all God's dealings with men are those of grace, both in Creation and redemption. They flow from the loving heart of the Father (51).

Similarly, Beach discusses the view of Stephen Strehle who, in the words of Beach, claims that "Calvinism ... sold the gospel for a mess of pottage, the pottage coming in the form of Franciscan scholasticism and voluntarism" (56). Beach provides many examples of this diverse interpretation but he believes that a much more nuanced view is necessary if we are to understand Reformed federalism.

Instead of seeing Reformed federal theology as legalism, as an attempt to mitigate predestinarianism, or conversely as a codification of predestinarianism, Beach contends that we should see in this doctrine a defense of divine grace. In other words, it is designed to defend the basic doctrinal concerns of the Reformation. A good summary of this is provided on p. 214, where Beach summarizes the concerns of federal theology:

God saves human beings not by setting aside what they are obliged as creatures to give him or what is due him as God (as if he would allow disobedience to go unpunished or no longer require that His Word be honored or heeded). Rather, God upholds his original commands, extends his original promises, and applies his original sanctions, for Christ meets all obligations and conditions that are entailed in a right relationship with God including suffering on behalf of sinners the penalties for the violation of the stipulations of the relationship. Christ does this in order to merit for them what is not theirs by right to possess, and he does this according to God's loving and gracious provision.

For Beach, Turretin's explanation of federal theology defended all the major concerns of Augustinian Reformed theology. This defense is particularly apparent in Turretin's elenctic approach. Turretin opposes all formulation of the doctrine of the covenants that would compromise the doctrine of divine grace, such as those proposed by the Remonstrants and the Socinians and to a much lesser degree those of Cocceianism and Saumur (Amyraldianism).

We shall illustrate Beach's work by examining his discussion of two different theological issues. First, in his discussion of the covenant of works, Beach seeks to solve the difficult problem that surrounds the issue of merit in the covenant of works. Many have rejected the covenant of works as inconsistent with God's grace because it puts God in man's debt. After all, if man owed God all obedience, how could Adam merit anything from God?

There is certainly plausibility in such argumentation, but Beach explains from Turretin that this is actually based on a misconception. The basic principle of the Creator-creature relationship in Reformed theology is expressed well, according to Beach, by Herman Witsius, “I lay this down as an acknowledged truth, that God owes nothing to his creature. By no claim, no law is he bound to reward it. For all that the creature is, he owes entirely to God; both because he created it, and also, because he is infinitely above it” (116). Since God owes nothing to man, it is right to say with Turretin “that God should give a reward would exceed obligations; the promise of that reward, certified formally in the covenant relationship, only heightened the display of benignity” (83). Consequently, the relationship of pre-fall Adam’s works to eternal life cannot be understood as a matter of merit strictly speaking. God did not owe Adam’s obedience eternal life simply in virtue of their natural relationship.

A better way to understand the promise of eternal life is that it is firstly an evidence of His goodness and only secondarily of His justice (though once promised, it would be unjust for God not to give the reward). Adam naturally owed God all obedience, but God, in His infinite goodness, offered a reward to the obedience that Adam already owed Him. “Law isn’t more primary than God’s graciousness or benevolence; but neither is divine law forfeited for the sake of divine goodness” (143). God’s justice *and* His goodness are both brilliantly displayed in the covenant of works. Beach notes, “Many scholars underestimate the significance of this feature of seventeenth-century Reformed federalism” (84). This underestimate is one of the primary reasons for the common misunderstanding of the Reformed doctrine of the covenant of works. The doctrine of the covenant of works maintained the Creator/creature distinction, both in God’s independence from man and man’s absolute dependence on God.

The second issue that illustrates Turretin’s defense of Augustinian/Reformed theology is found in Beach’s explanation of the conditions of the covenants. This is a particularly apt example because the Arminians used the bilateral and conditional character of the covenant to argue for human free will in the matter of salvation. The basic problem is that the conditions seem to lend themselves to legalism. Beach describes the problem as it already existed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. He writes:

Some deny that the promises of the covenant of grace are conditional, fearful that the law will be confounded with the gospel and with the promises of each, while others maintain that conditions apply, concerned that faith and holiness of life not be compromised and that libertinism not find a foothold (179).

The problem can easily be seen when we consider one of Turretin’s statements:

In vain do we hope that God will be our God, unless in turn we are his people and bear witness to the love of the Father, unless we give the obedience of children to him. In vain do we hope that he will bestow the promised blessings, unless we perform the duties required of us (177).

Some might see this as a sort of legalism. How would Turretin answer this question? As in so many other areas, he writes, “It is easy to reconcile these views by laying down some distinctions” (179).

First, while there are conditions in the covenant of grace which include faith and, in a broader sense, also repentance and obedience (see p. 189), these duties are also promises. God not only commands the covenanted to repent and believe, He promises in that same covenant to work these duties in them. Beach explains:

While God commands the legal condition (perfect obedience), he does not bestow or promise such obedience to man [in the legal covenant]. In regard to the promises of the gospel, however, God not only commands faith (which is the evangelical condition), he also promises and grants faith as a gift (182).

In contrast to the covenant of works, God not only commands obedience but also promises to insure that it necessarily takes place. In short, “these conditions require both a work of Christ for sinners and a work of Christ in sinners” (210).

Second, faith exists in both the covenant of works and the covenant of grace but in different respects. Beach summarizes Turretin by saying:

In the covenant of grace, faith displaces works, usurping its role as to effect, though faith and works are distinguished from one another in their respective causality—that is, faith now obtains for us what works was intended to achieve in the covenant of nature, though, as Turretin states, the ‘genus of cause’ is different in each case (185).

In the covenant of works, works (perfect obedience) function as the cause in man of obtaining eternal life. In the covenant of grace, it is faith. However, the “genus of cause” is different. This means that they cause it in different ways. In the covenant of works, man’s obedience is the material or meritorious cause of his justification. In the covenant of grace, faith is the instrumental cause, and the righteousness of Christ is the material or meritorious cause of our justification.

Third, works are present in both covenants but in a different respect. Turretin is very willing to say that good works

are necessary for salvation and thus also in the covenant of grace. He is very careful, however, to distinguish the way in which they are necessary. He writes, “They were required in the first [covenant] as an antecedent condition by way of a cause for acquiring life; but in the second, they are only the subsequent condition as the fruit and effect of the life already acquired” (206). In the covenant of works, man’s obedience goes before justification. In the covenant of grace, it comes after. In this way, Turretin states very clearly that faith acts alone in justification, though it is never alone in the one who is justified.

In all of this, we see how Turretin recognized very well that there were conditions in the covenant of grace. He also saw that faith and works were necessary in both covenants. However, he also realized that the way in which they are necessary is the difference between a gracious salvation and legalism. Turretin’s distinctions are meant to preserve the primacy of divine grace in salvation and yet not to lose man’s responsibility and the necessity of faith and works in the process.

Throughout this book, you will find similar discussions of Turretin’s nuanced and careful explanations of the doctrines of the covenant. We highly recommend this book as a companion volume to Turretin, a contribution to scholarship on Reformed covenant theology, and as a very good explanation of the Reformed doctrine on this matter. It corrects many conceptions both within and without the Reformed/Presbyterian community.

That being said, we would offer two minor criticisms. First, there is not enough background information on Turretin’s opponents. It would have been helpful to see some interaction with Turretin’s own opponents. Oftentimes, one is left wondering after having read Turretin what exactly Turretin’s opponents were arguing and why. For example, on p. 93, Beach cites Turretin’s citation of Episcopius (a Remonstrant) as an example of a Remonstrant who denied the covenant of works. Why did he do that? What did he think he was gaining? Similarly, on pp. 302–305, Beach explains the teaching that there were three covenants (nature, legal, and grace) as opposed to the covenant of works and covenant of grace. It would have been helpful to see more on this viewpoint and some other resources for further research. This is often a problem throughout the book.

The other question involves the main thesis. Turretin’s doctrine of the covenant of grace does seem to be a defense of the doctrine of grace. But the question remains, why did Turretin use the concept of covenant to defend those doctrines rather than defending the other doctrines separately? Why do it in this topic? I think the answer is rather simple. First, the idea and terminology of covenant are Scriptural. The work of our salvation is described in terms of a covenant or testament in many places in Scripture. This plain fact forms the

basic framework for the Reformed doctrine of the covenant. Furthermore, the new covenant is contrasted in Scripture with an old covenant or testament. The Reformed understood by at least the latter part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century that the idea of a law covenant (a covenant of works) should be pushed back from Moses to Adam. Add to that their reflection on Romans 5, and you have the basic doctrine of the covenant of works/covenant of grace. Hence, all of this is derived from reflecting on Scripture and its terminology.

A further reason why this doctrine is a defense of the doctrine of grace is found in Turretin’s opponents. The Remonstrants put an unbiblical content into the Biblical idea of covenant. They extended its universality, overemphasized its two-sidedness, and confused the difference between the Old and New Testaments (that is, the doctrine of salvation before and after Christ’s coming). In response, the Reformed defined the covenant in such a way that emphasized its unilateral nature (without denying its bilateral nature), defended its particularity, and asserted its continuity. It seems that it was this pressure from the Remonstrants that by way of counter-reaction solidified the Reformed definition. Consequently, you have a much more strenuous defense of the covenant of grace (and the covenant of works) in the 1630s and 1640s in the Netherlands and elsewhere in response to the Remonstrant errors. In this way, the Reformed doctrine truly becomes a defense of the idea that salvation is by God’s grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. ■

**REVIEW:** Bruce Waltke, with Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2007). 1,040 pages. ISBN 978-0310218975. \$44.99. Reviewed by Rev. Lane Keister, pastor of Hull Christian Reformed Church and Hope Reformed Church of Westfield, North Dakota.

#### BRUCE WALTKE’S VIEW OF THE OLD TESTAMENT IN RELATION TO SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

Bruce Waltke has written what will probably be regarded by many as his *magnum opus*. There are many things to commend in this volume, as well as a few things to critique.

The subtitle of the book (“an exegetical, canonical, and thematic approach”) is a good description of the book’s aims: it intends to be an exegetical, canonical, and thematic approach to Old Testament Theology. I might have added rhetorical to that subtitle, since rhetorical criticism is one of the main tools that Waltke uses in this work to flesh out the meaning of the Old Testament.

Things to commend: 1. The exegesis was mostly first-rate. He is extremely sensitive to literary concerns, and that positively affects his exegesis. A few examples will suffice. On page

597, Waltke is delineating the differences among the various judges. He writes, “Beginning with Jephthah, the years of oppression outlast the years of peace. Indeed, it is not said that during the lifetimes of Jephthah and Samson that the land had rest; it only says ‘they led’ Israel.” This is an example of a “gap,” which Waltke defines as “an intentional omission” (pg. 122), as opposed to a “blank,” which is “an inconsequential omission” (ibid.). Of course, one could go rather wild on the implications of what was left out, leaving one open to the charge that one is “exegeting” the cracks, rather than what is in the text. However, Waltke keeps this little trick well under control. Most of the time, he uses it when a pattern in the text gives rise to a certain expectation that is then changed by the omission. This results in many insights that would otherwise be overlooked.

Waltke is very canonically oriented. One of the best examples of this is on pages 866–867, where he gives us the similarities and the differences between the story of Ruth (specifically Elimelech), Lot, and Judah. This is the stuff of which biblical theology is made: comparing and contrasting earlier and later sections of the canon.

Waltke is an expert on the structure of biblical texts, and this helps him a great deal when it comes to prioritizing what is important in the text, although he is not always consistent in his proportions. In general, his outlines are convincing, even if he tends to see chiasm where there is not necessarily a convincing chiasm. Incidentally, the most amazing (and convincing) chiasm I have ever seen is in the beginning of Milgrom’s commentary on Numbers (Jacob Milgrom, *Numbers Commentary* [Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989] xviii). That commentary is worth its price for that alone).

Waltke’s approach leads him through all the books of the Old Testament. This has the distinct advantage of leaving one with the impression that there are not huge swaths of data being left out.

Those are some of the things this reviewer really enjoyed about the book. There are some criticisms about the book that should be made, however.

The first is that of his handling of the relationship of biblical theology to systematic theology. This reviewer first read page 31 and practically danced in glee. Finally we might have an Old Testament Theology that deals with systematic concerns in a sympathetic fashion! He wrote there, “In my view the church is best served when biblical theologians work in conversation with orthodox systematic theology regarding the Bible (bibliology) as the foundation and boundary in matters of deciding the basis, goal, and methodology for biblical theology.... Through this interpenetration of the two disciplines, we will be better able to present the theological power and the religious appeal of biblical concepts.”

Amen! This reviewer cannot count the number of times he has read in a commentary, “That is a dogmatic concept, and we cannot talk about that, nor should it have an impact on our exegesis.” So, this reviewer was expecting some of this interaction between biblical theology and systematics. Alas, little to none was forthcoming. Instead, we find this horrible description (pg. 64) of what systematians do, as opposed to what exegetes do:

Systematic (dogmatic) theologians present the Christian message to the contemporary world. They draw the impetus for organizing this message from outside the Old Testament. John Calvin, in his justly famous *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, organized his material according to the four divisions of the Apostles’ Creed. Philip Melancthon organized his theology according to one book of the Bible, Romans. Since the seventeenth century, theologians typically employed philosophical categories derived from Greek thought, such as Bibliology (the study of the Bible), hamartiology (the study of sin), pneumatology (the study of the Spirit), and so on.

Biblical theologians differ from dogmatians in three ways. First, biblical theologians primarily think as exegetes, not as logicians. Second, they derive their organizational principle from the biblical blocks of writings themselves rather than from factors external to the text. Third, their thinking is diachronic—that is, they track the development of theological themes in various blocks of writings. Systematic theologians think more synchronically—that is, they invest their energies on the church’s doctrines, not on the development of religious ideas within the Bible.

It is difficult to imagine a more warped view of what systematians do. First of all, the impetus for organizing the message of systematic theology comes from the Bible itself. That it is a logical order (usually prolegomena, God, man, Christ, salvation, church, end times, or something similar) does not in the least imply that it is an unbiblical order, or not based on the biblical texts. Indeed, a great deal of this is based on Genesis, and the order of events therein (we see God first, then creation, then unfallen man, then fallen man, then the promise of salvation, etc.).

Secondly, the categories employed are not derived from Greek philosophical thought, but from the Bible. The examples Waltke gives only prove this point: was Greek thought the first place that we saw the phrase “thus says the Lord?” Was Greek thought the first place where we see “And God said?” How about Deuteronomy 29:29? Is this verse not utterly foundational to the study of the Bible? Similarly, we can see that the Bible talks about sin extensively long before Greeks got around to thinking about it. What is so completely different

about grouping together the texts that talk about sin, versus the thematic approach that Waltke himself uses? This leads to yet another problem with Waltke's summary: systematic theology is very much concerned with how ideas develop within the biblical canon diachronically. Exegesis is the lifeblood of systematics.

Thirdly, it is utterly false that exegetes don't think primarily logically. How does Waltke get his insights into the rhetorical structure of the texts? Through illogicality? Rhetoric is not illogical, unless Waltke has completely forgotten his *trivium*. This page is not Waltke's best moment. This reviewer could agree with nothing on that page. Waltke advocated a great discussion between exegetes and systematians. It is not going to happen with this wedge being driven between the two disciplines.

The second major criticism I have is that proportions are not always balanced. For instance, Psalms and Ruth both get complete chapters to themselves, the former of which gets 27 pages, and the latter of which gets 20 pages! Surely, this is not in proportion to their relative importance in the canon. Psalms is one of the three or four most important books in the entire canon. Is Ruth almost that important? Furthermore, the prophets get extremely short shrift in this volume. The prophets constitute one of the four major blocks of writing in the entire Old Testament, and yet only receive a scant 45 pages in two chapters (out of 969 pages of text, not including indices, split up into 35 chapters). Isaiah at least should have received an entire chapter to itself, and yet receives the equivalent of 5 pages (split into three places due to his acceptance of the division of Isaiah into first, second, and third Isaiah). Song of Songs also is snubbed, receiving all of 2 pages. Many of the minor prophets also get very scant attention. One gets the distinct impression that these sections of Waltke's book were a bit rushed in production.

The third, and relatively minor criticism is that of typos. There are a fair number, including an extremely bizarre typo in chapter 33 on Proverbs. The footnotes start to drag behind the text until finally the text is quoting footnotes that don't even exist! The text starts getting ahead on page 907, and increases its pace until, in the middle of it, the text is quoting footnotes that don't appear for another three or four pages. Finally, footnotes 107–112 are simply not there at all!

These three criticisms are not enough to make me not recommend the book. A quick comparison between this Old Testament theology and the other major ones available such as Von Rad, Eichrodt, Brueggemann, and Goldingay, will quickly show that this one leaves those in the dust as to its level of insight into the Old Testament. So, this volume is a significant step forward in the realm of Old Testament theology, a sub-discipline that evangelicals have been slow to enter. There is further work to do in this area, especially

by a theologian who wishes to make biblical theology serve systematic theology rather than oppose it. ■

**Robert L. Reymond, *Faith's Reasons For Believing: An Apologetic Antidote to Mindless Christianity* (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Mentor, 2008). 480 pages. Paperback. ISBN 978-1845503376. \$19.99. Reviewed by W. Gary Crampton.**

Robert L. Reymond holds B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. degrees from Bob Jones University and has done doctoral and post-doctoral studies in other Seminaries and Universities. Dr. Reymond is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church in America, who has lectured in various countries in Europe and the East. He taught at Covenant Theological Seminary for more than twenty years before taking the chair of systematic theology at Knox Theological Seminary, where he presently serves as Professor emeritus. He also serves as the regular supply pastor at Holy Trinity Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Professor Reymond has authored numerous articles in theological journals and various reference works, and has written over a dozen books. To say the least, Dr. Reymond is a well educated, highly trained and skilled theologian.

*Faith's Reasons For Believing* is Dr. Reymond's latest work. It is written, as the subtitle (*An Apologetic Antidote to Mindless Christianity*) suggests, as a book on biblical apologetics, i.e., a biblical defense of the Christian faith. As the author relates, in October 2006 he was asked to teach a course on the subject of apologetics at the Boca Raton campus of Reformed Theological Seminary. He agreed to do so and began his preparation for the course. Providentially, the course never materialized due to scheduling problems, but the work that the Professor prepared for the course had given him the material necessary for this new book. As Dr. Reymond points out in the "Preface," there are (sadly) many Christians, as well as non-Christians, who do not know that there are really "reasons for believing." Far too many, both inside and outside of the Christian faith, are of the belief that Christianity is little more than an anti-intellectual leap of faith. Such is far from the truth. As the author explains, "according to Scripture, 'saving faith' is grounded in the knowledge of propositional truths about Jesus Christ," and knowledge of such propositions "is the cognitive foundation or base of saving faith." The content of biblical Christianity is found in doctrinal teachings (propositional teachings) regarding Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Faith then, most assuredly has "its reasons for believing" (11, 14).

*Faith's Reasons For Believing* is divided into thirteen chapters with an Epilogue. Chapter 1 (17–32) deals with "What is Christian Apologetics." The author tells us that Christianity, which is preeminently "the 'reasoning religion,'" is an "apologetic religion feeling deeply and passionately the burden both

to tell humankind *what* they must believe in order to be saved from the guilt and power of sin and to give to humankind the reasons, when sought, *why* they should believe” (17). Apologetics, a term that derives from the Greek *apologia* (which means “defense”), in the fullest sense of the word, “is the defense and vindication of the Christian faith against all attacks of doubters and unbelievers that will include the positive presentation of the reasonableness of Christianity’s truth claims and its more than ample sufficiency to meet the spiritual needs of humankind” (18). These things being so, apologetics is to be seen as both a defensive and offensive discipline. This “apologetic task” may be seen under four heads: “To answer particular objections,” “to give an account of the foundation of the Christian faith,” “to challenge non-Christian systems,” and “to persuade men of the truth claims of the Christian faith” (22–26).

At the close of the chapter, the author overviews the four “major apologetic systems,” which are “evidentialism” (found predominantly in the Thomistic Roman Catholic tradition, Arminianism, and inconsistent Reformed groups), “presuppositionalism” (wherein the primacy of special revelation is seen as the “ground for the entire theological enterprise,” and is found in “the consistent Reformed tradition”), “experientialism” (found in Neo-orthodox circles), and “autonomous humanism” (found among anti-supernatural groups, who deny the need for God and divine special revelation, and put full confidence in the rational process of man). Professor Reymond stands in “the consistent Reformed tradition” and defends the “presuppositional” approach (26–32).

Chapter 2 (33–68) studies “Faith’s Reasons for Believing in Christian Theology as an Intellectual Discipline.” Herein the author offers “five pillars upon which . . . the justification of Christian theology as an intellectual discipline securely rests”: “Christ’s own theological method,” “Christ’s mandate to His church to disciple and to teach the nations,” “the apostolic model,” “the apostolically approved example and activity of the New Testament church,” and “the very nature of Holy Scripture as the revealed Word of God” (39–59), and concludes with two addendums: expositions of Proverbs 26:4–5 and 2 Timothy 2:23–26 (62–68).

Chapter 3 (69–130) is on “Faith’s Reasons for Believing the Bible is God’s Word.” Dr. Reymond begins this chapter with the claim that “the true Christian church believes that the Bible is a word revelation from another world, even from the triune God of heaven.” Furthermore, “the evidence in Holy Scripture is pervasive and persistent for its revealedness, its divine origination, and its inerrancy and infallibility,” the Holy Spirit Himself being the “primary author” of the Bible (69). Professor Reymond overviews five Bible passages which assert this truth (1 Corinthians 2:6–14, 2 Peter 3:15–16, 2 Timothy 3:16, 1 Peter 1:10–12, and 2 Peter 1:20–21), and then goes on

to study a number of other ways in which “the Bible claims to be the Word of God.” Dr. Reymond then discusses the canon of Scripture, concluding that “God’s providence [was] the ultimate guiding force behind the canonization process of the New Testament,” as well as the Old (103). Two addendums close out the chapter: “The Canonicity of the ‘Disputed Books’” and “John Calvin’s View of Scriptural Inerrancy,” both of which are very well done.

Chapter 4 (131–166) has to do with “Faith’s Reasons for Believing in the Bodily Resurrection and Ascension to Heaven of Jesus Christ.” The author first explains the Scriptures’ teaching on these doctrinal truths (first on the resurrection, then on the ascension)—including the great significance of both, and then goes on to discuss the biblical evidences for them, dealing with the various critical views.

Chapter 5 (167–196) is on “Faith’s Reasons for Believing in the Virgin Birth of Christ.” Professor Reymond begins by studying the Isaianic prophecy of the virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14), referring to it as “an exclusive prophecy of Jesus Christ’s virginal conception” (167). Here he differentiates his view (which has also been the predominant view in the Reformed church through the ages) from others even within the Christian community who see a double fulfillment of this event. He then proceeds to look at the “biblical data” found in the New Testament on this subject, followed by a brief study of the testimony from church history. The chapter is brought to a close with a look at “the purpose of Christ’s virginal conception.” The author concludes that “when we then penetrate to the mysterious and marvelous primary purpose of the Christmas miracle, we should understand *before everything else* that by means of the virginal conception, ‘the [pre-existent] Word became flesh’ (John 1:14)! Mary’s virginal conception, in other words, was the means whereby *God became man*, whereby He who ‘was rich for our sakes became poor, that through His poverty, we might become rich (2 Corinthians 8:9)’” (196).

Chapter 6 (197–226) is titled “Faith’s Reasons for Believing in Biblical Miracles in General and Jesus’ Miracles in Particular.” Dr. Reymond first (properly) tells his readers that he has “no sympathy” with the contention of many theologians who, in order to satisfy the unbeliever, say that the biblical miracles are simply interventions of God into human affairs in ways that run counter to known or observable processes but that do not really violate the laws of nature.” He then defines a miracle as “an extraordinary objective occurrence in the external world effected by the immediate power of God, an event that is neither a mental phenomenon nor caused by a natural but rather a supernatural force injected into nature” (197). A better definition of a miracle (from a biblical perspective) would be hard to find. In the balance of the chapter the author speaks to “biblical miracles in general,” “Jesus’ miracles in particular,” and some of the critical and evangelical responses to miracles.

He then closes out the chapter by studying “Jesus’ transfiguration” along with its historicity and its meaning.

Chapter 7 (227–242) studies “Faith’s Reasons for Believing in Paul’s Supernatural Conversion on the Damascus Road.” After surveying the biblical material and dealing with attempts to rationalize the event itself, Professor Reymond reviews Paul’s argument in Galatians (as well as in the book of Acts) for this great work of redemption which has proved to be so determinant for the course of Christian history.

Chapter 8 (243–292) is on “Faith’s Reasons for Rejecting Evidentialism: A Case Study in Apologetic Methodology.” In the opinion of the present reviewer, this chapter alone is worth the price of the book. The primary “case study” that Dr. Reymond uses is that of B. B. Warfield—a theologian for whom the author has the utmost respect (which is clearly manifested in the chapter), yet who erred at this point. But secondly, the chapter reviews others within the evidentialist school of apologetics as well (such as the Ligonier group). Professor Reymond cites Abraham Kuyper, Francis Schaeffer, Cornelius Van Til, Gordon H. Clark, John Murray, J. I. Packer, John Frame, the Westminster Standards, et al., to point out the logical inconsistencies of evidentialism, and to show that it is incompatible with the balance of the Reformed faith in general. Evidentialism, as a method of apologetics, cannot stand up under the teachings of the Word of God.

Chapter 9 (293–342) teaches us about “Faith’s Reasons for Believing in the God of Christian Theism.” The author commences this chapter by saying that “no philosophical defense of Christianity would be complete without an explanation of why Christians believe in the Christian God” (293). He then speaks about the “perfections,” the triunity, and the “creatorship” of the monotheistic God of Christianity—adducing numerous biblical passages in his study. The chapter also addresses various of the alleged “proofs” for the existence of the God of Holy Scripture, pointing out that they all are fallacious. This does not, however, mean that the evidences for God’s existence (which are abundant, but prove nothing) are useless. On the contrary, the evidences must be used, but only in an *ad hominem* fashion to refute the gainsayers.

Chapter 10 (343–370) studies “Faith’s Reasons for Believing the Bible is Man’s Only *Pou Sto* for Knowledge and Personal Significance.” The Greek mathematician and inventor, Archimedes, in experimenting with his simple lever, once boasted that if one could give him a place where he could stand (a *pou sto*), i.e., where he could place his lever’s fulcrum, then he could move the earth. He was, of course, asking for a place outside of the cosmos to do this. This, says Professor Reymond, is likened to the Bible in that it is a Word from another world, and is the place where the Christian must take his stand on all matters of faith and life. The Bible is the “extra-cosmic ‘Archimedean point of reference’—epistemologically—and

extra-cosmic ‘first principle’ that can and will promote a unified field of knowledge.” Thus we are to understand that “when God gave His children His Word and Spirit, He gave them much more than simply basic information about Himself, about them, and about the relationship between them.... [He gave them] a distinct world and life view” (7, 343). In the chapter Dr. Reymond deals with “a Christian view of knowing,” “God’s knowledge,” “man’s knowledge,” and “the justification of knowledge” (345–355). Not only, though, is the Bible man’s *pou sto* for the justification of knowledge, it is also his *pou sto*, “via its doctrine of creation and God’s interpretation of His created state, for human personal significance,” as image bearers of the most high God of Holy Scripture (355).

Chapter 11 (371–396) is on “Faith’s Reasons for Believing in the Nature of Biblical Truth.” One of the saddest things recognizable in the United States of America today, writes Professor Reymond, is that both the church and the nation as a whole no longer believe that there is such a thing as absolute truth. Truth, we are told, is relative. This is a far cry from the belief of the founding fathers of America, who held that the Bible is the Word of God and is foundational for all areas of life. After citing a number of biblical passages wherein the God of Scripture is said to be truth itself, the author avers that there are two elements of biblical revelation (which are being challenged in our day by otherwise orthodox theologians) to which we must hold firmly if the Word of God is to be faithfully proclaimed: 1) That “truth [is] univocal for God and man” (375) and that “God’s truth [is] logically rational, ethically steadfast, and covenantally faithful” (381).

First there is the issue of univocal truth between God and man. Some otherwise orthodox theologians (e.g., Cornelius Van Til) wrongly claim that there is, not just a quantitative difference (which all Christian theologians affirm), but a “qualitative” difference between God’s knowledge of truth and man’s knowledge of truth. That is, there is no point of contact between the mind of God and the mind of man, so that all we are able to have is an analogy of the truth. But as Gordon Clark has pointed out, and Dr. Reymond affirms, an analogy of the truth is not the truth. Since God knows all truth (i.e., He is omniscient), if man is going to know any truth he must know that which is the mind of God. Therefore, unless there is a univocal point of contact between the mind of God and the mind of man, man could never know any truth. Saving faith must be grounded upon true knowledge, says the author, and this necessarily means that there must be some point of contact, some (univocal) point of identity, between the content of God’s knowledge and the content of man’s knowledge. Otherwise, man can have no truth at all.

Second, we must hold firmly to the logicity of the rational Word of God. We must not contend, as some otherwise orthodox theologians aver (e.g., Cornelius Van Til, J. I. Packer), that

the Bible contains logical paradox and/or antinomies—those teachings which cannot be reconciled before the bar of human reason. On the contrary, we must adhere to the fact that God's Word is truth, that Christ is the *Logos* of God Himself (John 1:1–3); He is Reason and Wisdom incarnate (1 Corinthians 1: 24, 30; Colossians 2:3), and in His Word He speaks to us in rationally coherent ways. To deny this, is to do despite to the *Logos* Himself.

Chapter 12 (397–430) is titled “Faith's Reasons for Believing in the Apologetic Value of Christian Theistic Ethics.” After distinguishing between “morality” (which is “descriptive” in that it describes behavior patterns, or the moral “isness” of a given person or society) and “ethics” (which is a “normative” science in that it prescribes obligations or the “oughtness” of moral behavior), and then differentiating between “personal, interpersonal, and social ethics,” the author surveys several secular ethical systems: Utilitarianism, Intuitionism, Emotivism, Existentialism, Instrumentalism, Evolutionary ethics, and (in an addendum) Immanuel Kant's Categorical Imperative. He then gives an overview of the biblical basis for “Christian theistic ethics,” concluding that the Bible, as the infallible, inerrant Word of God, is the only rule of faith and obedience, and it alone “reveals man's chief end and all the means of its fulfillment including the whole duty that God requires of man” (418).

Chapter 13 (431–455), the final chapter of the book, is on “Faith's Reasons for Believing in the Pauline Apologetic for Reaching this Postmodern Generation.” Herein, in a masterful manner, Dr. Reymond studies Paul's Mar's Hill apologetic address found in Acts 17:16–34. Due to the fact, says the author, that we live in an age (a Postmodern generation) where for the most part mankind “has rejected the Word of God and Christianity's concepts of absolute truth and rationality as essential requisites for the acquisition of knowledge,” the church is now faced with a new situation—one unlike the days when Christianity was a dominant influence in Western culture. Hence, says Professor Reymond, it is imperative for the church, in her apologetic address to the non-believing world, to understand the way the apostle Paul defended the Christian faith when confronted, not by Jewish people who were familiar with the Scriptures, but by the unbelieving world (“biblical illiterates”) of his day. When Paul defended the Christian faith in this situation, he did not expressly cite the Old Testament prophecies, which would have been unknown to his audience, but neither did Paul argue from the first principles of the non-believing world. Rather, he presented his case for Christian theism based on the teachings of the Word of God, with a message that echoed the thought, and at times even the language itself of Scripture. Throughout the address, the God of Holy Scripture was foundational to all—as Creator, Providential Sustainer, and Judge—all of which teachings are founded on the propositional revelation of the Bible.

An “Epilogue” (457–467) concludes the book. In it Dr. Reymond urges his readers to be “epistemologically self-conscious in all our actions and in all our predications” (457). In the opinion of the present reviewer, *Faith's Reasons For Believing* is the best apologetic work available today. It is highly recommended. ■

**Carl R. Trueman, *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man* (Ashgate, 2007). 132 pages. Paperback. ISBN 978-0754614708. \$29.95. Reviewed by Mark Jones, Pastor of Faith Presbyterian Church, Vancouver, BC, Canada.**

### Introduction

Without question, we can rightly regard Carl Trueman as one of the most renowned Owen experts, even before the publication of his latest work, *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man* (Ashgate, 2007). His previous study on Owen, *The Claims of Truth: John Owen's Trinitarian Theology* (Paternoster, 1998), precipitated something of a renaissance of interest in English Puritanism. Studies on Owen since then have been forthcoming and he is proving to be a popular research topic amongst postgraduates all over the world. Why, then, the need for another study on Owen from Trueman? After all, a close read of the two books will reveal that there is a lot of overlap. For example, both books open each chapter by contextualizing Owen as a Reformed Orthodox theologian in the seventeenth century and all that that implies in terms of his polemic context. More specifically, both books ask the question whether the nomenclature “Puritan” is useful in describing Owen's theology. There are, however, a number of differences between these two books, and they will be addressed below as the four chapters are reviewed.

### The EEBO Revolution

Before considering the relative strengths and weaknesses of Trueman's work – and I would say that the former outweighs the latter – we should note one significant difference between the two books in terms of his research. Scholars, particularly those with interests in the seventeenth-century England, are all agreed that “EEBO” (Early English Books Online) has transformed the nature of scholarship. Thus, Quentin Skinner, whom Trueman evidently owes a good deal of intellectual debt (15), writes: “the existence of EEBO has completely transformed my teaching as well as my own scholarly life – both entirely for the better.” Early English Books Online contains digital facsimile pages of almost every book printed in Britain, as well as British North America, from 1473–1700. Researchers are therefore able to access thousands of works from libraries all over the world from their computer via

the internet. Moreover, because of the Text Creation Partnership, many of these works are fully searchable, making research altogether different than ten years ago. This allows for a wider and more rigorous interaction with the primary sources. And therein is the difference between *The Claims of Truth* and *John Owen*.

Clearly, Trueman makes good use of EEBO, especially in chapters three and four where he is able to draw upon a number of seventeenth-century works besides Owen's. Of course, many of these works were reprinted in the nineteenth century; in the case of Owen, by Johnstone and Hunter (1850–55), the edition that Trueman cites. However, nineteenth-century editors were notoriously bad to the point that many scholars are now using the original printings because of the numerous interpolations and omissions made to the nineteenth-century reprints. For example, evidence suggests that the Nichols Standard Divines Series editors were careless in a number of places as they transcribed Thomas Goodwin's (1600–1680) works, even to the point of adding paragraphs not original to Goodwin. A return to the original 1691–1704 collected *Works* as well as the various works printed during Goodwin's lifetime has been necessary in order to reduce historical anachronism and the need to cite the *actual* words of Goodwin. With EEBO so readily accessible, perhaps future studies on Owen will use the original prints, if indeed the reprints are unreliable? And, like Bunyan (OUP) and Edwards (Yale), perhaps the need exists for a critical edition of Owen's works that deals with the (possible) redactions of the Good edition?

### Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man

The goal of Trueman's first chapter is to understand the complexity of the seventeenth-century context in which Owen lived, a concern not always shared by historical theologians who focus primarily on *what* a certain theologian wrote and not the *context* that played a role in shaping his writing in the first place. The results, all too often, are studies in historical theology that are (strangely) a-historical. But Trueman resists this tendency, and in so doing makes an important contribution to the various heuristic categories that have traditionally been used to describe Owen's thinking. For example, defining "Puritanism" has been, and still is, notoriously difficult. A strong case can be made that those who attempted to reform the Church of England along godly lines in the form of either Presbyterian or Independent church government are Puritans. Of course, those like Owen and Goodwin, who were part of this Reformation attempt, saw their hopes come to a definitive end with the restoration of King Charles II to the throne on 8 May 1660. In that respect, Owen was a Puritan turned nonconformist. Trueman notes, however, that the term "Puritan" can be problematic in terms of understanding Owen's *theology*. As Anthony Milton has noted, there was a broad spectrum of

different religious views before the civil war "running from crypto-popish 'Arminian' zealots [on the one hand] through to die-hard puritan nonconformists on the other" (*Catholic and Reformed*, 5). In that spectrum you have, for example, the moderate Puritan and "cautious reformer", Richard Sibbes, and those who adopted "the extreme ceremonialism of divines such as William Laud and Richard Montagu" (*Ibid*, 8). If Anthony Milton, Patrick Collinson and Peter Lake are correct in identifying Puritans as Protestants who were "distinctive in their enthusiasm and zeal for the cause of true religion in a way in which both they themselves (regarding themselves as a 'godly' elite) and their hostile opponents (seeing them as overprecise hypocrites) could and did recognize" (*Ibid*, 8), then surely Owen was a Puritan.

However, in connection with the definition above, simply to refer to Owen as a "Puritan" is to say very little about his theology. After all, how can the term "Puritan" be helpful in terms of understanding one's theology when Owen, John Goodwin (Arminian), John Milton (a "quasi-Arian," according to Trueman – see pg. 5 – and many others), and Richard Baxter (simply defies classification) are all considered "Puritans"? Therefore, as Trueman notes, in understanding Owen's theology, the term "Reformed Orthodoxy" is "more easily defined and less limiting than the category of Puritanism" (6). There is a similar discussion of this in *Claims of Truth* (9–13).

As a Reformed orthodox theologian, Owen belonged to the period of what Richard Muller calls "High Orthodoxy" (c. 1640–1700), a period characterized by the Arminian and Socinian threats to Reformed orthodoxy, thus explaining Owen's polemical writings. In connection with the context in which Owen found himself, Trueman highlights the philosophical, theological and linguistic training Owen received that enabled him to "use his intellectual powers and learning in the context of Reformed [polemics]" (17). As a Reformed theologian, Owen's chief polemical targets were Roman Catholicism, Arminianism and Socinianism. In this section, Trueman builds upon his earlier work in *Claims of Truth*, which also discusses these polemical targets (see pp. 19–29). Trueman's approach is extremely helpful in terms of providing the theological – and, at times, political – context in which Owen wrote and the training that formed Owen into perhaps *the* defender of Reformed orthodoxy in the seventeenth century. Behind the rigorous contextualization is Trueman's desire to portray the sophistication of Owen's thought as a much-needed corrective to the idea that Owen was some sort of "proto-fundamentalist" (33).

### Knowledge of the Trinitarian God

Chapter one sets the context for Trueman's discussion of Owen's doctrine of God; that is, the emphases in chapter two are understood in the polemical context of the sixteenth

and seventeenth centuries. Again, Trueman covers a lot of the same ground in this chapter as he did in his discussion of Owen's doctrine of God in *Claims of Truth* (see pp. 102–150). For example, in both books there is an emphasis on the divine attributes – especially the discussion of vindictory justice – and Owen's defence of the Trinity. Before discussing the divine attributes and Owen's defence of the Trinity, Trueman provides a helpful discussion of the Reformed orthodox distinction between archetypal and ectypal theology; one of the outcomes of this distinction being that the finite (humans) cannot grasp the infinite (God). Hence, the only possibility for knowledge of God is via his revelation (see also *Claims of Truth*, 54–56). Trueman looks at the attributes of divine simplicity, immensity, and vindictory justice. The attribute of vindictory justice is, as Trueman notes, a source of contention not only between the Reformed orthodox and the Socinians, but even among the Reformed orthodox themselves. Trueman refers to Twisse and Rutherford who argued that the atonement was only necessary because of the will of God and not because of his essential nature. Both Calvin and Goodwin also held to the view of Twisse and Rutherford. But Owen felt that this position both undermined Scriptural exegesis and gave far too much to the Socinians. Interestingly, one of Owen's main authorities in defending his position was the Jesuit philosopher, Francisco Suarez.

One of the strengths of Trueman's work in general is his formal analysis. This is particularly evident in his discussion on the attribute of vindictory justice. He has the ability to analyze Owen's thought without directly quoting too much from Owen's writings, thus providing the reader with the substance of Owen's thought and not endless quotations.

In his distillation of Owen's doctrine of the Trinity, Trueman does not provide an analysis of Owen's exegetical case for the Trinity; in other words, there is no discussion of the Old and New Testament evidence for the Triunity of God and how the Reformed orthodox approached the Old Testament in quite a different manner, concerning the progressive revelation of the Trinity (e.g. Gen 1:26), to their Socinian and Arminian opponents. Rather, Trueman's focus is on Owen's response to the Socinian, John Biddle, and the debate over how to define terms such as substance and essence (47–50). While both the orthodox and heretics affirmed the deity of the Father, the deity of the Son and the Spirit were not agreed upon. Hence, Trueman spends some time looking at Owen's defence of the Son's and the Spirit's deity; and here he gives more attention to the exegetical disputes of certain texts such as, in the case of the Son, John 1:1, Proverbs 8, Isaiah 9:6, and, in the case of the Spirit, Genesis 1:2. Of the three chapters that discuss Owen's theology, chapter two is the weakest in terms of relating Owen to the broader Reformed interpretive tradition. Such an analysis would have been especially helpful in terms

of Owen's discussion of Genesis 1:2 and whether Reformed theologians understood *Elohim* as evidence for the Triunity of God. Most did not, but in the case of Genesis 1:26 (“let us”) the Reformed orthodox were generally agreed that this had reference to the plurality of persons in the Godhead. What this section lacks in terms of wider interaction with other Reformed theologians it makes up for in showing how complex the situation was for Owen in terms of “[c]areful logical distinctions . . . combine[d] with soteriological, exegetical, and linguistic concerns” (56) in the defence of Christian orthodoxy as defined in the major ecumenical creedal tradition in which Owen found himself working.

The chapter concludes by looking at how Owen articulates the relationship between God and creation. Both Trueman and Sebastian Rehnman have accurately identified Owen's Thomist influence, no doubt the result of his training at Oxford under the brilliant metaphysicist theologian, Thomas Barlow. Contingency, middle knowledge, determinism, and voluntarism are some of the topics that Trueman covers as he shows that Owen's anti-Pelagian theological framework arises out “of the ontological relationship which exists between the Creator and his creation” with the result that, for Owen, “all events are foreknown and foreordained by God, even if contingent in terms of their secondary causality” (65).

#### Divine Covenants and Catholic Christology

Trueman's chapter on Owen's covenant theology is perhaps the finest in the book, and while he seems to rework some of his original research in *Claims of Truth* on the covenant of redemption there is a lot that is new. A few preliminary points are worth considering at the outset. First, Trueman makes use of Owen's work, *Theologoumena Pantodapa* (vol. 17), which has been neglected in the secondary literature, most likely because it was never translated into English in the Good edition. Stephen Westcott provided the translation of *Theologoumena* under the title, *Biblical Theology*. However, as Rehnman has argued, and Trueman seems to agree, Westcott's translation cannot be used for serious scholarly use. Any study of Owen's covenant theology must take his *Theologoumena* into account. Second, there is a statement in *Theologoumena* that is vital to any study on Owen's covenant theology; and Trueman appears to miss it (see p. 78). Owen argues that all true theology is based on a covenant (*Theologoumena*, I.iv.10; *Biblical Theology*, 27). In his preface to Patrick Gillespie's work, *The Ark of the Covenant Opened; or a Treatise of the Covenant of Redemption Between God and Christ as the Foundation of the Covenant of Grace* (London, 1677), Owen writes: “For the Doctrine hereof, or the truth herein, is the very Center wherein all the lines concerning the grace of God and our own duty, do meet; wherein the whole of Religion doth consist” (p. B). Third, while Trueman

may have missed that important statement in *Theologoumena*, he makes the observation, based upon the title of Gillespie's excellent work, that the covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son, also known as the *pañtum salutis*, is the "basis of the Son's mediation" (67). This is a crucial point and it explains – at least, for the many of the Reformed orthodox – Anselm's famous question, *Cur Deus Homo?* (Why did God become man?) Fourth, the added advantage of using EEBO is clearly evident in this chapter and, unlike the previous chapter, Trueman interacts well with seventeenth-century primary sources.

The connection between the preceding chapters and this one is evident when Trueman discusses Adam's natural theology before the Fall. Adam's theology, which is dependent on God's revelation, is *endiathetos* (internal) but not entirely *emphytos* (innate). Adam possesses an intrinsic "spiritual wisdom" so that he can understand God as Creator, Lawgiver, Ruler, and Rewarder (68). However, God also reveals himself externally in terms of the "sacramental command relative to the Tree" (68). Because of the (massive) distance between the Creator and creature the idea of meriting eternal reward is for the Reformed, as Trueman notes, "inconceivable" (70). However, in connection with the sacramental Tree, because the works-principle is in the form of the covenant, reward is possible on the basis of covenant obedience, also known as *pañtum* merit.

One of Trueman's main concerns as he discusses the covenant of works, and its use among the Reformed orthodox, is to show that this doctrine did not emerge as the result of "bald proof-texting", but rather in the context of "careful linguistic and theological reflection" (71). He does this by making reference to the works of Patrick Gillespie, John Ball, Francis Turretin, and Herman Witsius. Trueman's discussion of the intricacies of this doctrine is fascinating, but, in the end, very little is said with regard to Owen. This is regrettable because Owen spends a good deal of time in his writings on the covenant of works, especially its relation to man *after* the Fall both with respect to its republication at Sinai and its saving efficacy (or lack thereof). In fact, Owen's position on Sinai is an area that has important ramifications for his theology.

In his massive commentary on Hebrews, Owen appears to make a distinction between "theological covenants" (e.g. covenant of grace) and "scriptural covenants" (e.g. "New Covenant"). In his commentary on Hebrews, the theological covenants are discussed, but the "scriptural covenants" are primary. In other words, the covenants of works and grace are addressed only insofar as they relate to the "Old" and "New" covenants. As a result of these various distinctions, Owen posits that Sinai played a unique role in redemptive history, so much so that it was, in some sense, "another covenant", distinct from the *foedus gratiae*. A number of important issues

are, of course, related to Owen's covenant theology like, for example, his heavy law-gospel distinction and the newness of the New Covenant. I have no doubt that Trueman is aware of these issues in Owen's covenant theology, but why he fails to elucidate more on Sinai, for example, is a little curious to this reviewer.

Regarding the covenant of works, Trueman is indeed correct to argue that the Reformed orthodox doctrine of the covenant of works is not a matter of finding a text somewhere that explicitly or implicitly hints at such an idea. Rather, it is the careful outworking of his understanding of natural and supernatural theology; the attributes of God as Creator, law-maker, sustainer, ruler, and rewarder; and, his relational understanding of theology. Unfortunately, we are not presented with Owen's own theology on this issue with the exception of one quote on Adamic imputation (see p. 76).

The "Christological Response" to the post-Fall situation is where Trueman makes a vital point, already hinted at, about the eternal basis for the covenant of grace (78). Seventeenth-century theologians, like Owen, Gillespie, and Goodwin, argued that Christ's role as Mediator in the covenant of grace is based upon the pretemporal covenant of redemption (*pañtum salutis*). Hence, the *pañtum salutis* is used as an argument for the *ad intra* trinitarian grounding of the *ad extra* work of salvation. Unlike Trueman's distillation of the covenant of works, more attention is given to Owen's own thoughts on the covenant of grace. However, despite the added attention, and a useful description of Owen's view of conditions in the covenant of grace, the section is brief – too brief, in my opinion – and the omission of one of Owen's favourite (soteric) texts, Genesis 3:15 (*protoevangelium*), is a little surprising, especially given its significance in *Theologoumena* and the rest of Owen's *Works*.

Regarding Owen's covenant theology in general, Trueman's most helpful discussion is on Owen's doctrine of the covenant of redemption. In *The Claims of Truth* this covenant receives detailed attention, especially in light of the various critics of Owen – both in the past (Baxter) and in the present (Alan Clifford) – who have argued, for example, that "commercial categories" dominate Owen's covenant theology at the expense of "sober exegesis". But, as Trueman shows, the concept is not unique to Owen; in fact, "[t]he origins of the concept lie in the initial Reformation theology of Calvin and his contemporaries" and is, in fact, grounded in solid exposition (81). Based on the findings of Carol Williams' Ph.D. dissertation (Calvin Theological Seminary, 2005), Trueman suggests that the term, "covenant of redemption", was first used by David Dickson at his address in 1638 to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Both Dickson and Owen held that the covenant of redemption is "logically prior to, and the foundation of, the covenant of grace" (81).

This doctrine is an intra-Trinitarian covenant between the Father and the Son whereupon the Father appoints the Son as Mediator to act as the God-man, in possession of the Spirit, on behalf of the elect in the context of the temporal covenant of grace (83). Again, as in his previous discussion of the covenant of works, Trueman is intent on showing that the use of the covenant concept to describe intra-Trinitarian relations is the result of “various linguistic and conceptual arguments” so that “careful analysis of the biblical text ... legitimizes the use of the term” (85). Importantly, Trueman shows that Owen was not unaware of the danger of falling into a sub-Trinitarian foundation for the covenant of grace by focussing on the Father and the Son to the exclusion of the Spirit. Rather, for Owen, salvation is Trinitarian and the Spirit plays an all-important role in the application of redemption (86–87). This is an example of how the covenant of redemption, instead of radically divorcing time and eternity, as Karl Barth suggests (87), actually connects the temporal and the pretemporal in a coherent way. Christ’s work in time is grounded in eternity.

In terms of the application of the covenant of redemption, Trueman looks at Christ’s office as priest, the office most assailed by the Catholics, Socinians, and Arminians in Owen’s day (87). Owen’s defence of the Priesthood of Christ undermines Catholicism, “whose doctrine of the mass derogates from the finality of the cross”, Arminianism, “whose understanding of atonement and free will undermines the efficacy of Christ’s atonement”, and Socinianism, “whose reconstruction of Christ’s work in the light of the denial of the Incarnation turned the Messiah into little more than an inspiring teacher” (88). Not surprisingly, then, Owen chose, of all the books in the Bible, to write a (gigantic) commentary on Hebrews. With good reason, Christ’s priesthood is the office on which Trueman spends the most time.

Trueman finishes off the chapter with a discussion on the person of Christ in relation to his incarnation and the role of the Spirit. This is an important – and (sadly) much neglected – area of Reformed orthodoxy. Even among orthodox Protestants – particularly between the Reformed and Lutherans – there has been disagreement on the “communication of properties” (*communicatio idiomatum*). While the Reformed make a sharp distinction between the two natures of Christ – rejecting the Lutheran commingling of the divine and human – they vigorously maintained the unity of the person, thus holding to Chalcedonian orthodoxy (93). The Reformed self-consciously resisted Nestorianism because they argued that the person of the Son became flesh, not the substance but the subsistence. The unity of Christ’s divine and human nature is anchored in the person. Owen was heavily dependent on Cyril’s Christology in his exposition of the doctrine of the incarnation. The problem with Chalcedon, as Owen saw

it, was not the wording, or even the theology, of the Creed itself, but the Definition’s failure to posit the means of its own integration, that is, by an affirmation of the Spirit’s work in/on the person of Christ.

The Reformed doctrine of the “communication of operations” (*communicatio operationum*), stemming from the “communication of properties”, is summed up in the following: “Christ, in the work of mediation, acteth according to both natures; by each nature doing that which is proper to itself” (*Westminster Confession of Faith* 8.7, FPP edition, 1990). In terms of Christ acting according to his human nature, it is vital to understand that he does so in the power of the Spirit; that is, the Spirit guided, directed, comforted and supported Christ during his earthly ministry. This is also commonly understood as “Spirit Christology”. Not only then does the role of the Spirit give coherence to Chalcedon in terms of how Christ mediated according to his human nature, but it also gives rise to a thoroughly Trinitarian understanding of Christ’s redemptive work, not only in its application to the elect but in terms of Christ’s life and ministry – i.e. the Son obeying the Father in the power of the Spirit (98). I would say that one of the great contributions Owen makes to Christology is his Christo-Pneumatology and, for that reason, I am glad that Trueman references this aspect of Owen’s thought.

The salient point, implicit throughout this chapter, is Trueman’s desire to show how Owen connected Christology to covenant theology. The covenants of redemption, works, and grace are all important in understanding the person and work of Christ, and hence the chapter is appropriately titled “Divine Covenants and Catholic Christology”.

#### The Article by Which the Church Stands or Falls

Given Owen’s massive treatment on the doctrine of justification (*Works*, Vol. 5), it is somewhat surprising that there is not a lot of secondary literature that examines this doctrine in Owen’s thought. Trueman’s chapter goes some way to remedying this problem. He rightly points out the complexity of Owen’s seventeenth-century context; namely, the threat coming from the Catholic theologians and the rising problems of antinomianism and neonomianism in England (102). Moreover, even in the Reformed orthodox camp, there were disagreements on the doctrine of justification, particularly the imputation of the active and passive obedience of Christ. Nowhere was this debate more vigorously argued than at the Westminster Assembly. Chad van Dixhoorn has documented the debate in some detail and Trueman makes note of his important work. The result is a rather good summary of the intricacies involved at the Assembly as well as brief discussion on Baxter’s own problems with the doctrine of double imputation (106–107). This sets the context for a look at Owen’s 1677 treatise on justification, a work which represents Owen’s

most mature thoughts on the subject at a time when the role of imputation, for example, “was considerably more elaborate than [sic] it had been in the sixteenth century” (107). Owen adopts the clearer position of the *Savoy Declaration* (1658) which maintains the imputation of both Christ’s active and passive obedience. And this position is defended, primarily against the Socinians, by understanding Owen’s position on justification in the broader theological context of the covenants and Christology. Because the debate on imputation has been a (recent) source of historical inquiry, Trueman focuses in on this aspect of Owen’s distillation. However, his work on justification is elaborate and, while Trueman’s summary is helpful, much more needs to be written on other related areas of Owen’s doctrine (e.g. nature and use of faith, formal cause, instrumental cause, objects of faith, etc.).

Next, Trueman discusses the much-vexed issue of eternal justification. In connection with this doctrine he makes reference to Tobias Crisp and goes some way towards exonerating Crisp from the “bald characterization implied by the term ‘eternal justification’” (114). Crisp is, however, not the only one accused of eternal justification. In fact, Trueman documents Baxter’s own charge that Owen’s view of the atonement leads to “Crispianism” (i.e. eternal justification). Owen suggests, however, that Baxter’s charge that his (Owen’s) theology requires eternal justification rests upon misunderstanding Owen’s view of how the elect are in union with Christ before faith. Trueman does not reference this particular quote by Owen in relation to Baxter’s charge, but it is worth mentioning: “I dispute as well as I can against justification from eternity, and that I cannot do it like Mr. B[axter] is my unhappiness, not my crime” (*Works*, 12:603). While this discussion is helpful, I am not persuaded that Trueman adds anything significant to this discussion that is not already found in chapter five of *Claims of Truth* (especially pp. 206-210).

To conclude the chapter Trueman looks at Owen’s view of works in the Christian life and, naturally arising from that issue, his harmony between Paul and James. Somewhat ironically, while Baxter accuses Owen of a form of antinomianism, Sinclair Ferguson has suggested that Owen compromises the gracious nature of the covenant of grace by insisting upon “new obedience” (Sinclair Ferguson, “The Doctrine of the Christian Life in the Teaching of Dr. John Owen” [2 vols., Ph.D. thesis, University of Aberdeen, 1979] 482; Owen, *Works*, 1:482) as a condition of the covenant. But “new obedience”, according to Owen, has reference not to justification but to sanctification. Of course, when one reads Owen carefully on the formal cause of justification and his self-conscious resistance to the Catholic doctrine of double justification, it becomes clear that Owen clearly saw himself

operating within the parameters of Reformed orthodoxy on this much-assailed doctrine.

### Conclusion

Trueman concludes his book on Owen with a helpful summary of his overall argument. He also provides justification for why Owen should be included in the series on Great Theologians. There is no doubt, based on Trueman’s work, that Owen deserves a place in such a series alongside other luminaries such as Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, and Calvin. However, Trueman’s first work, *Claims of Truth*, sufficiently demonstrated this already. Because *Claims of Truth* and *John Owen* intersect at so many points, the question must be asked about the usefulness – or, even legitimacy – of another book on Owen from Trueman. Hence, while the book is well-written, well-argued, and well-researched, I am not persuaded that it represents enough of an advance on his first work to warrant a new publication altogether. A chapter on Owen’s ecclesiology, given his significance as the leading Independent of his time, would have been helpful, especially since that area of Owen’s theology is relatively unexplored in the secondary literature. *John Owen* is a book that, in some sense, never lived up to its anticipation, but only because the bar had already been set very high in *The Claims of Truth*. ■

D. G. Hart and John R. Muether, *Seeking a Better Country: 300 Years of American Presbyterianism* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 2007). 288 pages. ISBN 978-0-87552-574-7 (cloth). \$24.99. Reviewed by Andrew M. McGinnis, Ph.D. Studies in Systematic Theology, Calvin Theological Seminary.

Attempting to understand the nature of Presbyterianism is like Augustine’s wrestling with the nature of time. If we are honest, we must confess that we do not know what it is, and yet we talk about it and experience it all around us.<sup>1</sup> One gets the impression after reading *Seeking a Better Country* that historians Darryl Hart and John Muether have spent long hours ruminating in good Augustinian fashion on the question, what is American Presbyterianism? I will stop short of comparing the book to the *Confessions* (or the authors to Augustine!), but in *Seeking a Better Country* Hart and Muether make their way through American Presbyterian history in a contemplative, searching way that is worthy of the attention of anyone seeking to understand Presbyterian identity.

*Seeking a Better Country* presents us with 300 years of American Presbyterian history in 288 pages. At an average of over a year per page, selectivity was unavoidable, but the authors present their necessarily selective story in a way they believe is fitting for Presbyterianism: decently and in good

1. *Confessions*, XI. xxv.

order (vii-viii, 10). Hence this is no triumphalist tale of unity and ecumenism, nor is it a celebration of martyrs for the orthodox cause. Instead, by calmly reflecting on the 300 years since the first presbytery in America, Hart and Muether seek to write a true narrative that will both honor our Presbyterian past and strengthen our Presbyterian future. One of the goals of their contemplative journey is to walk the middle way between “disillusionment and optimism,” which is a path they believe will lead to a sober “hopefulness” about the future of Presbyterianism (10). In the end, *Seeking a Better Country* calls American Presbyterians to wrestle with who they are and where they are going.

In this review I will forego any lengthy summary of the book’s contents. The major movements of American Presbyterian history are relatively well known and, besides, Hart and Muether’s account is far superior to any I could sketch here. My purpose is rather to highlight, through examples from *Seeking a Better Country* and additional examples, a few distinctly American features of American Presbyterianism. Thus we will become more cognizant of the way the church has been contextualized in American culture. Through this approach to Hart and Muether’s text, I hope to stimulate further reflection and introspection on what it means to be a Presbyterian in America.

Before proceeding, a few comments on the book’s structure and content are warranted. Apart from introductory and concluding chapters, the work is divided into three parts, each of which covers roughly a century in the church’s history: 1706-1789, 1789-1869 and 1869-2006. The chapters in each part proceed more or less chronologically and highlight the major events, debates, divisions, and reunions in the history of the Presbyterian Church (U. S. A.). Despite the focus on the mainline church, the authors attempt to give sufficient attention to northern and southern expressions of Presbyterianism while not neglecting the smaller denominations that separated from the mainline church. They admit that such a task becomes a bit of a balancing act (9), but their effort is admirable. Furthermore, Hart and Muether’s narrative is not overpowered by the stories of the many luminary individuals in the church’s past. These narratives, where necessary, are situated neatly in the context of the larger story so that the church is the central focus. In this way, our Presbyterian heroes retain their humanity and earthiness.

### Americanized Presbyterianism

Two of the earliest humble heroes of American Presbyterianism were Francis Makemie and Jedediah Andrews, both of whom faced serious challenges as they established Presbyterian churches in the New World without Old World denominational connections (24-32). While Makemie’s ministerial persistence is worthy of deep admiration, Jedediah Andrews’

church in Philadelphia may provide the most profound picture of American Presbyterianism. The earliest members of Andrews’ congregation were hardly of noble Presbyterian pedigree. In fact, Hart and Muether describe Andrews’ Philadelphia congregation as a “motley assortment of English-speaking Protestants” (29). If this congregation was the mother of American Presbyterianism, then her offspring bear the family resemblance. Since its earliest days, the Presbyterian church, in its religious, ethnic, and cultural influences, has exhibited the characteristics of the fabled American melting pot.

Even today, across the various Presbyterian denominations there are vast numbers of laity and clergy who have come out of other Christian denominations and have no known ties to Presbyterianism, let alone the 17<sup>th</sup> century Presbyterianism of the British Isles. For example, the presence of many former Baptists in the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) has become an oft-told denominational joke, while the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) has traditionally attracted people of Dutch descent who trace their histories to various Dutch Reformed denominations. Furthermore, one hardly needs to mention the many broadly evangelical and fundamentalist members that populate the smaller denominations. In the case of the mainline Presbyterian Church (U. S. A.), Hart and Muether have shown the growing identity crisis of a denomination that has few distinctly Presbyterian moorings apart from its form of government (244-251). This “motley assortment” of personal histories and commitments in the Presbyterian denominations, for good or for ill, has been an ongoing feature of the church in the American context. Americanization has also appeared in many other ways, and each aspect of this process has brought its own unique challenges.

First, rapid American expansion on the large North American continent posed unforeseen challenges to Presbyterians in the New World. The citizens of the American colonies became increasingly atomized and disconnected as they pushed westward. A disheartening aspect of the church’s experience in this new situation was its failure to establish connected churches according to the Presbyterian model in a way that could answer the challenges of scattered settlements and the intensifying individualistic mindset.

The challenge that the American frontier posed to Presbyterians is apparent in Hart and Muether’s account of Francis Makemie and the first Presbytery of 1706. Makemie was keenly aware of the fact that true religion needed established towns and social centers in order to flourish (26), and Hart and Muether note that America was the kind of place least suited for the success of a church whose government was connective (31). This problem was amplified as the 19<sup>th</sup> century neared and the church was outrun not only by populations

moving west, but also by ministers who were not adequately held accountable by their geographically distant presbyteries and synods. The so-called Second Great Awakening has left us with innumerable examples of this phenomenon, especially in frontier Kentucky and the Ohio River valley.<sup>2</sup> Thus, when we reflect on the struggles of the Presbyterians in such a context, we should be cognizant of the impact that land and geography have on the spread of Christianity in general and Presbyterianism in particular. Missions scholar Andrew Walls has called attention to the role of space in the contextualization of the gospel, and the experience of American Presbyterians confirms that seemingly neutral things such as geography and physical distance are powerful factors that the church should not ignore.<sup>3</sup>

Second, in a nation whose population was both rapidly growing and rapidly spreading, the cry for more pastors was inevitable, and it was the revival-minded ministers that swiftly answered the call. For all the complaints that Old Side Presbyterians made against the itinerant preachers of the Great Awakening, these preachers were not only stirring religious interest in remote places, they were also witnessing the rise of new groups of Christians who needed ministers. As Hart and Muether recount, William Tennent, Sr.'s Log College and the subsequent schools it inspired, including the College of New Jersey (Princeton), were New Side efforts to meet the call for ministers (52-59, 65-66).

In this regard, one example that supplements Hart and Muether's narrative is the 1740s revival in Hanover County, Virginia, where small groups of Anglicans grew weary of the dead religion of the established church. These people, encouraged by the preaching of itinerant Presbyterians William

Robinson and John Blair, began meeting together to read the Scriptures and various Reformation texts including Luther's commentary on Galatians. Eventually, when the groups were officially recognized as dissenters, they were in need of a minister. The New Side New Castle Presbytery ordained Samuel Davies to the work in 1747. Davies had been trained at Samuel Blair's college in Fagg's Manor, Pennsylvania, which was a school based on the original Log College. Eventually Davies recruited a handful of ministers who, after training either at Fagg's Manor or the College of New Jersey, would be instrumental in the spread of Presbyterianism in Virginia and Kentucky.<sup>4</sup>

The story of the Hanover revival illustrates further aspects of the process of Americanization. Again, it shows the way that geography and distance affected the spread of Presbyterianism. Distant and isolated congregations needed trained pastors, and these pastors needed to be members of higher courts for the sake of accountability and fellowship. Meeting this need required the classic American traits of ingenuity and individual effort. Despite how 21<sup>st</sup>-century Presbyterians may feel about the likes of the Tennents and the Blairs, these men saw the need of their era and took the initiative to meet it. Their ingenuity and ambivalence toward traditional church structures was and continues to be a point of contention, but they were motivated by a desire to see the gospel spread to new regions. Whether their honorable ends justified their controversial means is a question that deserves the attention of all gospel-loving Presbyterians. However, at the very least, the early revivalist Presbyterians illustrate an important point. Through their tireless preaching tours and their ingenuity in training and sending ministers, these men helped to craft a Presbyterian identity imbued with an evangelical and missionary fervor that is uniquely American.

Third, an example from the 20<sup>th</sup> century illustrates the continued significance that ethnic and denominational attachments have had in American Presbyterianism. As mentioned above, the Dutch influence on the OPC has been palpable since its earliest years, especially due to two founding professors at Westminster Theological Seminary: Cornelius Van Til and R. B. Kuiper. Yet not everyone in the OPC (then known as the Presbyterian Church of America) was enamored with the Dutch contributions to the young church. The ministers who left the denomination in 1937 to form the Bible Presbyterian Church (BPC) had a different concept of American Presbyterianism.<sup>5</sup> Hart and Muether's account of this division is very brief, perhaps to a fault (201, 221). At one point, they mistakenly say that it was the Evangelical Presbyterian Church<sup>6</sup> that separated from the OPC (PCofA) in 1937 (221). Actually, it was the BPC that separated in 1937, whereas the EPC was the name taken by a later branch of the Bible Presbyterians, the BPC (Columbus Synod), in 1961. The EPC continued

2. An indispensable study of the Second Great Awakening that also captures denominational responses to the new revivalism is Nathan O. Hatch's book, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

3. Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History* (Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis, 1996), 229.

4. On the Hanover County revival, see William H. Foote, *Sketches of Virginia: Historical and Biographical*, First Series (Philadelphia: W. S. Martien, 1850; Reprint, Richmond: John Knox, 1966), 119-146; Wesley M. Gewehr, *The Great Awakening in Virginia, 1740-1790* (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1930; Reprint, Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1965); George W. Pilcher, *Samuel Davies: Apostle of Dissent in Colonial Virginia* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1971), 27-34, 106-107; Thomas S. Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 234-240.

5. For more on this division, see George M. Marsden, "Perspective on the Division of 1937," in *Pressing Toward the Mark: Essays Commemorating Fifty Years of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, ed. Charles G. Dennison and Richard Gamble (Philadelphia: Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1986), 295-328.

6. Not to be confused with the current denomination of the same name.

until 1965, when it merged with the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America, General Synod.<sup>7</sup> Admittedly the names are confusing, and the authors are probably here only attempting to give a condensed version of the story. Besides, they do get the names correct in an earlier discussion (201) and in the chart on the inside cover of the book. Confusing names aside, the division of 1937 deserves a bit more attention given what it shows us about rival concepts of American Presbyterianism.

While the BPC split of 1937 was marked by heated theological debates on the well-worn issues of premillennialism, the beverage use of alcohol, and control of the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions, deeper matters of denominational and personal identity were also at work. One illustration of these deeper matters is found in the experience of Allan MacRae, a founding Old Testament instructor at Westminster Seminary and constituting member of the Bible Presbyterian Church. After the death of his favorite mentor and professor Robert Dick Wilson and the resignation of professor Oswald T. Allis, MacRae began to see himself as an outsider on Westminster's faculty. He further felt that what had once been a grand American church was suffering from the intrusion of foreign Dutch elements. Thus, for MacRae, the issues of eschatology and the separated life were only the public aspects of his decision to leave Westminster and the PCofA.<sup>8</sup>

Another Bible Presbyterian, the outspoken separatist Carl McIntire, provides further evidence that divergent concepts of American Presbyterian identity were at work in the division of 1937. McIntire, who prided himself on his purebred Presbyterian background, also exhibited a pronounced Americanism that at times was tinged with nativism.<sup>9</sup> For this reason, McIntire, the "true" American Presbyterian, was fighting for more than eschatology in his debate with Kuiper in late 1936. At root he was defending an *American* Presbyterian identity against the Dutch professor. Thus the early division in what would become the OPC and BPC further demonstrates that the American Presbyterian melting pot is a heterogeneous and often unstable mixture of divergent ethnic and ecclesiastical influences, and this mixture is often stirred by individual personalities and prejudices that lay beneath the public points of debate.

Examples of American contextualization could be multiplied. Space, rapid expansion, and issues of ethnic identity certainly do not represent all of the ways the American context has influenced Presbyterianism. What these few examples show, however, is that Presbyterianism has indeed partaken of its American cultural setting. Though contemporary Presbyterians may have very different reactions to contextualization and its effects, this distinct form of American Presbyterianism is hardly surprising. If contextualization is a feature of Christianity as a whole, then Presbyterianism in

America will also be a contextualized phenomenon, and the American characteristics naturally will differ from those of the British and Scots-Irish Presbyterianism of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In the end, identifying the enduring and unchanging essentials of Presbyterianism is where the debate lives, and this is seen most clearly when Presbyterian confessionalism enters the American context.

### Contextualized Confessionalism

No scholarly account of American Presbyterianism can avoid discussing the church's history of confessional subscription. In this regard *Seeking a Better Country* does not disappoint. The American church's varying stance toward the Westminster Standards is in many ways the rhythm of Hart and Muether's narrative. Such a rhythm, while certainly reflecting the authors' desires to call the church back to its confessional roots, is not an imposition of their biases on the church's history. Rather, it is fair to say that the heartbeat of American Presbyterianism is the long struggle to understand how an American church should appropriate doctrinal standards that originated in a different historical and cultural context. By reviewing a few of the important moments in the history of subscription, we can see additional affects of the American context on the church.

In order to understand subscription in America, one must first understand the Adopting Act of 1729. *Seeking a Better Country* covers the debates and personalities surrounding the 1729 Synod and contains an overview of the interpretive questions related to the records of that Synod. Of particular interest is the authors' treatment of the vexing phrase "essential and necessary articles" as used in relation to the Westminster Standards. On this point, Hart and Muether exhibit the kind of detailed textual analysis that is often lacking in histories of American Presbyterianism. Though they are reserved on the point, they conclude that the original intent of the 1729 Synod was that ministers were to "adopt the Westminster Standards in a fairly strict manner" (48).

Ultimately, however, the Adopting Act does not seem to bear the weight that later Presbyterians have placed on it. While the Adopting Act indicated that the standards needed to be received in a form suitable to the American political

7. Hart and Muether also incorrectly state that this merger occurred in 1964 (221). For more on these denominations and the merger that formed the RPCES, see George P. Hutchinson, *The History Behind the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod* (Cherry Hill, N. J.: Mack, 1974).

8. For a detailed look at MacRae's experiences, see my "Stranger in a Strange Land: Allan MacRae, Personal Identity, and the Division of 1937" *Presbyterian* 33/2 (Fall 2007): 94-110.

9. John Fea, "Carl McIntire: From Fundamentalist Presbyterian to Presbyterian Fundamentalist," *American Presbyterians* 72/4 (Winter 1994): 262-264.

and religious context, this act was neither a blank check for doctrinal relativism, nor a clear defense of strict subscription. Hart and Muether argue that the Adopting Act itself “did not really address subscription” in the way that later Presbyterians may have wished and, further, the Act was subject to varying interpretations at local and synodical levels in its own day (45, 49). With this ambiguous start to subscription in the American context, it is not surprising that debates persisted.

Subsequent to the Adopting Act, the issue of confessional subscription often became the arena in which individuals contested their divergent views of Christian experience. This is not to say that there were never legitimate disputes over doctrine or the way in which a minister should subscribe the standards. However, there were occasions when subscription to the Westminster Standards was raised as a major point of dispute only to ultimately fade into the background over time. One clear example is the 1741 division between the Old and New Sides. Ironically, for all the differences between the subscription views of men like John Thomson and Jonathan Dickinson, the Old and New Side synods ended up with “substantially similar” terms for membership (65). Thus, while individuals’ confessional views were important, it was the varying personal convictions regarding the nature of authentic religious piety that gave the debate its fervency.

A similar dynamic is visible after the Old School and New School division. Hart and Muether, drawing on George Marsden’s seminal work,<sup>10</sup> argue that the New School’s “maturing self-understanding” eventually resulted in a doctrinal position quite similar to that of the Old School (133). Hence, as the original tensions over confessional and denominational distinctives evaporated, the mark that distinguished the New School from the Old School had to do more with religious sensibility than confessional adherence. That is, by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, New School Presbyterians had reached a confessionally defined Calvinism, but preferred that it “speak softly” in a way more suited to evangelism and social reform (135, 137). Here again, beneath the issue of confessional conformity lay deep-seated personal convictions about the nature of Christian piety and its proper expression.

A later period in the church’s history reveals the impact of social and cultural conditions on confessional subscription. In the case of Southern Presbyterians after the Civil War an initial insistence on strict subscription softened over time as the cultural context changed. At the outset of the Reconstruction period, strict subscription was a means of protecting the ravaged south from northern ecclesial and social influences

(224-227). When Southern Presbyterians like Robert L. Dabney and John L. Girardeau stood unflinchingly upon the truth of every statement in the doctrinal standards, it functioned as an extension of the postbellum “Lost Cause” ideology.<sup>11</sup> That is, the ongoing defense of southern identity was reflected in the vehemence and urgency with which Southern Presbyterians defended the Westminster Standards. To defend the standards was, in many ways, to defend the South. Yet, by the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this strict subscription stance began to loosen as the North-South divide mollified and a new generation of Southern Presbyterians pursued closer ties with the Northern church (229-234).

These few examples illustrate that confessional subscription is frequently tied to changing cultural situations and personal convictions regarding the nature of the Christian life. In 1729, men with divergent views on piety and confessionalism gave subscription an ambiguous start in America, and subsequent events in church and society have further shaped the way the standards have been subscribed and defended. This complicated history has intensified the ambiguity of confessional subscription in the American church. Hence the relationship between Presbyterian confessionalism and the American cultural context has been multifaceted, dynamic, and bilateral.

#### “Adjectival” Presbyterians

Lastly, there is an additional phenomenon that illustrates the contextualized aspects of Presbyterianism in America. We could perhaps call this phenomenon “adjectivalism.” Adjectival Presbyterians—what Hart and Muether call “hyphenated Presbyterians” (247)—are those who identify themselves not simply as Presbyterian but by a variety of descriptors. How many species of Presbyterian are there? Here are a few options: Old Side, New Side, Old School, New School, evangelical, confessional, mainline, moderate, fundamentalist, conservative, neo-orthodox, liberal, Northern, and Southern. All of these adjectives (or adjectival phrases) have become identity markers in their own right that, when placed in front of the term *Presbyterian*, make it difficult to determine whether the adjective or the term *Presbyterian* is the more definitive of the two.

Such an attempt at identity specification is a common American phenomenon that is even more prevalent in our postmodern era. Today the list of possible descriptors has been vastly expanded. Apparently it is no longer enough to be Reformed or Presbyterian or Lutheran, etc., one must have an even more distinct tribal identity. As Hart and Muether point out, this phenomenon is in part due to the failure of denominations to provide a sufficient religious identity for American Christians (246-247, 260-261). Thus a Christian in a traditional denomination often feel compelled to identify with a particular theological stance, a parachurch organization, a

10. George M. Marsden, *The Evangelical Mind and the New School Presbyterian Experience* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970).

11. On Dabney and the “Lost Cause” ideology, see Sean Michael Lucas, *Robert Lewis Dabney: A Southern Presbyterian Life* (Phillipsburg, N. J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2005), 221-224.

contemporary church leader, or an internet blog community. In its extreme manifestations, postmoderns will identify with multiple denominations, traditions, and associations, some of which may even be contradictory. Hence, in today's church, religious identity is an increasingly complex and self-constructed moving target. It is no wonder, then, that it is so difficult to pinpoint a distinct Presbyterian identity.

### Blind Spots and the Heavenly Perspective

This "adjectival" process of narrowing, adding to, and relativizing what it means to be Presbyterian is just one further example of the way in which Presbyterianism has become contextualized in America. We have also seen how other features of the American context have affected Presbyterianism. The American ethnic and denominational melting pot has brought unique challenges to Presbyterianism, as has westward expansion and the American frontier. Furthermore, confessional subscription has been affected by cultural change and varying concepts of Christian piety. Indeed, many additional examples could be cited, and Hart and Muether present other significant points of contact between Presbyterianism and American culture. Readers should especially note the authors' repeated reflections on the church's involvement in the state and social activism. Also, throughout the book the authors are keenly aware of an American revivalist impulse in the history of the church and its effects on Presbyterian identity.

In the end, one of the great benefits of *Seeking a Better Country* is the way it points out the cultural features of American Presbyterianism. Through Hart and Muether's observant and honest narrative, the reader comes face to face with the fact that Presbyterianism, like Christianity throughout its history, has absorbed aspects of its cultural context. This realization should encourage Presbyterians to be more attentive to the culturally conditioned aspects of American Presbyterianism, and it should lead us to better evaluate whether these aspects are detrimental, beneficial, or neutral. In fact, one of the most vital questions American Presbyterians can ask is, what are our cultural blind spots? We should be grateful that *Seeking a Better Country* identifies some of these blind spots for us.

What then is the essence of Presbyterianism? What should American Presbyterianism look like? Hart and Muether offer no easy answers. On the one hand, they quietly advocate a confessional form of Presbyterianism and hint that it has the ability to answer the church's contemporary identity crisis (257, 253-254). On the other hand, they refuse to revel in a golden Presbyterian past or anticipate a golden Presbyterian future. In fact, according to their final two chapters, the prospects for the future look bleak. They are not pessimists, however, but realists, and the sad reality is that American Presbyterians are numerically slouching toward obscurity. Yet, thankfully,

these disheartening appearances are not all there is. In another move reminiscent of Augustine, the authors turn their readers' eyes toward the heavenly, enduring city of God. This is not to advocate escapism, for, in Hart and Muether's view, what it means to be an American Presbyterian is a this-worldly quandary that we as creatures and faithful believers must continue to address. We may not shirk the hard questions. However, as *Seeking a Better Country* gently reminds us, Presbyterianism, like the rest of this broken world, has no golden age until God brings his heavenly city to earth and makes all things new. ■

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### RECENT REFORMED WRITINGS ON WORSHIP

This journal, since its genesis, has run articles on the doctrine of worship, and particularly on the regulative principle of worship. In 2005, David C. Lachman and Frank J. Smith wrote a critical piece on the views of John M. Frame and R. J. Gore. In 2006 and 2007, an extensive two-part series, a sixty-year retrospective on the use of the term "regulative principle of worship" in Reformed literature, appeared. This year, Dr. Smith follows up with reviews on still more material which deal with worship from a putatively Reformed perspective.

Reggie M. Kidd, *With One Voice: Discovering Christ's Song in Our Worship* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2005) Paperback. 217 pages. ISBN 978-0801065910. \$14.99.

Dr. Kidd has been a professor at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando. He is presently associated with the Institute for Worship Studies, founded by Robert Webber. He is a talented writer who undoubtedly means well. However, there are numerous questionable sentiments found in this volume.

The first turn-off comes before turning a page, in that the cover of this paperback is highly offensive to those who hold to the second commandment's prohibition on making images of God: on the front cover is found a modernist depiction of Christ.

In the Preface, Dr. Kidd writes of the various churches he has experienced in his spiritual pilgrimage: from Westminster Chapel in Williamsburg, Virginia, and its folk guitars, flute, and violin playing hymns and 1960s contemporary praise songs; to Philadelphia's Tenth Presbyterian Church with classical organ music; to Spanish River Church (PCA) in Boca Raton; to Chapel Hill (N.C.) Bible Church which introduced him "to the vibrant music of the Catholic folk mass movement;" to Northland, A Church Distributed, in Longwood, Florida, and its "disciplined, professional, and theologically

astute contemporary worship;" to Orangewood Presbyterian Church (PCA), Maitland, Florida (10f).

The author quickly establishes two major motifs—that the church is a singing community, and that Jesus is a singing Savior in the midst of His people. He writes: "I believe that much of the difficulty we face in the church stems from the fact that we think it's all about us—our tastes, our preferences, our principles. So we debate styles, genres, levels of participation, and levels of volume. When we factor in the other Singer as well—this Singing Savior—our conversations, I submit, will take on a different tone" (22).

Much of the book is focused on the Psalter as forming a paradigm for our praise. However, he alleges that the "hymns" of Colossians 3:16 are "crafted, poetic explorations of the faith" and the "spiritual songs" are "songs of instruction or ad hoc exclamations" (27).

Speaking of David's candor, he writes: "I can understand why Bono would call him 'the Elvis of the bible [sic].' ... David had that same combination of being larger-than-life and as frail as the frailest of us. Perhaps this is why David is the Bible's first real singer" (63).

Dr. Kidd speaks of Psalm 22 as being "The Musical Hinge;" and goes on to consider Jesus' lament as well as His chant of victory. Again, there is much here that is profound and helpful. However, he begs the question when, after noting that "Jesus sings in our midst because death itself has begun working backwards," he concludes: "It is only fitting that we should answer his song with ours, because, as Twila Paris rightly sings, 'All that has been taken, it shall be restored'" (118). Instead of answering "his song with ours," why shouldn't we simply join Him in His song?

The author writes in Chapter 7 of "The Singing Savior's Many Voices: "Just like hair, music can either be a means of pushing each other away or of drawing close to each other. 'Music doesn't open doors nearly as much as it builds walls,' maintains middle-aged *Orlando Sentinel* columnist and cartoonist Jake Vest, commenting on why musical performances during a recent Grammy awards telecast sent him to his refrigerator as much for escape as for refreshment. What Vest's generation's rock musical *Hair* did to its parents, rap singer Andre 3000's version of the hootchie-kootchie does to Vest's generation: 'shock, dismay, befuddle and offend'" (120).

But this variety is to be celebrated, for it is Jesus who inhabits "really diverse music" (ibid.). Indeed, "Jesus purges the idolatrous aspects of a culture's music and focuses the yearning for redemption that shows up wherever the *imago Dei* bears the kiss of common grace. Jesus cleanses consciences and he cleanses songs one would have thought foul beyond redemption.... It's hard to miss the fact that Jesus sings with a staggering plurality of 'folk voices'—songs emerging from cultures and social subsystems configured around 'all the

families of the earth.' As the song says, 'red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in his sight.' Because of that fact, they all have a voice in his assembly" (127).

The author uses this perspective to make his next point: "Throughout history, the working poor have produced a simple, gritty, unpretentious aesthetic. 'Work songs' comprise a subset of folk music—genres like sea chanteys, chain gang songs, and cowboy ballads. But the music of the working poor takes into its sweep all kinds of earthy musical dialects: from blues to folk hymns. The music of the 'working poor' tends to be participatory. Its beauty lies more in being done than in being listened to. Folk music tends to be gritty, because it deals with life's injustices, hopes, and compensating pleasures" (128).

For Reggie Kidd, the Singing Savior has a "Bach" voice, a "Bubba" voice, and a "Blues Brothers" voice. "Bach's" voice gives expression to the New Testament's vision of our being called to participate in the City of God. Here is a commonwealth in which the worthiest of human aspirations—including the artistic—find their goal and satisfaction." He continues: "Bubba" is my shorthand for the fact that Jesus also sings among the culturally less refined—he is as much Brother within the family sitting around the piano singing 'Will the Circle Be Unbroken' as he is Lord of the cathedral congregation chanting a *Te Deum*.... 'Bubba' represents to me the most famous of folk composers: 'Anonymous.'" "Blues Brothers" is a reference to a movie starring John Belushi and Dan Ackroyd, whose characters "go on a 'mission from God' to reunite their soul band for a concert in order to raise money to save the orphanage, and so to take care of the next generation. In the process, of course, they break a lot of rules. To me, they are a parable of a similar call God places on each generation of the church. The Blues Brothers' voice answers to the New Testament's call to be cadres of friends [i.e., *koinonia*] who enlist the common dialect of their culture ... to the service of redemptive ends. Musically, we are called to do the best we can with the musical idioms we have inherited so we can help the next generation hear the Savior's song and take up their own voice in response" (130–32).

The next three chapters speak of these three genres of music. Regarding "Bach," he writes:

Because he is the very Logos of God and agent of creation, Jesus is deserving of the most elegant, the most intellectually rigorous and challenging—and the most passionately romantic—aesthetic expressions of worship imaginable. Christ merits majestic worship. For many people, and for good reason, the attraction of a classical aesthetic is that it connotes transcendence, elegance, and excellence—and is therefore especially apposite to worship of the exalted Christ (134).

Classical music helps the church to wrestle with the relationship between what is true and what is beautiful. While believers were divinely given “the song of redemption,” unbelievers were granted “the gift of song.” Dr. Kidd writes: “God has placed us in a symbiotic relationship with nonbelieving musicians. I call this the Jubal factor. They have a bravery we need while we have a story they are lost without. I suspect that God himself prompts the children of Jubal, the mad geniuses outside the believing community—the Beethovens, the Wagners—to push the musical frontiers further out so the church can follow and learn new textures, tone colors, rhythms, harmonic combinations, and melodic possibilities” (137).

He speculates: “Maybe the perfect musical diet is equal parts Bach, Bubba, and the Blues Brothers. I don’t know. I’ve never seen it in church.... I’ve concluded that it must be our Singing Savior’s delight to make one fellowship resonate more to Bach’s voice and another to Bubba’s. It must bring him satisfaction to grace one fellowship with a heap of the Blues Brothers’ gifts and a dash of Bubba, and another with a boatload of Bubba and a sprinkling of Bach” (144).

In the chapter on “Bubba’s Voice,” the author writes that the church’s folk songs not only are “frank and honest,” but “also give shape to different truths and moods of the faith itself. Whatever stream of Christianity any of us has landed in—high or low Protestant, Catholic or Orthodox—we have received a heritage of song. Christian philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff says we all have our ‘tribal’ music. There’s incredible richness in the Christian family tree, and each branch seems to have been entrusted with a special insight and a unique voice” (154).

He continues:

Our spiritual forbears sensed a particular “fit” between their preaching of the faith and their singing of the faith. Lutheran chorales and hymns have their own way of interweaving the objectivity of Christ’s work *for* us with the subjective benefits of his life *in* us. Methodist and Moravian hymns have theirs. Genevan metrical psalms embody both the *gravitas* (the weightiness) of what it is to worship a holy God, and the delight of having this holy God draw near in grace. Baptist testimony songs give voice to the Christian instinct for telling our neighbors the Good News, while Baptist hymns make their own contribution to Christendom’s majestic praise. Anglo-Catholic settings of “service music” adorn worship that is a weekly recapitulation of the history of redemption. Orthodox chanting makes palpable the mystery of the interconnectedness between heaven and earth. The grittiness of spirituals (both African American and shape-note) preserve the cross-shaped hopefulness of life lived out in pilgrimage. We’re all trustees of a profound gift (154f).

With this quotation, we begin to see more clearly where Dr. Kidd goes astray. It is one thing to maintain that there may legitimately be different genres of music to be employed in worship—that is to say, that a variety of tunes may be used, since the matter of tunes is one of circumstance. But it is something altogether different to use that truth as a springboard for contending that men may bring to God their own words in sung praise. With the preceding paragraph, we can also perceive that Dr. Kidd moves beyond an acceptance of all worship songs (that is, with respect to the content), to an acceptance of the theologies behind all of those songs—including Anglo-Catholic and Orthodox. He is astute to recognize that there is a necessary relationship between one’s theology and one’s worship songs. What he seems to be indicating is that all of the theologies across the spectrum of Christendom are equally legitimate. What he should have concluded, instead, is that it is the Calvinistic stream that is the purest and most consistent, and that therefore the songs that come from that branch should be emulated.

His confusion is further evident a couple of paragraphs later:

My own tribe is the Calvinist. The clans within this tribe are numerous and enthusiastic—from exclusive psalm-singers to singers of psalms and (old school) hymns (in old school ways), to minstrels rewriting old schools hymns with new folklike melodies, to progressives who self-consciously contextualize their singing to their regional or ethnic or demographic setting. Our family homecomings are not always cordial. We have to keep reminding ourselves of what Paul told the Romans (if I may paraphrase): “One sings praise songs as well as psalms. Another abstains from praise songs and sings only psalms. Let not him who sings everything despise her who abstains, and let not her who abstains judge him who sings everything; for God welcomes him.... He who sings everything sings in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God. She who abstains, does so in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. None of us lives to ourselves, none of us dies to ourselves.” We have to learn to do what my friend and colleague Steve Brown says the functional family does on long vacations in the car—it bans the headphones and lets Grandma and Junior take turns picking the family’s music (155f).

But that, of course, is to maintain the view of “toleration” for a wide variety of worship songs, and, by definition, to attack exclusive psalmody: no matter how nicely and cutely it may be put, there is a polemic edge to these words—backed up by a twisting (what he calls a “paraphrase”) of Holy Scripture.

The polemic is expressed more sharply a page later: “One of the greatest challenges of our day is to live with what

sociologist Peter Berger calls ‘the heretical imperative,’ that is, an awareness that our tribe’s way of embodying the faith is not the only option. As we become more aware of each other’s song we see more clearly that our own way of singing is a choice. It’s not the only option. None of us embodies wholly the wholeness of who our Savior is. In that realization we avoid the pitfalls of what we might call xenophobic ‘tribalism’—the belief that the gospel stands or falls with the particular way in which *our* tribe sings it” (157).

However, please note that the argument about not embodying “wholly the wholeness of who our Savior is” is the type of rhetoric that liberals have used for decades in order to beat down any number of exclusive doctrines, from the doctrine of Scripture to the extent of the atonement. This argument only has force if Scripture allows for the type of expansiveness of worship song which Dr. Kidd envisions. Furthermore, let it again be noted that there is a variety of ways by which the singing of the Psalms can come to expression—but allowing for a wide repertoire of tunes across the musical spectrum does not serve as a foundation for expanding the content of worship song.

It is not surprising to find Reggie Kidd advocating rock and roll music and “alternative” and “edgier” contemporary music that offers syncopation and a backbeat and other rhythmic devices which “can lend songs a richer, more pleasuring texture” (176).

In the final chapter, he writes:

Despite every attempt we make to pare his song list down to a manageable repertoire, Jesus is constantly expanding it. In the face of our careful attention to which niche market can be served by which vocal bandwidth, the Singing Savior is distributing his magnificent voice across an increasingly wide spectrum of musical idioms. In defiance of congregations’ insistence on dividing themselves along age and affinity lines, Jesus teaches his people to defer to one another. Thus he blends the songs of generations and nations and families and tribes and tongues to make sweet harmony to the Father (178).

But the basic problem with Dr. Kidd’s position is that we are to sing Jesus’ songs and not expect Him to sing ours. That misunderstanding, coupled with thinking that a broad allowance for various tunes and styles automatically allows for all kinds of content, undermines his entire thesis.

Paxson H. Jeancake, *The Art of Worship: Opening Our Eyes to the Beauty of the Gospel* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006). Paperback. xiii, 171. ISBN 978-1597527156. \$22.00.

Paxson Jeancake is a songwriter and “worship leader” who

serves as Director of Worship and Arts at East Cobb Presbyterian Church, a PCA congregation in Atlanta, Georgia. This book represents his thoughts on the intersection of gospel, art, and worship.

In the Introduction, he lays out the book’s organizational structure as being founded on three categories: leadership, theology, and community. This reflects John Frame’s triperspectivalism. But more than merely providing a way in which to discuss worship, the author believes that “they actually reveal the very character of God himself, and the way he has initiated his relationship with us as worshippers. The three perspectives allow us to see the way God has given us divine revelation about himself, organically inspired, that we might have intimate knowledge of him; how he has entered right into our world, giving us the common stuff of life (bread, wine, water) to gather around in community, enabling us to see and experience the gospel; and how he has given us the gift of music, the intimacy of conversation, and the heritage of truth through which we voice our own inner affections, petitions, and convictions” (5).

The author then writes of the gospel, including its beauty, and the fact that we often don’t really understand the gospel. We often don’t believe the message “at a deep level” (“it’s too good to be true”), and we also turn to false idols (9). However, God opens our eyes to the gospel, through His Word’s inspiration, the Spirit’s illumination, in a context of community, and via the power of artistic media. This leads Mr. Jeancake to “give serious attention to the unique way that each art form can appropriately serve the Christian meta-narrative. Whether through story, image, lyrical or poetic language, much of the power of art lies in its ability to open our eyes to meaning and truth” (13).

God’s love of beauty forms a major motif in the author’s consideration of the temple, as well as the use of artistry seen in events such as Nathan’s confrontation of David with his sin. A distinction is drawn between “seeing” (knowing intellectually) and “seeing as” (knowing spiritually).

Moreover, “Jesus demonstrates the power of literary art forms and dramatic gestures to teach the people of God—to create space for them to wrestle with the truth about God and themselves.” He continues: “Just like those in the Old Testament and those who walked with Jesus, we need art forms to speak to our imagination; to open our eyes to the meaning of God’s word for our lives” (17).

With that perspective as a premise, the author writes: “To be sure, the primary purpose of corporate worship is for the glory of God—it has a vertical focus and aim. However, we can also speak of the secondary aims of worship recognizing that there is a horizontal dimension as well. Worship is offered *by* God’s people, *through* various means, including: the ministry of the word, the observance of the sacraments,

and the expression of songs, prayers, and professions of faith. Thus, while I'm hesitant to say that worship *is* art, I would say that worship incorporates *artistic media* of expression—story, imagery and experience, lyrical and poetic expression. Each of these media, in fact, reflects the different perspectives of worship that we will explore in the remainder of this book” (18). He concludes the Introduction by positing that worship leaders are “priests” in that they help to facilitate God’s meeting with His people.

Of course, what the author has done is to ignore completely the regulative principle of worship, and to establish a view of worship that is built upon the structure which he has imposed upon the Biblical data. There is no evidence of an orthodox understanding of the essential difference between the administration of the covenant of grace in the New Covenant era and its administration in the Old.

In Chapter 1, Mr. Jeancake gives evidence of his genuine intentions of piety. He uses several of the Psalms to illustrate how to cultivate the Psalmist’s heart.

In Chapter 2, he sets forth three broad characteristics for every worship leader: he must “think like a theologian, labor like an artist, and shepherd like a pastor” (37).

Part 2 of the book (“Discovering a Gospel-Centered Worship Theology”) begins with Chapter 3 (“The Story of the Gospel”), in which he writes of the “power of story.” This, he says, is the “normative perspective—the ministry of the word as it comes to us as a grand narrative that helps us make sense out of life, that resonates at a deep level with who we are, who God is, and how we are to live in light of the gospel of Christ” (54). He then quotes from Bill Moyers’ interview of Joseph Campbell, in celebration of myth and story. Though conceding that there is “plenty of guidance” one can derive from Scripture, and that “it does indeed contain plenty of true propositions and divine directives, the Bible is infinitely more than that” (56).

But here’s the fundamental problem—Mr. Jeancake is driving a wedge between the notion of propositional truth and the “meta-narrative” of Scripture, and at the same time undermining doctrinal truth by making the “story” more fundamental. Surely it is significant that he quotes from left-wing journalist Moyers and noted pagan Campbell, in their celebration of myth.

Indeed, the author is sympathetic to the perspective offered by Brent Curtis and John Eldridge, in their book *The Sacred Romance*, in which they lionize the Medieval approach of viewing “the gospel as a Romance, a cosmic drama whose themes permeated our own stories and drew together all the random scenes in a redemptive wholeness” and in which they decry “our rationalistic approach to life, which has dominated Western culture for hundreds of years” (55).

Based on these foundational notions, Mr. Jeancake

supports the use of movie clips during sermons (55), personal testimonies as part of the liturgy (“we should regularly share the present stories of faith and conversion as an important facet of the ministry of the word”), and drama (with its “unique ability to reveal, shock, and enlarge, thus allowing us to see things as they really are”) (63). He also supports the adapting of multi-media technologies for worship.

Chapter 4 is entitled “The Images of the Gospel.” Here he segues off of the sacraments as “‘visible words’ of the gospel” to a broad-based “situational perspective—observing the imagery and experience of the gospel through the common, elemental objects of bread, wine, and water, as well as the other forms of visual imagery and aesthetics” (71). As if by magic, Mr. Jeancake moves from the God-ordained sacraments to an all-encompassing embrace of imagery and aesthetics. He then quotes from a book from the official publishing house of the (liberal) Presbyterian Church (USA), Westminster John Knox Press, which unites the “taste and texture of communion bread” with “movement and stillness in the room, the smell of candles or evergreen branches, and the touch of hands extended in welcome shape Christian worship” (ibid.).

After considering the sacraments, the chapter moves on to the visual arts: “Though God has chosen to give us the common stuff of life (bread, wine, water) and has instituted certain acts (baptism and the Lord’s Supper) as signs and seals of the covenant of grace, the gospel can also [be] expressed through the medium of visual arts” (77). He quotes Robert Webber, who candidly acknowledged that the Protestant Reformation was “Word-driven,” but who also expressed “hope for the future” in that, via the communication revolution, “Protestantism is restoring the visual to worship” (ibid.).

But, of course, the rejection of Word-orientation and the acceptance of a visual approach to worship is an abandonment of the Protestant Reformation—a point concerning which Mr. Jeancake seems blithely unaware.

Over the next few pages, the author writes of how his PCA church’s “Worship and Arts ministry commissioned a local artist to create a series of paintings that would visually capture the essence of a recent sermon series.” He quotes from that artist’s philosophy of art: “History shows that artists have used many forms of visual methods to tell stories—drawing, painting, sculpture, ceramics, and textiles, etc. It is through these forms, I believe, that we can tell God’s story in a way that makes Him visible. . . . The visual arts used as a component of worship can set you free visually from the expected and open new ways to show His glory. When we hear a story and connect it to an image, it then can become alive in our minds. When that happens, the story can become real through our lives. That is what God wants of each of us—to tell His story through our lives” (77f).

By way of response, let it be noted that this is not

significantly different from the mystical perspective of Medieval Romanism. It also, however, shares much in common with the experimental worship in the Southern Presbyterian Church that was one of the contributing factors in the formation of what became the Presbyterian Church in America.<sup>1</sup>

Paxson Jeancake argues that because we have been created “as multi-sensory beings, visual imagery can be a powerful means of communicating aspects of the gospel and the Christian meta-narrative into worship.” The three examples he offers are “as background imagery for slides; as cover art for bulletins, and as works displayed in the narthex or lobby of your worship space” (83).

Chapter 5 is on “The Gift of Music.” He writes that during the summer after graduating from school, he was leading worship at his hometown church. “I can remember one particular morning looking over at one [of] my vocalists and the two of us looking joyfully stunned at how God was so apparently working in our midst. I would often look behind me at my djembè player, pounding out rhythms with his head back, his eyes closed, lost in worship. It was all so incredible” (86).<sup>2</sup>

But, of course, how does he know that it was a spiritual experience? Maybe it was merely an emotional experience, fueled by the heavy beat of the drum.

Writing of Psalm singing, Mr. Jeancake quotes Hughes Oliphant Old about the High Church party, led by Elizabeth I, sneering at and dismissing the Calvinistic metrical Psalms as “Geneva jigs.” He continues: “Here, the irony of our current situation concerning contemporary worship music is worth noting. Some in the Reformed tradition today sneer at contemporary worship music; yet, those writing and singing such music are simply carrying on the *spirit* of the

1. As one example among many, the *Presbyterian Journal* editorialized on September 25, 1968, as follows: “If there is anything the Bible says clearly, it is that God is very particular about the way (the manner, the form) of worship. Cain’s offering was rejected, while Abel’s was accepted. The Lord Jesus said to the woman at the well, ‘God wants people to worship Him in spirit and in truth.’ Idolatry (in part) is the devising of false forms of worship, such as images, medals, candles, prayer wheels, flagellation, drugs, entertainment—most of which have their place, but not necessarily in church.” The editorial continued: “If proper worship is what I want to do, then the Hindu’s bed of spikes, the Mohammedan’s barefoot pilgrimage, the mountaineer’s snake-handling, are all praiseworthy. And if worship is the appeal to someone in his own idiom, then let’s bring the discotheque into the sanctuary” (quoted in Frank J. Smith, *The History of the Presbyterian Church in America: The Silver Anniversary Edition* [Lawrenceville, Ga.: Presbyterian Scholars Press, 1999] 495).

2. For the uninitiated, a djembè is a drum which originated in West Africa. According to Wikipedia, “The djembe is said to contain three spirits: the spirit of the tree, the spirit of the animal of which the drum head is made, and the spirit of the instrument maker.”

3. Melinda Henneberger, “I Dare You’: Madeleine L’Engle On God, ‘The Da Vinci Code’ and Aging Well,” *Newsweek* Web Exclusive, May 7, 2004, accessed at <http://www.newsweek.com/id/105017/>.

Reformation by putting church music ‘in the language of the people’” (96).

However, there are significant differences between the contemporary Christian music scene and that which Calvin, et al., accomplished in the Reformation era. And while we would not want to rule out of hand all contemporary tunes, nevertheless, one cannot simply appeal to the new way of singing exemplified in the Reformation in order automatically to justify innovation for innovation’s sake.

The author tries to make a case for composing “new songs”—but in such a way as to be seemingly ignorant of how Scripture employs the sense of “newness.” Quoting from Andy Park regarding the writing of new hymns, we read, “When God is breathing upon us, we can write God-breathed songs” (102). Of course, that’s true—but since inspiration has ceased, the church no longer has that ability.

Mr. Jeancake also quotes Madeleine L’Engle: “God is constantly creating, in us, through us, with us, and to co-create with God is our human calling.” He completes the thought by writing this: “Through the act of ‘co-creating’ with God and birthing original melodies and lyrics, we experience the privilege of offering the church new songs for both corporate and private expressions of worship” (102f).

Of course, Mr. Jeancake doesn’t address the fact that Madeleine L’Engle was a liberal Episcopalian who believed in universalism. A 2004 interview with *Newsweek* revealed these views: “What are you against? Narrow-mindedness. I’m against people taking the Bible absolutely literally, rather than letting some of it be real fantasy, like Jonah. You know, the whole story of David is a novel ... Faith is best expressed in story. If the Bible is not literally true, does that mean we don’t need to take it seriously? Oh no, you do, because it’s truth, not fact, and you have to take truth seriously even when it expands beyond the facts.”<sup>3</sup> But he has no problem with the assertion that God continues to create, and that we are co-creators with Him.

Chapter 8 (“Developing a Worship Identity”) sets forth several liturgical models: Lectionary; Traditional (Reformed or Revivalist); Seeker; Praise and Worship; and Convergence. “The Convergence model seeks to bring out the best of these various models of worship by creating a robust gospel-dialogue, a multi-sensory sacramental experience, and an affective, Spirit-filled encounter—each complemented by a creative and innovative use of technology and the arts” (139). In celebrating diversity, the author writes: “One does not have to look very far to notice that the body of Christ is made up of a diverse mix of folks. Throughout the history of the church we have, at times, invested our creative energy in Gregorian chant, Metrical psalmody [sic], Lutheran chorale, Reformed hymnody, Revivalistic hymnody, Plainsong, Pop, Gospel, Folk, Rock, Acoustic, Classical, Urban-Gospel, and Celtic. The list is as varied as cultures are diverse. In today’s

multi-cultural atmosphere, celebrating only one genre of music is a bit boring at best, prideful at worst" (145).

However, Mr. Jeancake has failed to appreciate that there might be bona fide Biblical reasons for preferring one genre of music over another. What he has done is to elevate the concept of variety for variety's (and culture's) sake, instead of dealing substantively with what Scripture has to say on the subject. By doing so, he has himself manifested a prideful position—one that hasn't taken into serious account the Biblical data or the wealth of literature on the matter written by Reformed scholars.

Chapter 9 ("Crafting Gospel-Centered Worship") offers six principles to guide the planning of worship: Start with the Word; Identify a Theme; Find an Anchor (i.e., something to help "advance the theme and spark further creativity"); Choose Appropriate Texts; Look for Transcendent Moments; and Handle with Care. He then writes of how to put it all together, by discussing four characteristics of the Convergence model: "(1) a robust gospel-dialogue, (2) a multi-sensory sacramental experience, and (3) a Spirit-filled encounter—each complemented by (4) a creative and innovative use of technology and the arts" (151).

Although there may be good things which the author has expressed in this book, the vast majority of his writing is rubbish. Whatever good is here can be found in other, more substantive works; and furthermore, those good sentiments will not usually in those other works be found in the employ of innovation or multicultural correctness, as is the case with this book. Mr. Jeancake's perspective is dangerous, as it will lead back to the Romantic mysticism of Rome and the left-wing experimental worship of mainline churches in the 1960s.

**John M. Frame, "The Second Commandment: Regulating Worship," in *The Doctrine of the Christian Life: A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2008) Hardback. 1108 pages. ISBN 978-0875527963. \$44.99.**

John M. Frame is a professor at Reformed Theological Seminary (RTS) in Orlando. Chapter 26 of this tome is entitled "The Second Commandment: Regulating Worship." Professor Frame's approach is similar to what he has written in the past, but it appears also to represent some refinement in argument.

Dr. Frame begins by noting that the second commandment has been applied in Reformed theology to more than simply a prohibition on images; instead, it also applies "to other issues concerning the regulation of worship" (464).

The author asserts that although "a nice theoretical contrast" has been historically presented between the Reformed perspective on one hand, and the Lutheran/Anglican view on the other, this sharp distinction may not be justified. He

writes that most Lutheran and Anglican practices, "even things that Presbyterians most object to, such as vestments, processions, and incense, arise from some theological reflection, including a biblical rationale.... Lutherans and Anglicans apply Scripture to worship differently than Presbyterians do, but this may be a hermeneutical/exegetical issue, more than one of fundamental principle" (465f).

As we have observed in previous articles in *The Confessional Presbyterian*, it is characteristic of those with a weak or defective view of the regulative principle to downplay the (significant) differences among various approaches to worship.

The professor next speaks of circumstances of worship, and the treatment of such in the Westminster Confession of Faith (1.6). He observes that circumstances "are to be ordered by general revelation ('the light of nature'), Christian wisdom ('prudence'), and the general rules of Scripture." In a footnote, he utilizes his tri-perspectivalism: "These three factors form a triad: the general rules of Scripture are normative, general revelation is situational, and wisdom is existential" (466).

In exegeting the Westminster Confession, he notes that although the term "elements" is not used, the word "parts" is. Further, the Westminster divines posited "two different regulative principles: one for human life in general, and a different one for faith and worship" (467).

As he begins to evaluate the regulative principle, he argues that numerous Scriptural passages (Genesis 4:5; Leviticus 10:1-2; 1 Samuel 13:8-14; 2 Samuel 6:6-7; 1 Kings 12:32-33; 15:30; 2 Chronicles 26:16-23; 28:3; Jeremiah 7:31; 1 Corinthians 11:29-30) illustrate that "people suffer severe penalties for defective worship.... So it is literally a life-and-death matter to worship God according to his command. For us today, that means deriving our worship from the Bible" (468).

However, he grounds the regulative principle on "general considerations: the nature of worship as homage to God, the nature of revelation, the sufficiency of Scripture" (ibid.). He doesn't believe that deriving this principle from the second commandment and its prohibition of idolatry, is valid.

His skepticism of the relationship between the second commandment and the regulative principle revolves around the fact that human wisdom must be employed regarding the circumstances of worship, and in other ways also. He writes that "the second commandment does not distinguish between elements and circumstances, nor does it distinguish right from wrong uses of reason in worship. Insofar as the regulative principle depends on such distinctions, it must rely on portions of Scripture other than the second commandment" (469).

But, of course, most ethical issues rely on portions of Scripture other than the Decalogue, for a full explanation and delineation of the appropriate parameters. Since every sin or responsibility comes under one or more of the Ten

Commandments, it is only fitting that the issue of the regulative principle would be handled under the second commandment; given that reality, it is easy to see why the Reformers believed that worshipping by means of a graven image is the most heinous example of unauthorized worship.

Professor Frame says that he is dubious that the regulative principle can be derived from the standard proof texts; and he deals with Genesis 4:5, Leviticus 10:1–2, 1 Samuel 13:13, and Jeremiah 7:31 in order to demonstrate his doubts. His conclusion is that “these passages do not prove the regulative principle specifically. They do prove that whatever is not prescribed is forbidden. They do show that God takes violations of his rules for worship very seriously” (470).

But, isn’t the basic point of the regulative principle that “whatever is not prescribed is forbidden”? The positive dimension of the regulative principle, viz., that of the necessity of Biblical warrant, or that worship is a command performance, follows at least by good and necessary consequence. Accordingly, how can the professor write that “these passages do not prove the regulative principle specifically”?

Next, he considers problems in applying the regulative principle. The first issue is that of determining the elements of worship. Here, he speaks of the three sources for Biblical warrant: “explicit commands,” “approved examples,” and “theological inferences.” The second and third of these sources, according to the author, allows for “considerable scope for human reflection, even in determining ‘elements’—a disturbing result, since many revere the regulative principle precisely because it minimizes (or even eliminates) such reflection. But it is not clear how

4. Michael Bushell, *The Songs of Zion: A Contemporary Case for Exclusive Psalmody* (Pittsburgh: Crown and Covenant Publications, 1980; third edition, 1999).

5. This present author wrote that Mr. Bushell’s view “introduces confusion into the terminology. In the same way that the author correctly wants to guard against the confusion between two different uses of the term ‘regulative principle,’ we also want to guard against conflating the notion of circumstance. We understand why Mr. Bushell was trying to make this distinction, and was willing to concede that there was ‘overlap’ between the categories of substance and circumstance. He wanted to be able to point out that the content of worship song cannot be regarded as a circumstance that is within the Church’s discretion. However, the proper way to make that point is by noting that the content of worship song is a substantial aspect of that particular element of worship, in the same way that the content of any of the elements is a necessary aspect of that particular element. In other words, whether it is an element with an objectively ‘fixed’ content (such as the singing of praise and the reading of the Word), or an element with content which is ‘free’ (such as prayer and the preaching of the Word), the nature of that content is determined by Scripture, and therefore not a circumstantial matter” (Frank J. Smith with Chris Coldwell, “The Regulative Principle of Worship: Sixty Years in Reformed Literature. Part One (1946–1999),” *The Confessional Presbyterian* 2 (2006) 115f.

the regulative principle can function without this kind of reflection” (471).

However, we are not aware of anyone who would maintain that working through the implications of the regulative principle is a mindless enterprise. Indeed, we who hold to the regulative principle welcome rational discourse on the matter.

John Frame takes Michael Bushell to task for the way in which he overlaps elements and circumstances, and distinguishes between “circumstances that have ‘spiritual meaning’ or ‘sacred significance,’ such as the words of prayers, and those that don’t, such as the time and place of worship” (472). On this point, we basically agree with John Frame: despite Bushell’s masterful treatment of the question of the content of worship song,<sup>4</sup> there is a slight weakness in his position when he deals with the distinction between elements and circumstances.<sup>5</sup>

Professor Frame continues to press his point against Bushell by positing that there is no sharp distinction between spiritual and nonspiritual significance. This is so, he believes, because worship in the broad sense encompasses all of life, which is to be lived for God’s glory. In so doing he passes from legitimate to illegitimate criticism; this is true in that, while paying lip service to the confessional standards to which he subscribes, he contradicts the teaching of the Westminster Confession of Faith with respect to Christian liberty and liberty of conscience, by denying that “the area of worship is subject to a regulative principle different from that governing other areas of life.” In his view, the only distinction is that “God has a special concern with violations of his regulations for worship in the narrow sense” (473f). Again, he claims that the regulative principle of worship “bears on all of life, not only on worship in the narrow sense.” Accordingly, he maintains that “the regulative principle is simply the application of the sufficiency of Scripture to worship. So if we are to recognize the universality of *sola Scriptura* as taught in the Confession, we should reject the distinction between two regulative principles taught in WCF, 20.2” (474).

At this point, we must express our amazement. It is one thing for the good professor to disagree with the venerable product of Westminster. But it is quite another to suggest, as he has, that the Westminster authors contradicted themselves—that there is a contradiction between the universality of *sola Scriptura*, and a regulative principle of worship that is distinct from the way the Word governs the rest of life.

Professor Frame continues his line of attack by attempting to conflate the responsibility of both church and civil officials not to violate liberty of conscience:

... So the regulative principle is, in part, an attempt to define what officers (primarily in church and state) may and may not do to govern human life. Through it, the divines meant to subject officers to the higher authority of God’s Word. So the regulative principle says in effect that officers of the church

may require church members to follow God's commandments in Scripture for worship ("elements"), and they may require worshippers to follow these commandments in various ways ("forms," "circumstances") that agree with the general rules of the Word, even if they are not commanded there. But they may not command practices contrary to Scripture, nor may they require the addition of elements not commanded in Scripture.

Officers of the state may also require their citizens to obey them in matters Scripture assigns to the state. This is parallel to the "elements" we have discussed under worship. These officers may also require citizens to carry out these civic duties in various ways not prescribed by Scripture, but compatible with its general rules. This is parallel to the "forms" and "circumstances" of worship. But these officers may not command anything on divine (or other ultimate) authority that is not found in Scripture.

In this way too, then, it becomes evident that the regulative principle is the same for all spheres of human life, and for worship both in the broad sense and in the narrow sense. (475)

But please note that similarity does not imply equality or identity. The fact that man's physiology resembles in some ways that of primates, does not imply that they have a common ancestor; rather, it demonstrates that they have a common Creator. The fact that there are similarities between the application of liberty of conscience in the ecclesiastical sphere and its application in the civil sphere does not lead to the conclusion that "Scripture is sufficient for worship in the same way it is sufficient for everything else"—viz., that "God gives general principles, and we seek to apply these principles" (*ibid.*).

Professor Frame proceeds to speak of various ways in which a traditional understanding of the regulative principle has sought to downplay human input. The first example is that of regarding each element of worship as requiring "a specific biblical rationale" (476), with the particular issue being that of the content of worship song. Astonishingly, in his handling of John Murray, he claims that "the argument that each element of worship requires a biblical rationale independent of the others seems to me to lack biblical support or even confessional support." Furthermore, the "notion that worship can be neatly broken up into independent units is based more on philosophical atomism than on Scripture" (477).

But, of course, if there are not distinct "elements" of worship, then what in the world does the Confession of Faith mean when it speaks of "parts" of worship? Indeed, when Professor Frame claims that the notion that each element must be dealt with particularly does not have the support of the Westminster Standards, is he simply not aware of the relevant literature on the subject?

A second example of downplaying human input by traditionalists is that "God's commandments for worship must be specific to each redemptive era" (477). This perspective would rule out not only animal sacrifices, but things such as choirs.

But Professor Frame argues that it is un-Biblical to maintain that Old Testament worship practices were abrogated en masse. He claims that "Scripture never says that temple worship is completely abrogated. Temple worship contained not only animal sacrifices, but also prayer (as Acts 3:1), teaching (Acts 5:25), and praise. There is no biblical reason to suppose that these elements (along with choirs and orchestras) require specific renewals for the new covenant age." In the preceding paragraph, he argues that "there is no suggestion in the New Testament that the fulfillment of redemption in Christ abrogates all previous practices that are not specifically reauthorized for the new covenant." In a footnote, he even goes so far as to claim that the "notion that all previous practices are implicitly abrogated unless renewed is rather more like dispensationalist exegesis than the exegesis typical of covenant theology" (478).

It is here, however, that he manifests fundamental misunderstanding.

Historically, theologians have distinguished between what have been called "moral" elements of worship and "ceremonial" ones. That is to say, it is recognized that there are some practices of worship which are appropriate in every era of redemptive history, and there are some which were unique to the infant stage of the church—a time when God ordained more elaborate rituals. The Westminster Confession of Faith was written by Puritans who understood very well this basic principle of two "dispensations"—two significantly distinct ways of administering the Old and New Covenants. This is not, of course, some sort of proto-dispensationalism as enunciated by Darby and Scofield; rather, it is a manifestation of the position, held by some very strongly covenantal churchmen, that the New Covenant, in contrast to the Old, is "administered with greater simplicity and less outward glory" (WCF, 7.6). Deny this fundamental distinction between Old and New, and there is no rational way to prevent a service of "smells and bells."

Returning to Professor Frame's writings, he speaks of a third example in which God's prescriptions for worship can be made "overly specific," viz., by demanding "specific biblical warrant even for the means of carrying out the elements of worship" (*ibid.*). Here, he again assails Mr. Bushell's treatise and its view that "Scripture does not command us to use specific prayers or sermons, but does for songs" (479). Professor Frame claims that following Bushell's general principle, "the specific commandments of Colossians 4:16-17 and 1 Thessalonians 5:27 [would] imply that we are forbidden to read

any other Pauline letters in church. Since there are biblical commands to read three of Paul's letters, we are forbidden to read any others. To read others would be a violation of the regulative principle, an addition to God's Word." He adds: "But that is absurd, and I think we should simply reject the principle that generates such an absurdity. Scripture gives us the general principle that we should read Scripture in worship, and applications of that principle in Colossians 4 and 1 Thessalonians 5. There is no reason to think that Scripture implicitly or explicitly forbids additional applications. Similarly, even if Scripture specifically authorized, say, the Psalms as worship songs, that would not forbid us to sing other worship songs that meet biblical criteria" (ibid.).

Well, Professor Frame may think that the traditional Presbyterian view of the regulative principle is absurd; but for our part, we think that *his* position, in arguing that this principle is absurd based on Colossians 4 and 1 Thessalonians 5, is just plain silly. When Paul says to Timothy to give himself to "reading" (1 Timothy 4:13), and when the Lord has given His church a collection of books to be read, we are compelled to the conclusion that all of those books should be read in public worship. Moreover, Michael Bushell throughout his book demonstrated that the reason why we are to sing psalms exclusively, is because the Lord has given us a book of songs—similar to the book of readings (i.e., the entire Bible).

Professor Frame tries to link theonomic thought with a strict adherence to the regulative principle of worship: "some theonomists . . . have argued that unless God dictates to us specific civil penalties for every infraction of his law, then his law is useless. But that argument is inadequate, both for theonomy and for the regulative principle. There are some areas of life that are governed specifically by God's Word, but others that are not. God has chosen to rule his world, and his worship, in that way" (480).

This linking of theonomy and the regulative principle of worship seems to us ironic, since, in our experience, there are very few theonomists who truly understand the regulative principle. The reason for that, we believe, is because of a failure to distinguish among the three types of law (moral, ceremonial, judicial)—a confusion that is similar to John Frame's failure to distinguish between how Scripture governs life as a whole and how it governs the church.

Next, the author suggests that far from requiring traditionalist worship, "the regulative principle is primarily a means of criticizing tradition. Recall, for example, Jesus' attack on the Pharisaic traditions (Matt. 15:1–9), using Isaiah 29:13. Through Isaiah, God charged Israel with worshipping according to the commandments of men—using the regulative principle against them. The Reformers also used the regulative principle to counter the traditionalism of the Roman church. In our own time as well, we should use the regulative principle

as needed to counter the dead weight of tradition. Tradition can be a good thing, but not when it denies us the freedom to worship according to Scripture" (480).

Well, of course, it depends upon whether the "traditionalist" worship is Biblical or not, doesn't it? We, too, would criticize tradition for tradition's sake, whether it be the tradition of Roman Catholicism, or the so-called traditional Presbyterian services which are more in line with 1950s evangelicalism than with the Bible. The professor does in conjunction with this issue speak against "worship that is primarily archaic." However, by framing the basic issue as that of "traditionalist" worship, he has created a straw-man against which to argue; or, we could say that he has engaged in a standard tactic of "bait and switch": no one would want to violate the Pauline injunction for worship to be intelligible (1 Corinthians 14), but Professor Frame then argues that avoiding archaisms "also warrants contemporary music, when it is appropriate to the purposes of worship" (481). It is easy for him to proceed from this to argue for contemporary worship in all of its manifestations (such as applause, liturgical dance, and liturgical drama), as he has done elsewhere.

He concludes his consideration of the regulative principle by saying, in direct and deliberate contradiction of the Westminster Confession of Faith, that "in worship, as in all of life, we live by God's commands. His commands cover everything we do, so that whatever he does not command is prohibited. The proper applications of these commands, however, require human thought, consideration of the broader principles of Scripture, and the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts" (ibid.). Notice once again that he very clearly disagrees with the regulative principle as enunciated by the Westminster Standards, since the Westminster Confession of Faith distinguishes between worship in particular and life in general. And yet, he continues to enjoy the status of an ordained minister in a Presbyterian denomination, and an honored position as a professor at a Reformed theological seminary.

The last several pages of the chapter deal with images in worship. He notes that he, in the previous chapter, argues for the validity of making images and even having such images in places of worship. "Indeed, the Lord himself commanded the use of images in the tabernacle and the temple. The commandment excludes only the worshiping of images and the making of images for the purpose of worshiping them" (482). He appeals to the use of images as didactic devices in tabernacle and temple.

He writes that Scripture does not restrict "teaching in the church to oral and written communication" (483); and contends that the phrase in 1 Corinthians 1:21, which is translated in the King James Version as "the foolishness of preaching," should be rendered "the folly of what we preach" (ibid.)—i.e., it is a reference not to a particular medium, but to content.

Professor Frame concedes that there can be danger in the

use of pictures and statues, especially in the location where the church gathers for worship. However, that does not, in his view, absolutely prohibit the practice. He claims that Charles Hodge's opposition to having images in places of public worship was based on his appeal to "wisdom" rather than as "a universal divine mandate" (ibid.).

Now, it is true that Hodge does say that given the temptation involved, no one "can doubt the wisdom of their exclusion from places of public worship." However, this statement follows immediately his quotation of the Heidelberg Catechism Q/A 98, which is crystal clear that God "has willed that his Church be instructed, not by dumb images, but by the preaching of his word."<sup>6</sup> The "wisdom" to which the Princeton professor was referring, therefore, is not some take-it-or-leave-it bit of pious advice—a mere application of Biblical truth which can change according to circumstance (which is the implication of what Professor Frame wrote); rather, Hodge was definitely indicating that such images are, as reflected in the wisdom and understanding of the Reformed churches, forbidden. We would have thought that a professor of ethics would have understood enough about the Westminster Standards that he would know that the law of God prohibits whatever tends to sin ("6. That under one sin or duty, all of the same kind are forbidden or commanded; together with all the causes, means, occasions, and appearances thereof, and provocations thereunto," Larger Catechism, Q/A 99).

Professor Frame admits his disagreement with the Larger Catechism regarding making pictures of Jesus. In doing so, he writes: "Jesus images God, not only in his powers and character, but also in his physical being. He said to Philip, 'Whoever has seen me has seen the Father' (John 14:9)." A footnote reads as follows: "Review also the discussion of God's redemptive-historical invisibility in Chapter 25. God sometimes chooses to use a *temunah*, a visible form, to reveal himself. The prohibition of images in Deut. 4 is not because God has no *temunah*, but because he chose not to reveal his *temunah* to Israel on the day of the assembly" (484).

Upon reading this, we must confess, we were stunned. At first blush, it appears that the seminary professor is suggesting that there is physicality and visibility to God's existence. This would be utterly in opposition to one of the basic divine attributes, viz., immateriality. Of course, it depends on what the meaning of "has" is. If we take the word straightforwardly, we would gather that what is being asserted is that God possesses ("has") a visible form (*temunah*) inherently, rather than merely choosing to manifest His glory in a visible way.<sup>7</sup> Now, it is possible that Professor Frame is still orthodox on the doctrine of the invisibility of God, but one would be hard-pressed to demonstrate it from this quote. (Notice also the footnote on p. 483: "The notion that worship without images is somehow simpler, purer, or more spiritual has appeared in

theological literature. But I know of no biblical basis for this assertion. Even under the new covenant, God provides the visual imagery of the sacraments. Prejudices against the material and visual have more in common with Gnosticism than with anything in Scripture.") This type of sloppy thinking and expression (coupled with gratuitous jabs at his conservative theological counterparts) is not unknown elsewhere among the writings of Professor Frame in his professional career; and the fact that he is still a seminary professor is a sad comment on the state of theological education, even in a time of proliferation of (purportedly) Reformed seminaries.

As noted above, the professor deals in the previous chapter ("The Second Commandment: Prohibited Images") with "God's redemptive-historical visibility." We thought that perhaps here we would discover a more orthodox explanation.

It is true that he avers that "God is invisible (Rom. 1:20; Col. 1:15; 1 Tim. 1:17; Heb. 11:27) and that no one has ever seen him (John 1:18; 5:37; 6:46; 1 John 4:12, 20)." He also uses correct terminology when he writes that "God often reveals himself in Scripture by visible means, namely, theophany and incarnation" (456). He writes that because man is "God's image ... and Christ is the image of God par excellence," "it is simply wrong to claim that God cannot be imaged.... The functions of our ears and eyes image the powers of God, who hears and sees without ears and eyes. So God's invisibility does not entail that there are no images of him, or that every image of him is misleading" (457).

He then claims: "So the divine attribute of invisibility is not relevant to the second commandment." He continues: "Israel is not to worship images because God chose, on the day of the assembly recorded in Exodus 19–20, to reveal himself invisibly, by word rather than by visible form.... The word translated 'form' here [Deut. 4:12] and in verse 15 is *temunah*. The point is not that God has no *temunah*, or that God's *temunah* can never be seen. In fact, Moses saw God's *temunah* (Num. 12: 8), and David anticipates one day awakening to behold God's 'likeness' (*temunah*) (Ps. 17:15). God might also have shown his *temunah* to Israel on the day of the assembly, but he chose not to" (ibid.).

He continues: "So God's formlessness, as a ground of the second commandment, is not metaphysical, but redemptive-historical. God revealed himself formlessly to Israel at the inauguration of the Mosaic covenant, and so he forbade them to use any material or visible thing as an object of worship. He could have made a material thing that so perfectly represented him that it deserved worship. Indeed, that is what he

6. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975) 3:304–305.

7. Even a child knows that you can't "see God" (*Catechism for Young Children*: "Q. 11. Can you see God? A. No; I cannot see God, but he always sees me.").

did in the incarnation of Christ. But he chose not to provide such an object for Israel's worship during the Old Testament period" (458).

Again, we are astonished. We are amazed by the apparent self-contradiction, for earlier in the chapter, he wrote: "Any view that justifies bowing down to an image is wrong, and bowing to an image, whatever the rationale, is wrong" (454). But we are also flabbergasted by the manner in which he attempts to sweep away the entire Reformed hermeneutic with regard to idolatry, and to stand the second commandment on its head.

Chapter 26 ends with more argumentation for pictures of Jesus, including these final sentences: "People who are inclined to worship images may be especially inclined to worship pictures of Jesus. But in many situations today (such as the average children's Sunday school in present-day America) that danger is minimal or nonexistent. And there are positive reasons to use pictures of Jesus in the church's pedagogy" (486).

In our opinion, there is a logical progression that has been manifest in Professor Frame's views. He has, through his triperspectivalism, advanced the notion that the normative perspective is not paramount to the situational or existential. He has rejected the regulative principle of worship, as historically understood, and instead has tried to justify all kinds of bizarre things in worship; in doing so, he has adopted a form of sensualism with respect to worship. And now, the sensualism has given way to a view of God that borders on materialism and gross heresy.<sup>8</sup>

**Robert L. Dickie, *What the Bible Teaches About Worship* (Faverdale North, Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2007). Paperback 155 pages. ISBN 978-0852346594. \$13.99.**

Robert L. Dickie, pastor of Berean Baptist Church in Grand Blanc, Michigan, sees a need to satisfy the contemporary longing of people for a deeper spiritual experience than what they find in "the superficial and silly innovations that have been substituted for the worship of God, and which have been the cause of so many debates, struggles and conflicts within the church" (from the back cover).

Part One, "The ingredients of throne-room worship," contains several chapters that begin with the words "Worship is": "Worship is God-centered," "Worship is praise," "Worship is focused on the finished work of Christ," "Worship is music," "Worship is liturgical," "Worship is adoration," and "Worship is preaching." Utilizing Revelation 4-5 as the paradigm for

our worship, Pastor Dickie laments the loss of theocentricity in worship—a trend which, "if not reversed, will be the eventual death and destruction of the church," and which will lead to the collapse of Western Civilization as well (29). He writes that praise must permeate our worship services, in contrast to a concentration on "activities and programmes" (34). The emphasis on the finished work of Christ is also an acknowledgement of the presence of Christ in worship, and a proclamation of His work. While acknowledging the "integral" role of music in worship, he writes that "we must be careful that we do not cram so much unnecessary music into the service that the preaching of the Word is rushed or neglected altogether" (44). He uses the word "liturgy" to speak of "beauty, order and planning involved in our worship"—that "worship is orderly and reverent in its design, in contrast to the sloppy, irreverent and noisy confusion that seems to characterize so many services today" (45). He writes: "... what is desperately missing in many churches is the deliberate and thoughtful attempt to encourage participation in worship, and to inspire an attitude of reverence, awe and wonder. Most contemporary styles of worship are a far cry from the worship described in Revelation chapters 4 and 5. The phenomena of a consumer-religion based on programmes and entertainment—and geared to sell itself to a constituency who are not really interested in seeking the presence of God—will eventually leave behind a religious wasteland. Our culture will be impoverished as a result" (47-48). The notion of adoration runs counter to the "casual, non-threatening and entertaining" service that is often offered today (51). Finally, the bifurcation of worship and preaching leads to worship being "turned into a mystical experience that can be manipulated by music, emotions, entertainment and other non-scriptural innovations. And the proclaiming of the Word of God is often viewed as a boring, irrelevant activity that no longer serves any purpose in the body of Christ.... Drama, mime, puppet shows, magic, rapping, rock concerts, video productions and story-telling are replacing expository preaching" (53).

Part Two is entitled "The departure from throne-room worship." The first chapter details some of the bizarre worship practices going on in today's church, including the following: "A pastor riding a motorcycle down the centre aisle of the church and up onto the platform;" "A pastor lying on a table while a karate team took a Japanese sword and cut a watermelon on his stomach without killing him!;" "A pastor having pizza delivered to his church while he was preaching at the pulpit. This pastor then began to eat the pizza while he continued to preach his sermon;" "A pastor preaching on the text, 'Let us run the race that is set before us...' and while he was preaching, he began to undress, taking off his suit. Underneath he was wearing a track jogging outfit equipped with a sports whistle; he then began to blow the whistle and

8. Covering much of the same ground as found in this current book is Professor Frame's "A Fresh Look at the Regulative Principle," found on-line at [http://www.frame-poythress.org/frame\\_articles/RegulativePrinciple.htm](http://www.frame-poythress.org/frame_articles/RegulativePrinciple.htm). This article was originally intended for a multi-author book which was never published.

jog around his pulpit to make a point of running the race that God has given us;” “A pastor tying a rope on one of the beams in the sanctuary and then swinging out over the front of the church and back to the platform where the pulpit was located” (63–64).

Another departure from Biblical worship has been the abandonment of expository preaching. Pastor Dickie suggests that this failure has come about because of a lack of faith in the power of the gospel unto salvation, as well as because of the offensive nature of preaching that is faithful to Scripture. Accordingly, there has been a loss of focus on Christ and the glorifying of Him. This is also seen in the fact that choruses are replacing the grand old hymns of the church—music which reflected a Biblical pattern—that is, the pattern found in the Psalter with respect to the “complexity factor,” “the ratio of praise to petition,” and the “range of topics” (77).

Other chapters in Part Two speak of the failure to understand the purpose of the church; distortion of the gospel; use of an unbalanced theology and emotionalism (as witnessed in the Emergent Church movement); a void of reverence; a new style of evangelism; and losing faith in the gospel.

Part Three gives the “steps to recovering throne-room worship.” Here he says that we need to “Have a correct view of God;” “Make Christ the focus of our worship;” “Prepare for worship;” “Remember the true purpose of worship;” “Define success” (not numbers, but fidelity); “Return to the great doctrines of our faith;” and “repent” of unbiblical worship.

Part Four gives “Practical suggestions on how to worship God.” In this section, we are encouraged to be God-centered in our focus in worship; to enjoy praising God in worship; to worship with songs and hymns; and to consider preaching as an act of worship. The author also gives suggestions to assist us in prayer and preparation for worship, keeping focused on Christ in worship.

In his conclusion, Robert Dickie contends that the worship wars will result, through a Biblical consideration of worship, in greater purity in the church, in this generation and for those generations that follow. He also concedes that rejecting “the premise on which contemporary church worship stands and the many trends that flow out of this” does not imply “that we must reject everything they may be doing” (148).

**Richard A. Muller and Rowland S. Ward, *Scripture and Worship: Biblical Interpretation and the Directory for Public Worship* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2007) Paperback, x, 181 pages. ISBN 978-1596380721. \$17.99.**

This book is a volume in a series, edited by Carl R. Trueman, entitled *The Westminster Assembly and the Reformed Faith*. As indicated by the title, this volume has two distinct foci. Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia minister Rowland

Ward wrote the section on worship. Dr. Ward is the author of many books and articles including a *Modern English Psalter*, *Modern English texts of the Westminster Confession and Catechisms*, and *God & Adam: Reformed Theology and the Creation Covenant* (New Melbourne Press, 2003); and has contributed an extensive article on the subject of confessional subscription to the forthcoming *The Westminster Confession into the 21st Century*, volume 3. He has specialized in work dealing with the Westminster Assembly, as reflected in the text under review.

In his first chapter (Chapter 5 of the volume as a whole), Dr. Ward notes that in the seventeenth century, there were worship wars—conflicts that tied directly to the English Civil War. He writes that the primary principle in the writing of the Westminster Directory for Public Worship was that of what is now known as the regulative principle of worship.

However, this fact leads to a consideration of the question of the relationship between Calvin and the British Puritans. In Dr. Ward’s view, “there does not appear to be any substantial difference between Calvin and the seventeenth-century English Puritans, if one excepts the more radical Independents. For Calvin, the ceremonies that were not otherwise unlawful biblically were indifferent things” (104). Two pages later, he writes: “there is no fundamental difference between Calvin and the Westminster men on worship. They are in agreement in the principle, and the differences in form and rubric are those which a church, in due subjection to Scripture, may maintain without schism. Both, when it is possible, remove all doubtful religious ceremonies, or those that have become a snare. Both are keenly concerned for the unity of the church, and will strive to accommodate to maintain that unity.”<sup>9</sup>

The next chapter is on “Elements and Practice.” In the first few pages, the author deals with matters such as offerings, length of service, and order of service. Regarding an offering, he suggests that the paucity of reference to this subject “reflects the practice of that age in maintaining the church ministry, services, and buildings from the public purse.” However, he also notes that the Church of Scotland Assembly in 1648 “actually forbade the collection during service as ‘a very great and unseemly disturbance of Divine Worship’” (114). Dr. Ward says that two and a half hours “was not unusual for the ordinary service” in the time of the Westminster Assembly. He compares, in a chart, the orders of service from the Scottish Book of Common Order (1564), Alexander Henderson’s 1641 description of a typical service, and the Westminster Directory (1645). He also summarizes the 1645 evaluation of the Westminster Directory by an Anglican, Dr. Henry Hammond, who served as chaplain to Charles I. Dr. Ward responds to the notion that the Directory “outlines a dull, unimaginative

9. The author adopts the distinctions set forth by T. David Gordon

service” by quoting Leland Ryken in *Worldly Saints*, to the effect that the Puritans appealed, in Shakespearean fashion, to the imagination through vivid language.

Posture in worship was not specified. However, in the Reformed world, there was a progression of customary postures for prayer: from kneeling (sixteenth century) to sitting (seventeenth century) to standing (eighteenth century). The author notes that more than one-fourth of the Directory’s words are dedicated to “suggested content of the prayers” (122). About one-eighth is taken up with preaching. The preacher “need not expound every doctrine in his text,” but as a “soul-physician” he “is to make wise choices as to what is needful and appropriate so as to draw their souls to Christ” (127).

The baptism of infants was usually performed the second Lord’s Day after their birth. Regarding the Lord’s Supper, there was controversy over the “frequency” of observance, with the practice in Scotland usually being annually. The wording of the Directory allowed for communicants to be seated either “about” the Lord’s table (per the English custom, where they would remain in the pews) or “at” the table (as practiced by the Scots). “This,” writes the author, “is an example of how those agreed on the regulative principle could disagree on its application” (133).

The Australian pastor discusses other topics included in the Directory, such as sanctification of the Sabbath, marriage, visitation of the sick, burying of the dead, fasting, and thanksgiving. He maintains, despite his own commitment to psalmody, that drawing a conclusion of “exclusive psalmody” from the Confessional phrase “singing of psalms with grace in the heart” can

among element, form, rubric, and circumstance: “The form of worship includes the way of doing a particular thing. Thus, prayer is an element of worship, the Lord’s Prayer is a form of prayer, and a rubric would be an instruction whether to stand, sit or kneel” (101).

10. While it may be we should not speak theologically of the Westminster divines as an ‘Assembly of Exclusive Psalmists,’ others take a contrary view to Dr. Ward and conclude that in their productions they are at least practically so. In other words, there is every reason to conclude that in the Confession of Faith and Directory for the Public Worship of God, the divines intended to authorize the singing of only the psalms, but were not prescient in addressing controversies over the content of worship song which developed after the Westminster Assembly. See Chris Coldwell’s appendix “The Meaning of ‘Psalms’ in the Context of the Westminster Standards,” in “The Regulative Principle of Worship: Sixty Years in Reformed Literature Part Two (2000–2007) in *The Confessional Presbyterian* 3 (2007) 211–215, 303; and see Matthew Winzer’s summary of the flaws in Nick Needham’s work in the same (p. 201) and his expanded review taking the affirmative stance as to the Divines’ Exclusive Psalmody intent in this issue, pages 253–266.

11. Dr. Ward himself offers his own modernized version of the text. The modernizations consists mostly of modern punctuation, elimination of “-eth” endings, “Spirit” instead of “Ghost,” and “convenience” instead of “conveniency.” Also, several long sentences in the Preface were broken up into shorter sentences. Overall, however, he refrained from a total rewrite into modern English style.

be done “only with major qualifications.” He writes that “one should not draw the conclusion that [the Westminster Assembly] held the view that only the 150 Psalms of Scripture could properly be used according to the regulative principle” (136), since the Assembly provided for other songs from Scripture to be sung as well.<sup>10</sup> He also mentions the Appendix to the Directory, on days and places of public worship.

In the conclusion to this chapter, we read:

The directory obviously contains some dated material, and yet, even where it may not be followed today with the care originally intended, it offers wise counsel. We may not have the same concern to avoid funeral services, yet who can deny that there are dangers in our own time with them? We do not think of a ring in marriage as a hangover from popery, nor become passionate over whether we sit in the pew or around a table at the Lord’s Supper, but it was high views of marriage and of the Supper that led to strongly held opinions on these matters. We should have high views, too, even if the application is seen in a different light today. In an age when the written word is losing out to the visual, reading two chapters in course has a lot of logic, particularly where people are not literate or not biblically literate. Hopefully, we don’t have the same negative reaction to the Lord’s Prayer as some did, and heed the advice in the directory. We might be well advantaged to dispatch any announcements before the services lest they intrude in a way the directory does not recognize, and to also keep in view the problems of lengthy communion services that have developed in some circles since the 1640s. We may find Christmas and Easter to be days of opportunity in a multicultural and secular context in Western societies of today, even if we agree that they are not required by Scripture. Those of Scots background may be challenged as to whether New Year services cannot sometimes be associated with a kind of worldliness and superstition the Westminster divines would have roundly condemned (138f).

A thirty-five page appendix contains a modernized version of the text of “A Directory for the Public Worship of God in the Three Kingdoms.”<sup>11</sup>

R. C. Sproul, *Truths We Confess: A Layman’s Guide to the Westminster Confession of Faith, Volume 2: Salvation and the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2007) Hardback. 368 pages. ISBN 978-1596380400. \$25.00.

R. C. Sproul, *A Taste of Heaven: Worship in the Light of Eternity* (Lake Mary, Fla.: Reformation Trust, 2006). Hardback. 173 pages. ISBN 978-1567690767. \$15.00.

*Truths We Confess* is the second of a three volume set in which the head of Ligonier Ministries considers each phrase of the

Westminster Confession of Faith. Of particular significance is his consideration of Chapter 21, “Of Religious Worship, and the Sabbath Day.”

Dr. Sproul notes that Calvin believed that the primary work of church reformation was with respect to worship, and that sound doctrine was a necessary foundation for worship that would avoid idolatry and superstition. The author laments the “avant-garde revolution of worship motivated by a desire to reach out to a secularized American turned off to ‘churchiness’ and ecclesiastical traditions. There has been an attempt to disguise or mask the gospel, so that people will not think they are in church. There is no chancel, but a stage. There is no choir, but a worship team.” In his view, “the minute we begin to pander to the ‘audience’ rather than to God, we are in serious trouble. I don’t want to be cynical or harsh, but the Old Testament worship service where the people were the most enthusiastic and energetic consisted in the singing of praise songs by an overflow congregation, while dancing around a golden calf (Exodus 32:17–19).” He continues: “Worship is not an arena for open experimentation. If we ‘worship’ by doing what we enjoy, rather than by doing what is pleasing to God, our worship will gravitate toward idolatry. It is our duty, as much as possible, to learn what true worship is supposed to be like” (311).

With regard to the section that begins “The acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will . . .,” the author claims that the prohibition of “visible representation” of the deity refers to “visible representations of God the Father” (312). On this, Dr. Sproul is simply, and grossly, mistaken: no Puritan theologian would have countenanced “pictures” of Christ; and furthermore, the Larger Catechism is perspicuous on the matter: “The sins forbidden in the second commandment are . . . the making any representation of God, of all or of any of the three persons, either inwardly in our mind, or outwardly in any kind of image or likeness of any creature whatsoever” (Answer 109). It is perhaps worth mentioning that the independent congregation which he pastors is filled with icons.<sup>12</sup>

Dr. Sproul utilizes God’s institution and regulation of marriage as an analogy of how He institutes and regulates worship. He professes that he is “haunted by the Old Testament story of Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, who were trained in all the proper procedures of worship in the religious community,” and who were “executed for their experimental worship.” The author avers: “The most important ingredient of worship is that the holiness of God is made manifest. We are to honor our holy God and to acknowledge and give glory to his majesty and his transcendent greatness. There should be an atmosphere of fear and trembling in our worship” (313). He decries the penchant for people today to attend church for the sake of fellowship rather than worship.

Regarding Sections 2 and 3 of Chapter 21 of the Confession of Faith, Dr. Sproul writes of the necessity of worshipping the true and living God rather than a false god, and of doing so based solely on the mediatorial work of Jesus Christ. Moreover, we have another mediator, viz., the Holy Spirit, who gives us the words to pray.

Dr. Sproul does express an exception to the Confessional prohibition on praying “for those of whom it may be known that they have sinned the sin unto death.” He does so, by saying that 1 John 5:16 (“I do not say that he should pray” for a brother sinning a sin unto death) does not prohibit said prayer. While appreciating the nice logical point which Dr. Sproul is making, we would respectfully disagree with him: the “suggestion” enunciated in John’s epistle carries the force of an obligation. Indeed, the hermeneutical assumption inherent in Dr. Sproul’s position may be quite telling with regard to how he deals with the regulative principle of worship: approved apostolic example and apostolic counsel have the same moral weight as direct command.

Regarding music in worship, he writes: “Probably few periods in church history have had more controversy about church music than we currently have, particularly in the United States” (328f). He distinguishes between contemporary music and contemporary forms of worship, and also draws a distinction between music that is good, music that is mediocre, and music that is poor.

Dr. Sproul concedes that the Bible does not prescribe that only ordained elders must administer the sacraments. However, he appeals to the orderliness of church procedures and the general authority which ordained men exercise in the life of the church, as warrant for the historic practice.

He contends that the Confessional provision for occasional elements of worship allows for special services, such as feasts at Thanksgiving and Christmas, and observance of holy days such as Maundy Thursday (contrary to the divines’ clear intent expressed in their appendix on ‘holy days’ in their Directory for the Public Worship of God).

He argues for the necessity of corporate worship on the basis of the notion of the body of Christ, and also the priesthood of all believers.

He acknowledges the debate between those who regard the institution of the Sabbath as a creation ordinance and those who believe it was initiated under the Mosaic economy, while siding with the former position. However, he does not adopt the Puritan understanding of “pleasure” in Isaiah 58:13–14—that it refers to recreation; in his view, the term refers to a refraining from unlawful commercial activity. He also, on logical grounds, takes exception to the Confessional

12. In researching this article, we received a brochure printed by the congregation which details the six, shall we say, revealing paintings of Christ which adorn the sanctuary.

requirement of the whole Sabbath day being taken up “in the public and private exercises of His worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy.”

While Dr. Sproul, in dealing with Chapter 21 of the Westminster Confession, mentions the regulative principle (and even appeals to the account of Nadab and Abihu), it is not evident that he really understands it. This is perhaps most obvious in his book *A Taste of Heaven*, that compares the apocalyptic vision of heaven to our earth-bound worship today.

In the Preface, Dr. Sproul writes that although man is designed for worship, he is inhibited from divine worship by “the universal sin, the most foundational sin among human beings,” which is idolatry (10). He laments our failure “to make a transition Sunday morning from the secular to the sacred, from the common to the uncommon, from the profane to the holy. We continue, as did the sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, to offer strange fire before the Lord” (11).

Chapter 1 is on “The Form of Worship.” He properly notes that there is no such thing as “informal worship,” since it is impossible to “have corporate worship with no form. There’s some form to every worship service, so there’s really no such thing as worship that is informal in the literal sense. The issue is not whether we’re going to have a liturgy or form. The question is, ‘What will be the structure, the style, and the content of the liturgy?’” (14). He points out that the form must be Biblical, rather than what is stimulating or exciting to us. In determining how worship should be conducted today, we must steer between total continuity between Old and New Testaments, and total discontinuity. Total continuity results in the legalism condemned in Galatians; total discontinuity leads to the heresy of Marcionism.

The author traces competing visions regarding worship (such as high vs. low liturgy, use or non-use of vestments, classical vs. contemporary music) to a Protestant overreaction to Roman Catholicism. Writing of the iconoclast Andreas Carlstadt, whom Luther opposed, R.C. Sproul contends that the “problem was not with the form but with the formalism into which Rome had fallen”—in other words, “that the form becomes the end in itself” (20). In seminary, he chose the high liturgy position, because the author of an assigned book convinced him that that “priestly tradition” was Biblical, and that the “prophetic tradition” in the Old Testament was not in opposition to liturgies per se, but against cold formalism in rote observance of the ceremonies.

Chapter 2, “Sacrifices in Faith,” says that the latria (service of worship) among the Jews focused on praise, prayer, and offering of sacrifices. Dr. Sproul acknowledges that Christ has “fulfilled all the symbolism and ritual of Old Testament worship,” which is why “we don’t go to church and put bullocks, sheep, goats, or anything else on an altar as burnt offerings to

the Lord” (24). However, because of the reality of the fulfillment of the sacrifices, we have also lost sight of the notion of sacrifice as informing our worship today.

Dr. Sproul refers to a book by a twentieth century French Roman Catholic theologian, Yves Conger, entitled *The Church from Abel*. After speaking of the worship of Cain and Abel, he concludes the chapter by writing: “The single most important thing to understand about worship is that the only worship that is acceptable to God is worship that proceeds from a heart that is trusting in God, and in God alone” (38).

Chapter 3, “Living Sacrifices,” appeals to Romans 12:1–2, in making the point that God “doesn’t want us to play with religion, to dabble in church, or to simply write a check. He wants us—body and soul” (46).

Chapter 4, “The House of Prayer,” maintains that the reason why Catholic church buildings are kept open night and day, while Protestant church buildings are usually locked, is because “an integral part of the life of Catholic devotion [is] for people to see the church building as a sanctuary for prayer” (49). The author mentions that when he was in seminary, each week he would go to Duquesne University, “to the convent of the mother house of the Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart, an order of nuns that was involved in mission work to people who were sick and had other needs. I met with the nuns in their chapel and prayed with them, because prayer was part of their routine” (50).

While not wanting to get into an involved discussion about the Catholic theology of prayer, he says, “The point is that Catholics go to their sanctuaries at all times of the day to pray. You can scarcely walk into the sanctuary of a large Catholic church and find it vacant. At almost any hour, there will be people sitting in the pews or over in some little alcove where the candles are, and they will be praying” (ibid.).

He then refers to the perpetual burning of incense in the temple, as indicating that God wants worship to be characterized by prayer—a point underscored by Jesus’ casting out of the moneychangers. Dr. Sproul writes that kneeling is one way in which Protestants can recover an emphasis on prayer; he also recommends that the people of a congregation themselves be involved orally in the congregational prayer that is usually led by the minister.

These favorable references to Romanism constitute a disturbing pattern throughout this Presbyterian pastor’s writings. If he wanted to emphasize fervency in storming the gates of heaven, why not use Korean Presbyterians as an example for round-the-clock prayers, rather than idolatrous papists?

Chapter 5, “Symbolism in Worship,” argues that although God throughout redemptive history has communicated largely through verbal means, “God always has attended His verbal communication with non-verbal forms of communication: signs, symbols, gestures, drama, concrete object lessons,

images, and rituals. These are non-verbal enhancements and reinforcements of the verbal. God not only spoke to His people Israel, He also showed them things” (60f). While acknowledging that the medium of radio can excite the imagination (as in radio dramas, such as the Green Hornet and the Lone Ranger), he also believes that the New Testament worship, like that of the Old Testament, is “replete with symbolism” (63). (Other than the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s upper, the only other examples which the author offers of on-verbal signs in the New Testament are Jesus’ miracles.) He states that “God, when He outlined His pattern for worship in the Old Testament, also mandated visible signs, tangible acts of drama that aren’t isolated from the Word or contrary to the Word but are married to the Word. That’s why, for example, in most Christian churches, you’re not allowed to celebrate the sacrament without some preaching to indicate that Word and sacrament go together. The Word is expressed verbally, and then that verbal expression is supported, corroborated, and reinforced by the drama of the signs and of the symbols” (66).

Chapters 6 through 9 are on the sacraments. Regarding baptism, the author argues that although the baptism of John the Baptist and Christian baptism are not synonymous, there is nevertheless continuity between them. He delineates baptism as signifying the covenant (with both blessing and curse, depending upon one’s response), regeneration, identification with Christ, cleansing from sin, faith, repentance, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Interestingly, he concedes to the immersionists that it is “more dramatic to go under and come up” from the water, adding that almost all of the churches that practice baptism by sprinkling view immersion as “the preferential mode of baptism” (89). (Of course, it is highly questionable as to whether his concession, with regard to the views of churches that baptize by sprinkling, is accurate.) In Chapter 8 (“To You and Your Children”), he presents the standard arguments against and in favor of infant baptism. In the next chapter, he presents the four understandings of the presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper.

Chapter 10 (“The Whole Person”) states that the reason why many people are bored with church is “because they have no sense of the presence of God when they attend worship” (126). While acknowledging that there is discontinuity between the New Testament worship and the shadowy forms of Old Testament worship, he also wants to discover the Old Testament principles that validly apply today. He contends that the real danger for Protestants is that of becoming Gnostics “who think that our response to God is purely cerebral, purely mental” (131). Dr. Sproul seeks a balance between the clear prohibition on worship via images, and the fact that Israel’s worship “was intensely visual. Not only that, there was a strong element of auditory perception. The orchestration of

instruments, such as the cymbals and the harp, and singing were part of the experience of worship, not to mention the hearing of the Word read. There was an element of olfactory sense—the incense that was used to symbolize the sweet fragrance and aroma of the prayers of the people of God that rose before Him. Worship involved the whole person, including the senses” (134). The rest of the book is dedicated to trying to discern whether Old Testament sensual worship practices should be used to “enrich our own worship” (136).

Chapter 11, “The Role of Beauty,” argues that “every church building looks like something” (whether it be, for example, in the shape of a boat or the shape of a cross), and therefore, “whenever we go to a worship service, we have a visual experience” (138f). The principle he is enunciating “is that every form we see is an art form, and every art form communicates something particular.” Even the color of an object is for a reason, and “communicates something” (139). According to Dr. Sproul, although it would be legalistic to follow the exact details set forth in Exodus regarding the tabernacle and the priestly garments, there is an on-going principle of worshipping in “the beauty of holiness.” He writes: “The Christian faith is like a stool with three legs, and those three elements of the faith are the good, the true, and the beautiful” (141). God’s concern for beauty is seen in Revelation 21, in its description of the church. This is also reflected in the Old Testament, which “has almost a preoccupation with the presence of beautiful things in the house of God.” Accordingly, it “seems appropriate for our worship to be conducted in beautiful spaces with beautiful accouterments” (143). He argues that gothic structures, which create a sense of awe, help a person who enters to be “aware that a transition has been made from the profane to the sacred” (144). He suggests that buildings such as Edinburgh’s St. Giles and Geneva’s St. Pierre’s (where Calvin ministered) “breathtakingly communicate something of the beauty of holiness, and there’s nothing in them that involves images that may distort a person’s understanding” (ibid.). He writes that, because of the iconoclasm of the Reformers, Protestants have tried to distance themselves from “anything that smacks of the Roman Catholic tradition” (145). Church buildings are therefore “built to look more like town meeting halls. The chancel is no longer called the chancel, it’s called the stage. The pulpit is not called a pulpit, it’s called a lectern, and the congregation isn’t called a congregation, but it’s called an audience.” At least partly, this approach is “due to an abiding antipathy to beauty in worship, based on a desire to avoid an empty form of worship that is merely external. The church wants to exhibit that worship comes from the heart, not from external stimuli” (146).

Dr. Sproul surely is correct that there should be careful attention given to church buildings. However, he surely is dead wrong when he suggests that the external, sensual ap-

peal found in Old Covenant worship and practices should be reproduced today.

Chapter 12 (“The Sounds of Worship”) celebrates the Westminster Brass—a misnamed group if there ever was one, since its name is reminiscent of the Westminster Assembly while also employing brass musical instruments in public worship. Dr. Sproul appeals to a number of passages which speak of vocal, choral, and instrumental music. He writes that “Psalm 150 indicates virtually all of the elements of orchestral music are present and sanctioned by God for worship” (153). The author discusses the notion of what constitutes “good” music, including historic views of aesthetics. He claims that exclusive psalmists “reason that the psalms were inspired by God, so there is no danger of bad theology in their words” (159)—apparently unaware of the traditional arguments in favor of singing only psalms for public worship. In the final paragraph of the chapter, he writes the “sense of transcendence” is the paramount principle for church music: “Music in worship shouldn’t familiarize God to me, but rather music should stimulate the soul to a posture of adoration” (ibid.).

The final chapter, “The Touch of Eternity,” touches on how the five senses play a role in the church and its worship. Dr. Sproul argues that ordination entails a touching on the head. He also contends, though without documentation, that, before congregations grew too large, the pronouncement of benediction also involved a minister touching each congregation. Regarding taste, the wine of the Lord’s Supper is an especially fitting symbol of Christ’s death, in that wine evokes a bitterness and burning sensation, but also expresses joy. Regarding the sense of smell, this Presbyterian teaching elder writes:

There are very few Protestant churches that still incorporate incense in worship, and if you were to suggest it in your church, your suggestion might not be well received. Why is that? It has to do with the reaction of our Protestant forebears against the Roman Catholic form of worship in the sixteenth century. Because Rome used incense, the Reformed rejected it, and now we have, as it were, thrown the baby out with the bath water. In our Protestant protest, we have isolated ourselves from an element of worship that God provided, and we’ve lost something. We need to see that when God ordained worship, He included an olfactory dimension. Therefore, we have to be careful about making a principial objection to the use of incense in worship (172).

But this is sheer and utter nonsense.

13. An illustration of Dr. Sproul’s views on worship may be found in the interview which this present reviewer conducted with him for *Presbyterian & Reformed News* (Vol. 6, Number 5, September-October 2000); available on-line at <http://www.presbyteriannews.org/volumes/v6/5/pr6-5.pdf>.

The Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 7, Section 6, deals with the transition from elaborate ritual in the Old Covenant to the simplicity of the New. In *Truths We Confess*, Dr. Sproul, with regard to that section, writes: “The ordinances in this new situation include the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Lacking the detailed ritualistic manifestation present in the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, these sacraments are therefore exhibited with more simplicity” (227f). However, notice that he speaks only of the preaching of the Word and the sacraments. In point of fact, it is the Old Covenant economy as a whole that has been abrogated by the coming of Christ, with the result that all of our worship is to reflect the simplified, streamlined nature of the New Covenant. Dr. Sproul’s continued appeal to aesthetics as a governing principle in New Testament worship runs counter to the Confessional position. It is not aesthetics, but the covenant, that forms the overarching principle—not just “covenant” as an ethereal ideal, but “covenant” as revealed in the history of redemption: that is, the notion of covenant that reflects the trans-ethnic and universal nature of the church in this era, and that accordingly does not impose cultural norms upon worship. Without this covenantal understanding, a professed adherence to the regulative principle is virtually meaningless, since it cannot properly distinguish between moral and ceremonial regulations.

In most respects, Dr. Sproul clearly has a veneration and respect for the work of the Westminster Assembly, and there is much of value that can be learned from his writings. However, with respect to worship, he is clearly not in accord with the Standards.<sup>13</sup>

**Dominic A. Aquila, “Redemptive History and the Regulative Principle of Worship” in *The Hope Fulfilled: Essays in Honor of O. Palmer Robertson* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2008). Paperback. 461 pages. ISBN 9781596381155. \$29.99.**

Dominic Aquila has had a prominent career as a churchman: pastor, ecclesiastical bureaucrat, member of the Standing Judicial Commission of the Presbyterian Church in America, professor, and currently President of New Geneva Theological Seminary in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He has recently begun an Internet news agency, The Aquila Report.

Dr. Aquila begins this chapter by noting the centrality of worship to one’s Christian life, and the fact that the Protestant Reformers were serious about worship. He also states that no understanding of worship is going to be perfect, and that the Reformation was influenced by a reaction against Roman Catholicism.

The basic thrust of the chapter is that “the same principles

of worship hold true for each period” of redemptive history; that “God mandated one set of truths or principles to govern worship in every stage of redemptive history, even though there are observable differences of worship practices in these various stages. In other words, the distinctive practices in these stages of redemption expressed the same principle of worship” (276).

The author argues from the “general equity” principle vis-à-vis the ceremonial law: “Under the new covenant we read the Old Testament with minds and eyes informed by the consummation that has come in Christ, we see the abiding principles, and we apply them in new covenant ways. And even here we need to recognize that not all new covenant practices will look exactly the same, even among believers who hold tenaciously to the same truths” (277). However, this last sentence raises an interesting issue—does the author believe that there is legitimate variation with respect to the elements of worship, or only with respect to circumstances? This chapter does not appear to give a clear answer.

President Aquila defines the regulative principle of worship as “the means by which the public worship of God should include only those elements that are instituted, commanded, or appointed by command or example in the Bible; that God institutes in Scripture everything he requires for worship in the church, and he prohibits everything else.” He contrasts this view with the normative principle, which “teaches that whatever Scripture does not prohibit in worship it permits, so long as it is agreeable to the peace and unity of the church” (ibid.).

The “principles for worship that are common in every stage or period of redemptive history” would “include at least the following”: “worshiping in community;” “theocentricity;” “proclamation;” “singing;” “offerings;” and “praying” (278).

Dr. Aquila seems to take exception to the views of John Frame; he correctly identifies circumstances as being “items concerning where the church meets, the time it meets, how it sits, and so forth.” However, he also concedes that there can be difficulty in applying the regulative principle, in that “the distinctions between elements and circumstances can become confused or even melded together. The result is a lack of distinctive clarity, which can result in both circumstances and elements being defined as elements” (280).

So far, so good: even the concession regarding a confusing of elements and circumstances is certainly valid, in that people who are either untrained or unwilling to think through these matters carefully can definitely get confused. However, the author then appears to stray from the very principles which he has enunciated. He writes:

The regulative principle of worship emphasizes and focuses on the elements of worship; these principles are then to be applied to the specific contexts of worship and their circumstances. The regulative principle seen this way, and understood in light

of redemptive history, does not so much restrict our worship as it directs its expansiveness. Worship is before God’s throne and calls true worshipers to express and engage their whole being. While the elements of worship are always true and guide us, in the new covenant they do not restrict or bind us. New covenant believers are not under the old covenant and its modalities; they must express worship in and with new covenant modalities. Old covenant modalities directed the people how to live and worship with exacting detail. Under the new covenant, the old covenant forms have been abrogated, and new covenant believers live under the general equity of God’s rule for life and worship (280f).

Of course, there is a measure of truth in what the author has written: there is not as much detailed instruction today as found under the Mosaic legislation. However, the sentiment that the regulative principle “does not so much restrict our worship as it directs its expansiveness” seems to us almost unintelligible; and the idea that “the elements of worship ... in the new covenant ... do not restrict or bind us” tends toward the “normative principle” direction.

Utilizing the standard Biblical-theological insights from Geerhardus Vos, Dr. Aquila goes on to speak of redemptive history. In this context, he avers that “when Christ came, the fullness of glory was revealed. Believers should expect the nature of worship under the fuller glory of the new covenant to be more glorious and unveiled than the nature of worship under the old covenant. And yet it appears that with certain definitions and applications of the regulative principle of worship, that [sic] believers are bound to old covenant realities and practices. We need to be careful not to impose old covenant anticipatory patterns, shadows, and types unto new covenant realities. The fuller glory of the new covenant has come in Christ and lesser glory of the old has faded and no longer pertains, except for the general equity required thereof” (282). Again, in a formal sense, we can agree with the sentiments he has expressed; but the difference will be in the details.

Dr. Aquila quotes from 2 Corinthians 3:7–11 and Hebrews 12:18, 22–24 and Hebrews 8:3–6, in order to demonstrate the “greater glory of the new covenant” (ibid.). However, he then, without adequate segue, and inexplicably, appeals to the book of Revelation as giving a paradigm for worship for today. “When worship scenes are presented in Scripture, they show us worship as it is. When believers worship on earth they are joining the worship already taking place in heaven” (284). Again, he writes: “When John was ushered into heaven to see what must take place (Rev. 4:1), he saw the true sanctuary, the same one that Moses saw when he met with God on the mountain and received the pattern or type of the tabernacle. This vision of heaven and the worship John observed was not a picture of worship in the distant future,

of only what will be, but worship in the present time. Another way to state it is that John observed the nature of worship that is, has always been, and will always be before the throne. It was the same worship that Moses would have observed when he met with God. Because Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8), he is to be worshiped according to the same principles in our time and in every generation” (286).

However, what Pastor Aquila fails explicitly to acknowledge is that the book of Revelation is a picture book—an apocalyptic piece of literature not meant to be taken literally. So, while it is true that we may glean certain principles from the book of Revelation with respect to new covenant worship, it is unhelpful (and potentially misleading) to maintain that the Apocalypse shows us “worship as it is.”

Dr. Aquila moves on to posit that, because “we no longer interpret Old Testament passages only in light of their immediate context,” but that “we must now see them in the context of the full revelation given in Christ,” therefore, “the texts of hymns and songs should express biblical truths in the same way that sermons are to express biblical truths. . . . If the human preacher can interpret, explain, and apply Scripture in human language, we can also sing scriptural concepts written by human authors. Whether it is spoken or sung, whether it is a direct quotation from Scripture or a faithful interpretation and application of Scripture, God’s truth is being declared. Just as sermons should present Christ to worshipers from all of the Scriptures (which includes interpretation and application), so new covenant believers should sing about Christ and his redemptive work, whether directly from Scripture, like the Psalms, or with faithful interpretations of all parts of Scripture” (287f). He goes on to aver:

New covenant ministers are not to preach the Psalms or any other Old Testament texts only in their typological sense. The faithful preacher exposit, explains, and applies all of Scripture in light of the fullness that has come in Christ. This is one reason why singing only the Psalms in worship is deficient in that, while they do speak of Christ, they do so typologically. Since the consummation of God’s redemptive revelation is in Christ, we need to speak and sing of Christ in all his fullness. Singing the Psalms is good but incomplete; we need to see and sing about the anticipation of Christ’s coming, but in the fullness of Christ’s completed redemptive work (Luke 24:44).

New covenant believers no longer live and worship under old covenant modalities. They speak and sing the same truths as old covenant believers, but they do so in light of the fuller revelation that has come in Christ. We are to preach the truth and we are to sing the truth (288).

Now we see clearly what Dr. Aquila meant by previously

using the undefined term “old covenant modalities”: his real target is the exclusive psalmists, who, after all, refuse to recognize (or at least sufficiently to celebrate) the full revelation of Jesus Christ.

But, alas, Dr. Aquila has begged the question: he has assumed what he has wanted to prove, and has done so in such a way as to deny the regulative principle. The regulative principle of worship, to which he professes allegiance, necessarily regulates each element particularly. There are different elements of worship, with each standing on its own two feet. There is not in the new covenant an amalgamation of elements into a protoplasmic sameness. In chemistry, an “element” is different from another element—that’s why we call the different practices of worship “elements” (or, to use the Confessional language, “parts”). What he must demonstrate is why the content of the singing of praise must, of necessity, be different from the hymnbook which the Lord has given to His church (viz., the Psalter).

It would appear that the lynchpin of his argument is that we must sing the same truths as are conveyed in preaching, and in the same way. But please note that hymn-singing does not, and indeed cannot, maintain that position.

To illustrate this point, consider the doctrine of the atonement. Key to this doctrine is a plethora of rich concepts such as double imputation; and it would be irresponsible for any gospel preacher not to preach such glorious truth. But, how many hymns are there which speak of double imputation? Ah, you say, but there are hymns which celebrate the atonement, although in poetic terms and not in precise theological terminology. Precisely—and as soon as it is acknowledged that singing, by definition, entails poetry rather than the type of theological exactness one finds in a systematic theology textbook, there is already distinction between the content of singing and the content of preaching.

But then the question arises as to which form of poetic expression is best suited to sing the praise of the Savior who has accomplished our redemption. Is it not the set of love songs which He has written, and sealed with His blood? Is it not the book of Psalms, which has been inspired by the Holy Spirit—a hymnbook whose expressions resonate with the rest of Scripture?

There is at least one other problem with Dominic Aquila’s position, and it is this: on what basis does he distinguish between preaching the Word and reading Scripture? He may want to maintain the reading of the Word of God as a separate, and sacrosanct, element of worship, which man dare not tamper with. However, if he can assume that in light of the new covenant realities, and apart from any explicit indication, the content of the singing of praise should change, how could he argue against the notion that simply reading an Old Testament passage in worship is likewise deficient? Again, each element comes as its own entity; and the fact that we preach in light

of the fullness of redemption does not mean that the content of worship song necessarily changes.

Perhaps the most serious problem with this article is its failure to deliver on what is a promising topic. There is a redemptive-theological change which occurs between the old covenant and the new, and it is reflected in the traditional Reformed understanding of worship.

This article fails to appreciate that the new covenant approach is not that of literally engaging in old-style worship, but being directed upward by means of vivid word-pictures—colorful concepts (as in the Apocalypse) which excite the imagination and inculcate, deeply and spiritually, divine truths, without the distraction of superficial and sensualistic worship. In the new covenant, there are simplified elements, yet they are still elements—items which are distinct from one another, and each subject to particular rules as derived from Scripture. That's the redemptive historical approach of the Westminster Confession of Faith, which states that under the new covenant, in contrast to the old, the covenant of grace is administered with greater simplicity and less outward glory (VII.6).

There are true sentiments which are expressed in this chapter. However, we must conclude that overall this effort is characterized by misunderstanding and non sequiturs.

**W. L. Bredenhof, "A Guide to Reformed Worship," ten articles in *The Clarion*, The Canadian Reformed Magazine (from Vol. 56, No. 23 [November 9, 2007], to Vol. 57, No. 7 [March 28, 2008]).**

Wes Bredenhof, a minister in the Canadian Reformed Churches, sets forth a Continental Reformed perspective in this ten-part series. He begins by claiming that "all of life is worship;" however, he qualifies that by noting that "there is something special that happens when God's people gather together for public worship," as he advocates the special presence of God: "This means that corporate, public worship has a unique character quite different from the everyday service that believers offer up to God."

He lays out what he says are "the two general principles that determine the shape of Reformed worship," viz., the regulative principle and covenantal structure. Regarding the regulative principle, he refers to the Belgic Confession, Article 7, which says that the Bible teaches the "whole manner of worship which God requires of us." Appeal is made to the classic text, Leviticus 10:1–2, regarding Nadab and Abihu. It is noted that Scriptural example can have the same force as a direct command, and that there is "an important distinction between elements and circumstances of worship," with the regulative principle applying to the former but not to the latter.

The principle of covenantal structure gives structure as to

how the elements should be laid out in a service. Here, the author touches on Jesus' mediatorial ministry, and the notion of a dialogue in worship.

From those foundational principles, Pastor Bredenhof deals with the call to worship, the votum (like a vow, commonly using the words of Psalm 124:8), the greeting (accompanied by the minister lifting up his hands and giving a salutation), the opening song, the reading of the law, confession of sin, assurance of pardon, preaching, congregational prayer, the collection, the closing elements (including a final song and the benediction), and the sacraments. He also considers why there should be two worship services on the Lord's Day.

What we find here is the Dutch Reformed proclivity to distinguish among various types of what Presbyterians would consider to be one element of worship. For example, instead of "reading of the law" as a separate element of worship, Presbyterians would consider the reading of the law to fall under the category of the reading of Scripture. Similarly, the confession of sin is regarded as a separate element of worship, rather than simply being another example of prayer.

This Canadian minister gives helpful encouragement and advice with regard to preaching. For instance, he writes: "So long as the Word is faithfully preached, it is the Word of God itself." He suggests that note-taking during sermons can assist the listener to concentrate. He speaks of the congregational prayer as having been rediscovered during the Reformation; and suggests that, although the placement of this prayer of intercession is a matter of circumstance, it usually is found near the close of the service. He counsels that a minister must use first person plural pronouns ("we," "us," and "our") rather than singular pronouns ("I," "me," and "my") when leading in public prayer; and also that the ones being led in prayer should "immediately echo the words of the minister in [their] own heart, intentionally using the first person plural." He also notes that worship is work, as much for the participant in the pew as for the worship leader.

He appeals to 1 Chronicles 16:29, Deuteronomy 16:17, and 1 Corinthians 16:1–2, and by "good and necessary consequence," to justify including an offertory in worship. "The collections are not a passive item that takes place at the back of the church, but rather an activity in the assembly." As he notes, this is not the traditional Presbyterian understanding; and even in certain Dutch circles, the practice is that of having a box at the back. This, it seems to us, is still the preferable method, rather than having an "offering" (a term which in the Old Testament has sacrificial overtones) as part of the worship.

Regarding the closing song, he writes: "Although it may be connected to the text for the sermon, it does not have to be. Though it is not well known, traditionally the Jews had a selection of Psalms that were normally used for the beginning

and end of the synagogue services.” At the beginning, Psalms 95–100 and 145–150 were used, and for the end, Psalms 24, 48, 81, 82, 92, 93 and 94 were employed. Even though we are not bound by this pattern, “the concluding song should prepare our hearts for leaving God’s special presence with joy and motivation to serve our great and gracious God.”

This pastor argues for the benediction as a part of worship, as it fits the Biblical pattern—both Aaronic and Pauline—of bestowing a blessing. He urges that the benediction should always use the precise language of Scripture, whether pronounced by a minister or an elder. He also believes that the congregation should put its own coda to the service with a loud “Amen!”

Regarding the sacraments, he states that they are of a different nature from the other elements of worship—that they consist of “signs and seals” rather than being Word-centered. However, the sacraments are the only divinely-ordained symbols in Biblical worship. “Consequently, things like paintings, videos, drama, dance—while legitimate in other settings— ... have no place in our corporate worship.”

The author answers the question of why baptism is included in worship, by noting that “Word and sacrament belong together.... The sacraments can be considered a sort of visible, tangible preaching of the gospel.... For this reason, normally baptism is administered in a public worship service by a minister of the Word and sacraments.”

He believes that baptism can take place early in a worship service, rather than after the sermon. He also argues that the congregation itself is a participant in the sacrament—a fact that is often forgotten.

The Lord’s Supper, while instituted when Jesus gathered privately with His disciples, soon became “a regular feature of the gatherings of the early church”—as witnessed in Acts 2: 42, and confirmed in 1 Corinthians 11:20. In the communion feast, there is a covenantal dialogue, in which believers actively respond to the “sacramental proclamation” of what Christ has done for their salvation. Following John Calvin’s lead, he prefers a frequent (perhaps even weekly) observance for communion, while at the same time recognizing that the frequency is a matter of circumstance. In his view, the Lord’s Supper can be taken to shut-ins, but the sacrament must always be accompanied by the Word in the context of a service of worship.

He concludes the series by strongly encouraging attendance at worship twice on the Lord’s Day, and he gives five reasons in support. First, it is “self-destructive” to miss out on the further opportunity for worship. Secondly, it harms families, both immediate and extended. Thirdly, it damages the church and its unity: “Since we are the body of Christ, we do things together and that includes gathering for corporate public worship.” Fourthly, it violates the Fifth Commandment by rejecting the authority of the elders. Fifthly, it frustrates one’s faithful pastor.

Cory Griess, “The Regulative Principle: A Confessional Examination,” *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal* (Vol. 41, No. 2, April 2008) 59–92; available on-line at <http://www.prca.org/prtj/apr2008.pdf>.

In this article, Cory Griess professes his allegiance to the regulative principle of worship, a principle he acknowledges to have come out of the Reformation and particularly Calvin. The author also expresses his desire to avoid two “extremes” with respect to the regulative principle.

After a fairly standard exposition of the principle itself, we discover toward the end of the article what he means by “extreme”: one extreme view is that of being too loose (as seen in the perspective of John Frame), and the other is that of being overly rigorous—as is evident, the author writes, in those who oppose musical instrumentation in public worship. In a footnote, he writes:

Those who decry instruments in worship will ... say that the New Testament church did not use instruments, therefore that practice should be seen as prescribed. However, the Scriptures never testify to this fact. And even if they did not use instruments, there is absolutely no evidence that the New Testament apostolic church did not use them because *instruments were a type of the Holy Spirit poured out* (as Girardeau argues). It is because of this that an instrument in the service of an element is a circumstance not laid down by NT example. If one says that the NT example has no instruments in the worship because we know this from other sources, then one must find out if the NT example includes passing the offering plate, closing one’s eyes in worship, etc., by those same sources (89).

Mr. Griess does interact with the Southern Presbyterian theologian John Lafayette Girardeau (though we would beg to differ with the author’s argumentation). However, he does not take into account the Reformation definition of circumstance (as set forth, for example, by George Gillespie), which leads to the conclusion that, no matter how construed, instrumentation cannot be justified as a matter of circumstance. He also does not explain how it would be that so many of the champions of the regulative principle, from Calvin to Girardeau to G.I. Williamson, were so obviously wrong on the question of instrumental music in public worship.

Mark Dalbey, “Christian Worship,” *Online Course Lectures, Covenant Theological Seminary* (Summer 2006).

Dr. Dalbey is a professor at Covenant Theological Seminary, the national seminary of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), located in St. Louis, Missouri. In a 2006 article in this

journal on the regulative principle of worship, we considered his D.Min. dissertation.<sup>14</sup>

His lecture notes on “Christian Worship” are found online.<sup>15</sup> Although he adds his own perspective, he largely follows John Frame and R.J. Gore.

Of particular interest to our readers may be one of the appendices (Appendix C: Chapel at Covenant Theological Seminary), which sets forth the Seminary’s policy regarding women leading in chapel services. Among the noteworthy points are the following. “Women are not to have teaching authority in church worship (1 Timothy 2:11–15)” “Women are to participate and exercise gifts in worship (1 Corinthians 11: 2–16).” “The call to silence (1 Corinthians 14:34; 1 Timothy 2: 12) does not mean absolute silence but silence in relationship to the speaking and ruling authority of elders.” “Female participation in a single voice in prayer, song, and scripture reading (other than the reading directly related to the preaching of the Word) is appropriate under the authoritative worship leadership of elders (1 Corinthians 11:5; 14:26; BOCO [*Book of Church Order*] 50–2).” “Female participation [as in single voice participation] should be implemented with sensitivity to brothers and sisters who may apply biblical principles differently. As the denominational seminary we must be sensitive to those who may disagree without stifling the participation of women and nonelder men in chapel worship services.” Three conclusions are drawn: “A. Women may individually pray, sing, and read scripture at Covenant chapel worship services under the official worship leadership [in accord with the policy that “The primary leadership of the worship service should be conducted by those holding the office of elder or those preparing for the office of elder as part of the training of pastors”]. B. Women may make announcements, give testimonies, and present mission moments at Covenant chapel worship services. C. On occasion, women and non-ordained men may be asked to present biblical principles for godly living in an area of one’s personal expertise when it meets a particular need of the Covenant Seminary community—so long as it is clearly under the authority of the administrative leadership of the seminary with direct oversight exercised through the Dean of Students.”

Quite frankly, we are at a loss as to how it is possible to exercise “sensitivity” toward conservatives who object to female leadership in chapel services, while at the same time not “stifling the participation of women” in those roles. Moreover, please note that this policy draws a distinction between Scripture reading “directly related to the preaching of the Word” and other Scripture reading: does this mean that the latter is somehow not authoritative? That leads us to point out that in Q/A 156, the Westminster Larger Catechism, to which Covenant Seminary presumably gives subscription (in “good faith,” of course), forbids just anyone from reading

Scripture in public worship. Finally, the PCA General Assembly has spoken to these very issues, when it took exception to the minutes of Southern Florida Presbytery for having a woman read Scripture in public worship and for having another woman lead in prayer.<sup>16</sup> Apparently, the PCA’s national seminary does not feel obligated to follow the position taken by its General Assembly.<sup>17</sup>

**Blogroll:** Andrew J. Webb, *Building Old School Presbyterian Churches*; Jeffrey J. Meyers, *Corrigenda Denuo*; Sean Michael Lucas, *Sean Michael Lucas*; R. Scott Clark, *The Heidelberg*; Will Shin, *Thoughts & Actions*.

Over the past year, particularly with the explosion of the number of blogs, the “regulative principle of worship” continues to be bandied about on the Internet. Among the more noteworthy are the following.

PCA pastor Andrew Webb of Fayetteville, North Carolina, remains steadfast in his advocacy of Old School Presbyterianism,

14. See *The Confessional Presbyterian* 2 (2006) 151–152.

15. Available at <http://www.covenantseminary.edu/worldwide/en/PT330/PT330.asp>. See also at the Covenant Seminary website the material from Professor Jerram Barrs’ course on “Christian Worship.” The Englishman deals with the regulative principle in an appendix, but appears largely to follow John Frame’s perspective. There are numerous erroneous statements and perspectives in this material, including, for example, the following: “Spiritual vitality always generates an outpouring of new music and hymns.” We’re certain that those who have advocated and practices exclusive psalmody through the centuries would beg to differ.

16. *Minutes 25<sup>th</sup> General Assembly* (1997) 218. When Southern Florida Presbytery pleaded that no authority had been cited for this exception, the 1998 General Assembly referred the lower court to 1 Corinthians 14:34, 1 Timothy 2:11–15, and the Westminster Larger Catechism Q/A 155–159 (*Minutes 26<sup>th</sup> General Assembly* [1998], 252). The Presbytery did not submit a response to this exception to the next General Assembly (*Minutes 27<sup>th</sup> General Assembly* [1999], 205). However, the next year, the Presbytery responded by saying that it “is sorry that exception occurred and will seek to prevent it from happening again” (*Minutes 28<sup>th</sup> General Assembly* [2000], 341).

17. There is continuing agitation on women’s issues as a whole, as witnessed by several overtures to the 35th PCA General Assembly (2008). Despite the efforts by Dr. Bryan Chapell, President of Covenant Seminary, the Assembly voted down Overture 9 from Philadelphia Presbytery, which had asked “that the General Assembly ‘erect a study committee on deaconesses’ to determine whether the election of women to the office of deacon is contrary to the Book of Church Order, and to determine more clearly the role of women in diaconal ministry.” “PCA News. General Assembly Rejects Deaconess Study Committee (June 2008).” ByFaith, *The Web Magazine* for the Presbyterian Church in America, <http://byfaithonline.com/page/pca-news/general-assembly-rejects-deaconess-study-committee>. Although there are distinct differences between the issue of female leadership in public worship and the issue of ordaining women to ecclesiastical office, nevertheless, the movements advocating change in both areas seem to be influenced by an egalitarian spirit.

which he characterizes as simple and Biblical. Among his recent articles are ones on the occasional elements of worship; administering the sacraments; reading, preaching, and hearing the Word; who should do the reading of Scripture in worship (teaching and ruling elders); and the acceptance of liturgies in Presbyterian churches (<http://biblebased.wordpress.com/category/worship/>). This advocate of the regulative principle deviates from the Westminster Standards' list of elements of worship when he expands the content of worship song to include uninspired material, and when he adds the collection and confessing the faith as parts of worship.

From an opposing viewpoint, there is the blog of Webb's fellow PCA pastor Jeffrey Meyers of St. Louis, Missouri (*Corrigenda Denuo*, <http://jeffreymeyers.blogspot.com>). This follower of the James B. Jordan school of thought which opposes the Presbyterian (and biblical) regulative principle of worship, has several series of blog posts on worship topics, espousing similar sentiments and in like vein as his published material.<sup>18</sup> Three notable series of blog posts are the following: *Presbyterians and Liturgies* (ten parts, July 24 through September 6, 2007); *Is Christmas Christian?* (fifteen parts, November 23, 2007 through February 8, 2008); and *The Regulative Principle of Worship* (five parts including two on "Worship in Spirit and Truth" April 1 through April 10, 2008). Also in the Advent theme is the singular post, "A Simple Church Year Catechism—Advent, Christmas, & Epiphany" (January 13, 2008).

The "Catechism" is comprised of twenty questions and answers. Here is a sampling:

Q 1. Why do we have different seasons of the year? A. God created the seasons for man's use and enjoyment.

Q 2. What do Fall and Winter remind us of? A. Fall and Winter remind us of sin and death because it is dark and cold.

Q 3. What do Spring and Summer teach us? A. Spring teaches us that God brings light and life to the world through Jesus Christ.

Q 4. What does the church calendar chiefly celebrate? A. The church calendar celebrates the life of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Q 5. Why does the church have her own seasons? A. The church has her own seasons to teach the world that true life is found in Jesus Christ and to resist reducing life to politics and economics.

Q 6. How are we to sanctify the seasons that God created for our benefit? A. According to 1 Timothy 4:5, we are to set apart the seasons with the Word of God and prayer.

Q 7. How has the church set apart the seasons with the Word of God and prayer? A. The church has chosen readings from the Old and New Testaments for each season and has ordered the prayer life of the church to match the life of Jesus.

We are also taught the proper colors for Advent (purple and royal blue, celebrating the "glorious King"), and for Christmas and Epiphany (white, which "reminds us of light and the shining forth of God's glory to the nations through Jesus Christ").

But, of course, all of this is totally arbitrary. Why not use red and green, as a reminder of the blood of Christ which brings new life? Or how about all of the hues of the rainbow, to celebrate that God's love goes to every race of man? What is most striking is that these arbitrary rituals are given the semblance of an objective status by virtue of being in a "catechism." Historically, a catechism is supposed to teach church doctrine—that is, that which is universal and based on Scripture. By seeking to inculcate these practices by catechetical method, Pastor Meyers makes a mockery of genuine catechizing.

Advocating a traditional Presbyterian aversion to holy days is Dr. Sean Michael Lucas, chief academic officer at Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis. In *Church Calendars, Scriptural Authority, and Liberty of Conscience* (two parts, February 6 and February 8, 2008), Professor Lucas bases his stance on both the doctrine of liberty of conscience and the regulative principle of worship, and in the comments section he takes a lot of heat for his position (including from Jeffrey Meyers, fresh from concluding his long series advocating holy days).

Dr. Lucas contends for the rhythm of 52 feast days each year—"the Lord's Day in which Word, Sacraments, and prayer constitute the heart of the church's 'calendar.' This, I believe, is what we find prescribed in God's Word, both by apostolic practice and direction. For a Presbyterian church to move beyond this—whether to demand attendance at Wednesday night activities as part of Christian discipleship or to offer Lenten observance as part of the church's discipleship practices, placing ashes on people's foreheads as part of this—binds the conscience in ways that are 'beside' the express command of Scripture itself and hence, spiritually illegitimate and potentially dangerous" (February 6, 2008).

According to Bishop Meyers, the comments expressing reaction to Dr. Lucas' post were "devastating" to the Covenant Seminary professor's position. Of course, it does depend upon one's perspective: cogency is in the eye of the beholder. It might be worth noting that one of the critical responders to Sean Lucas was John Allan T. Bankson, pastor of John Knox

18. See "The Regulative Principle of Worship: Sixty Years in Reformed Literature, Part Two (2000–2007)" in *The Confessional Presbyterian* 3 (2007) 175–177.

Presbyterian Church, a PCA congregation in Ruston, Louisiana. On Mr. Bankson's blog, <http://knowtea.com/>, we can read about celebrating Shrove Tuesday and footwashing on Maundy Thursday, as well as how to obtain real ashes for Ash Wednesday. (We wonder whether John Knox would appreciate being associated with such practices.) Somehow, with critique coming from such quarters, we have a hard time believing that the response was devastating.

In point of fact, it would appear to us that some of the responses to Pastor Meyers' blog offerings are far more damaging to his viewpoint. On December 14, 2007, one blogger countered the St. Louis minister by writing: "You want to have decorations, trees, cake, and gifts and celebrate Christmas and your justification is to say 'well doesn't the minister have the right to preach on the birth of Christ.' If your desire was simply to preach on the birth of Christ then you would not have trees, decorations &c. The fact you do looks remarkably like the Roman Catholic celebrations to me." Jeffrey Meyers replied: "I'm not using decorations, trees, cake, and gifts. I'm enjoying them."—to which the same responder wrote: "Please demonstrate that the 'traditional church year' is Scriptural;" and added: "Philip Schaff writes: 'Christmas was introduced in Antioch about the year 380; in Alexandria . . . not till about 430.'"

Dr. R. Scott Clark, professor at Westminster Seminary in California and minister in the United Reformed Churches of North America, apparently stirred up some classroom discussion when he suggested on *The Heidelbergblog*, that the use of musical instruments in worship might be idolatrous (<http://heidelbergblog.wordpress.com>). In *Could Instruments Be Idols* (May 3, 2008), he writes that "Calvin (and most of the Reformed) would have viewed the introduction of instruments into the service the same way they would have viewed someone slitting the throat of a bull during a stated service." He continues:

There's a second problem with instruments that is even more fundamental than our experience and that is those instruments that folk love so much come with some pretty heavy baggage. The only biblical ground for instruments also entails the sacrifice of animals. In other words, how are we going to use Moses' or David's instruments without killing Aaron's lambs or engaging in holy war? The same instruments we want to borrow from Moses come covered with the blood of bulls and goats and resonating with the sounds of holy war against your local canaanite [sic] city. The old Reformed churches understood that the Mosaic covenant was totalitarian. It's pretty hard to borrow just a little bit of Moses. Just ask the medieval church. How are we going to do what the medieval church did, borrow Mosaic elements (and for the same reasons) without gradually reproducing the Mosaic worship system just as the medieval church did?

Dr. Clark has also 'blogged' *Wanted: Better Tunes for the Psalms* (January 7, 2008), and *On Elements and Circumstances* (May 11, 2008). In the latter he writes: "An element is not morally indifferent. An element is morally and religiously obligated upon the Christian by God. A circumstance is morally indifferent. It may be done or omitted. As Bishop John Hooper argued in the 16th century, a circumstance neither adds anything to worship by its use or removes anything by its [sic] omission. Judging by some of the responses (private and public) to my criticisms of instruments it's evident to me that many who defend uninspired songs and musical instruments as mere circumstances don't really regard them as circumstances. As I keep saying, if I proposed moving the 11AM service to 10AM, I doubt that people would be so passionate and even heated."

To wrap up this roll, we finally note that Baptist minister Will Shin offers his support for biblical worship in "Regulative Principle Of Worship" (*Thoughts & Actions*, February 19, 2008, <http://thoughtsactions.wordpress.com/2008/02/19/regulative-principle-of-worship/>). He notes that the "Presbyterian Puritans, in assembling the Westminster standards, and the Reformed Baptist Puritans, in assembling the 1689 London Baptist Confession, were both aiming at the same thing: acceptable worship to Christ." "The Regulative Principle which is found in the Bible and expressed clearly in its climactic expression by the Puritans should not be placed by the way side because we and our contemporary culture are more fascinated and captivated by being entertained rather than by worshipping God." On the last point concludes his article soberly: "When Elijah said he wanted to have a 'contest' with the priests (a 'show'), what did the people do? They were all excited about it. 'Yes! Let's have a show!' And so they did. The 'contemporary church' is the same today. They want a show. They want fire to fall from heaven. They want the spectacular, or at least as entertaining as 'church may be.' But God is displeased. And if it were not for the grace of God, most 'churches' today would be consumed as Nadab and Abihu were."

**Conference: A Conversation on Denominational Renewal, February 26-28, 2008, Memorial Presbyterian Church (PCA), Saint Louis, Mo. Bill Boyd, "Worship," Matt Brown, "Ecclesiology," Jeremy Jones, "Theological Reflection." Audio available at [www.denominationalrenewal.org](http://www.denominationalrenewal.org).**

The perspective of this three-day conversation was that of "positive Reformed catholicity." In his address on "Worship," Pastor Boyd spoke of being at a pub and having a spiritual experience in the intimate, honest, and intense dialog among brothers over beer and Welsh nachos: "It is truly a taste of heaven. I don't know any word for that other than the word 'communion.'" He stated that engaging in worship should be more than just a glorified lecture hall, as he argued that "food is central" to

life and to the Biblical story: “At the center of the drama [of redemption] is food.” You need to eat or you will die. He said that “[t]he Word is the meal. We take the Word in and eat it.” But “you can’t encounter a word without being physical,” in that one must receive that word through the senses. “It’s *real*. . . . The Christian life is visceral.” According to the Texas minister, Reformed catholicity seeks to “glean from other traditions.” (In his talk, he cited *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*, a book by Eastern Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann.) Furthermore, the Biblical worldview which is emphasized in the Reformed faith sees no dichotomy between sacred and secular; this perspective leads to a greater appreciation of “aesthetic sensibilities” and the “relationship between form and content,” so that color, shape, sound, space, and tone take on greater significance. The emphases on physicality lead to a re-emphasis on the Incarnation, which guards against Gnosticism and Platonism. He said: “Maybe the most basic regulative thing going on in the Bible is that the Holy Spirit is regulating worship, by producing spiritual fruit in God’s people. And the chief danger that we have of offering strange fire in our worship is by gathering each week and by worshipping in the midst of God’s people and pretending that we love our neighbor.”

Another presentation at this conference was by Matt Brown, organizing pastor of Park Slope Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn, New York. Mr. Brown decried the current denominationalism, as he took aim at both “ecclesiological nostalgia” and the “elitist attitude” associated with it, and “ecclesiological nihilism.” In his view, the Apostle Paul taught that “You must enculturate the gospel in those [cultural and political] boundaries” set by the world: “The culture must determine, in some ways, how you are doing your mission. That’s what it means to be contextual. The catholicity of the church demands that we shape the ministry of the church according to particular cultures. Theology is always done in the service of mission—always.” Utilizing the perspective of Professor John Frame of theology being application, the member of the PCA’s Metropolitan New York Presbytery claimed: “Every creed . . . and every confession of the church is evidence of this very phenomenon. Each was written by people in response to particular contextual questions. Therefore, our theological formulations must change over time. The Westminster Confession of Faith is . . . a contextual document: it was answering the questions that were being asked by Christendom in the UK.” In his view, the Westminster Confession of Faith is a “missional document,” which tried to apply doctrine to a particular time. “If the PCA were to produce a new creed today, it’d look different from the Westminster Confession,” in that the contemporary issues that would be addressed would include the Holy Spirit (in light of the growth of Pentecostalism), the mission of the church, and relationship to other denominations (since Christendom is no more).

Also speaking at the conference was Jeremy Jones, a PCA

church planter in Memphis, Tennessee. This former Reformed University Ministries campus minister spoke against sectarianism, which he defined as the “practical or theoretical identification of your tradition or some subset of it as the true church”—constituting both an ecclesial myopia (self-focus) and ecclesial megalomania (delusions of grandeur). He attacked the perspective of Robert Lewis Dabney, who viewed all doctrines as interconnected so that, in Pastor Jones’ words, “an attack on one doctrine is an attack on the system as a whole.” The Tennessee teaching elder claimed that “sectarianism is the sin of legalism . . . and idolatry,” and a “serious theological error” which results in being either overly pessimistic or triumphalistic. Sectarianism, he contended, has “destroyed and deeply wounded” people, churches have been “blown apart by this,” and “marriages and the children of our church” have been “harmed by this.” Using the metaphor of the Church being a house, he stated that the “foundation of the house is the Word. The first floor of the house is the Catholic tradition, as it’s been mediated in the Roman Catholic communion and Eastern Orthodox communion. The second floor of the house: subdivided apartments of Protestantism.” He averred, “If you are a Protestant, . . . you rest on the Catholic tradition. You just do—you rely on it—these people mediated the Catholic faith to you. And the Church is one building. . . . It’s one house.” Speaking later of the necessity of contextualizing the gospel, he declared, “Inasmuch as you have trouble with an orthodox Reformed Catholic contextualism scheme, you have trouble with the Incarnation.”

By way of evaluation, we would acknowledge that much of what was propagated at this conference is good and Biblical. After all, who can disagree with being charitable and gracious and humble, whether in intra-denominational discussions or in discussing matters with believers from across a broad theological spectrum? However, what these brethren seem to have missed is that they themselves have erected their own theological barriers and shibboleths—indeed, to the point where anyone who disagrees with their paradigm has “trouble with the Incarnation.” Beyond that, we would note that although theological orthodoxy is built upon historic formulations of the Catholic Church (as in the ecumenical councils), the Roman Catholic Church is no longer part of the visible Body of Christ, but is a synagogue of Satan headed by the Antichrist. Furthermore, we would respectfully suggest that all Presbyterian denominations are supposed to subscribe to a particular set of formulations found in the Westminster Standards: is it charitable or gracious to enjoy ordained status in a Presbyterian church while going contrary to those standards? As was conceded by one or more of the speakers, preservation of doctrinal purity is one of the key components of the theological enterprise. That being the case, why is it wrong to enforce the doctrine that the church has confessed as being its understanding of the teachings of Scripture?

Although the conference organizers would deny this, the approach engendered is reminiscent of contemporary appeals in the political realm to “justice” and “fairness”—concepts that are cut off from the specific definition of, say, a Constitution, or particular moral teaching; concepts that can then be twisted into any shape desired. The fact that the presentations were couched in honeyed tones does not negate the implicit attacks upon those who would want to maintain full subscription to the Westminster Standards.

But perhaps even more basically, the whole approach calls into question a commitment to objective theological and ecclesiastical standards. The attack on Dabney is really an attack on systematic theology per se. It is a surrender to a re-framing that discounts the objective nature of the theological enterprise, and posits rather that “theology is application.”

The conference generated some discussion on blogs. The reader’s attention is particularly called to the comments of Bryan Cross, a former student at the PCA’s national seminary (Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis) who later converted to Roman Catholicism. He was largely encouraged by the presentations. He also made the following observation: “During Bill Boyd’s talk, I was sitting about two pews ahead of Bryan Chappell [sic], the President of Covenant Theological Seminary, and I heard him lean over to somebody next to him and say, ‘This is not your father’s PCA.’ I concur. For me, it was a kind of PCA ‘aggiornamento’, a call to think more broadly than the limits of a particular ecclesial ‘ghetto.’” (See “*Denominational Renewal*,” Part 1, Thursday, May 1, 2008, available on-line at <http://principiumunitatis.blogspot.com/2008/05/denominational-renewal-part-1.html>.)<sup>19</sup>

#### SUMMARY

Most of the authors whose books are reviewed in this article manifest an appalling lack of Biblical fidelity. Most distressing is the reality that among the worst offenders are popular writers in the Reformed community, such as John Frame and R.C. Sproul. There are numerous places where many of these authors either do not understand or do not deal with the historic Reformed understanding of worship, as exemplified in what has become known as the regulative principle of worship.

One of the benefits of, say, the book by Robert Dickie, is that we can point to it as an example of how someone with whom we do not totally agree theologically, has nevertheless grasped the fact that much of what passes today for worship is not worthy of the name. However, while a book such as his may be useful, and while someone could glean some good from it, there can also be a danger—that of being content with what we might describe as “Reformed lite.” Placing his material in the hands of novices or immature believers may assist them in resisting the temptation of contemporary worship.

But it may also result in their being immunized against the Puritan approach set forth in the Westminster Standards. Therefore, caution is urged in its use.

Rowland Ward’s contribution in dealing with the Westminster Assembly’s Directory for Public Worship is useful and represents on-going scholarly interest and development. However, his peculiar take on the Assembly’s view of the content of worship song leaves much to be desired.

The blogs we reviewed give evidence of a wide spectrum of opinion—from general sympathy for and support of the historic Reformed approach to worship, to a vitriolic attack upon that view.

As we concluded in last year’s *Confessional Presbyterian*, there is a continuing interest in the doctrine of worship and the regulative principle. But, as we also noted, there is much misunderstanding and confusion, with no sign of their dissipating. Some of the so-called experts clearly are simply ignorant. It is possible that others, through their employment of confusing terms and straw-man arguments, know only too well what they are doing. In any case, may God have mercy on all of us, that we may be enabled to fear Him and to worship Him in Spirit and in truth.

FRANK J. SMITH, PH.D., D.D. ■

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REVIEW: Nick Needham, ‘Westminster and worship: psalms, hymns, and musical instruments,’ In *The Westminster Confession into the 21st Century*, 2, ed. J. Ligon Duncan (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2005). 540 pages. ISBN 978-1-857-92878-5. \$37.99. Reviewed by Matthew Winzer, Grace Presbyterian Church (Australian Free Church), Rockhampton, Queensland, Australia.

#### WESTMINSTER AND WORSHIP EXAMINED: A Review of Nick Needham’s essay on the Westminster Confession of Faith’s teaching concerning the regulative principle, the singing of psalms, and the use of musical instruments in the public worship of God.

An attempt has recently been made by Nick Needham “to give an accurate historical judgment relating to the [Westminster] Assembly’s views and deliverances relating to exclusive

19. According to Wikipedia, “aggiornamento” means “bringing up to date,” and “was one of the key words used during the Second Vatican Council both by bishops and clergy attending the sessions, and by the media and Vaticanologists covering it. It was used to mean a spirit of change, openness, openmindedness and modernity.” Further, “The rival term used was *ressourcement* which meant a return to earlier sources, traditions and symbols of the early Church.”

psalmody and non-instrumental worship.”<sup>1</sup> If, however, one were expecting to find a detailed examination of the writings of the divines, he would be sorely disappointed. Throughout the article reference is made to only one fragment of writing from a member of the Assembly; all other quotations are taken from the statements of individual Puritans who neither attended the Westminster Assembly nor spoke specifically to the issue of exclusive psalmody. Moreover, no use has been made of the valuable historical material to be found in the writings of those members who have provided some sketches of its proceedings. Given this regrettable state of affairs, it must be said that the article fails in its attempt to provide an accurate historical judgment on the Assembly’s views. Whoever is the rightful possessor of the views Mr. Needham has represented, they have not been shown to belong to the Westminster Assembly.

### The Regulative Principle Of Worship.

The author begins with a clear explanation of the regulative principle of worship as taught in chapter 21.1 of the Confession. He correctly notes that the Confession uses the word *worship* “in the specific sense of performing acts whose basic and primary function is to express honour and veneration towards God” (*Westminster*, 224). As such it is to be distinguished from a wider definition of the word which considers all of life as worship. He then summarises the Confession’s statement as to the way God is to be worshipped: “God must be worshipped in ways He Himself has authorized in Scripture” (227). It is shown how this view differs from the Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Anglican position, which maintains that the church has power to decree ceremonies to a greater or lesser degree (229). He then turns to the Westminster Catechisms (Larger and Shorter) to clarify the meaning of the Confession and to confirm its insistence that worship must be instituted by God Himself (231–232).

1. J. Ligon Duncan, *The Westminster Confession into the 21st century*, 2, ed. J. Ligon Duncan (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2005) xiii. Hereafter referred to as *Westminster*.

2. For example, J. I. Packer writes, “To them, there could be no real spiritual understanding, or any genuine godliness, except as men exposed and enslaved their consciences to God’s Word.”—“The Puritan Conscience” in *Puritan Papers 2* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 2001) 238.

3. *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1994 rpt.) 86.

4. Ministers of Sion College, London, *Jus Divinum Regiminis Ecclesiastici* (1646; 1654; Dallas, Tex.: Naphtali Press, 1995) 7. The Naphtali Press edition is a critical edition which notes the differences between the first and third edition of the *Jus Divinum*.

5. C.f. Jeremiah Burroughs, *Gospel-Worship: or, the Right Manner of Sanctifying the Name of God in General* (London, Printed by Peter Cole, 1658) 8: “in God’s Worship there must be nothing tending up to God but what he hath commanded; whatsoever we meddle with in the Worship of God, it must be what we have a Warrant for out of the Word of God.”

In this part of the author’s presentation one would have expected to have seen some discussion of the Confession’s teaching of the regulative principle in relation to liberty of conscience. Chapter 20.2 provides a treatment of the subject under this important heading, which is acknowledged by historians to be fundamental to the way the Puritans understood religion.<sup>2</sup> This section of the Confession states, “God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in anything contrary to His Word; or beside it, if matters of faith or worship.”<sup>3</sup> The fact that a certain practice is not contrary to the Scriptures does not justify its use in worship to God; it must be positively taught in the Word as something that is required of the individual by God Himself. If it is not required by God in His Word then it is forbidden.

Given the importance of worshipping God according to true liberty of conscience, it becomes necessary to define what a divine institution is. According to a Presbyterian manifesto written by the ministers of Sion College at the time the Assembly was sitting, it is only what “can be proved by Scripture to have this stamp of divine warrant and authority set upon them” that “may properly be said to be *jure divino* [by divine right], and by the will and appointment of Jesus Christ.” “*Jus divinum* [a divine right] is the highest and best Tenure, whereby the Church can hold of Christ any Doctrine, Worship, or Government. Only God can stamp such a *jus divinum* upon any of these things, whereby Conscience shall be obliged.”<sup>4</sup> It does not suffice that an act of worship can be justified on the basis of Scriptural principles; this only constitutes a normative principle which is applicable to all of life. Faithful exegesis is required, whereby a *divine right* must be established from the Word of God for the introduction of a particular action or function into the worship and government of the church. Such an action must be shown to be (1) “above and contradicting from all human power and created authority whatsoever;” (2) “beyond all just, human or created power, to abolish or oppose the same;” and (3) “so obligatory unto all Churches in the whole Christian world that they ought uniformly to submit themselves unto it in all the Substantials of it so far as is possible” (*Jus Divinum*, 7). This divine warrant<sup>5</sup> can only be discovered by an interpretative process which takes into account the obligatory examples, divine approbation, divine acts and divine precepts of holy Scripture (13–35).

It should be noted that this *divine right* is required even for the smallest details of God’s worship. This is a point on which all the Westminster divines were agreed, Presbyterian and Independent alike. The Scottish commissioner, Samuel Rutherford, stated the claim of the smallest matters on the conscience of the worshipper:

We urge the immutability of Christ's Laws, as well in the smallest as greatest things, though the Commandments of Christ be greater or less in regard of the intrinsic matter; as to use water in Baptism or to Baptise is less than to Preach Christ and believe in him, 1 Cor. 1.17, yet they are both alike great, in regard of the Authority of Christ the Commander, Matt. 28.18, 19. And it's too great boldness to alter any commandment of Christ for the smallness of the matter, for it lieth upon our conscience, not because it is a greater or a lesser thing, and hath degrees of obligatory necessity lying in it for the matter; but it tieth us for the Authority of the Law-giver.<sup>6</sup>

In a similar vein, Jeremiah Burroughs, the English Independent, made it a noteworthy point that,

In the matters of Worship, God stands upon little things. Such things as seem to be very small and little to us, yet God stands much upon them in the matter of Worship. For there is nothing wherein the Prerogative of God doth more appear than in Worship.

He proceeded to explain,

Now God hath written the Law of natural Worship in our hearts, as that we should love God, fear God, trust in God, and pray to God: this God hath written in our hearts. But there are other things in the Worship of God that are not written in our hearts, that only depend upon the Will of God revealed in his Word. And these are of such a nature as we can see no reason for but only this, because God will have them.... God would have some waies for the honouring of him, that the Creature should not see into the reason of them, but meerly the Will of God to have them so (Jeremiah Burroughs, *Gospel-Worship*, 11).

This Puritan emphasis on human conscience being subject to the authority of God alone means that every action offered to God in formal worship, whether it be a small or a great action, requires a divine warrant in order that the conscience may offer it in faith to God. Worship is an act of bowing to His sovereign authority. There is no genuine honour given to the divine Name where there is not implicit submission to the divine Will; there is no place for human creativity in the worship of the Almighty. True worshippers are receptive, not creative; they attend on the Most High God and await His Word before they do anything in His court.

It is regrettable that Mr. Needham represents the regulative principle as allowing a certain degree of sanctified creativity and freedom in the worship of God. He writes,

The principle is rigid and inflexible, and does rule out creativity (sanctified or otherwise), as far as the ingredients of our worship are concerned; but it equally allows us a measure of Christian liberty in the exact way that we mix or combine those ingredients. Form and freedom are both provided for (*Westminster*, 240).

He finds this freedom in what the Confession (chapter 1.6) calls "circumstances concerning the worship of God ... 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." Mr. Needham considers that "in the realm of circumstance, 'Whatever is not forbidden is lawful, if it is edifying'" (284).

Do circumstances, as defined by the Confession of Faith, give freedom to practice things which edify if they are not forbidden by Scripture? The answer is a definite *no*. That which edifies is by nature a religious action and must therefore be deemed to be a part of worship. Genuine circumstances are non-religious and merely facilitate the performing of that action which God has prescribed. Samuel Rutherford further elucidates this necessary point:

In actions or Religious means of Worship, and actions Morall, whatever is beside the Word of God is against the Word of God; I say in Religious means, for there be means of Worship, or Circumstances Physicall, not Morall, not Religious, as whether the Pulpit be of stone or of timber, the Bell of this or this Metall, the house of Worship stand thus or thus in Situation.<sup>7</sup>

A circumstance therefore is nothing more than a means of worship without any religious significance whatsoever. It is that without which the action as an action could not be performed. It is an *adjunct* which incidentally accompanies the worship rather than an *addition* which qualitatively affects the worship.<sup>8</sup> That which edifies is not an *adjunct* but an *addition* to the worship of God.

Another Scottish commissioner to the Assembly, George Gillespie, also carefully distinguished between "common circumstances and sacred ceremonies" in a sermon before the House of Commons:

I know the Church must observe rules of order and conveniency in the common circumstances of Times, Places,

6. Samuel Rutherford, *The Divine Right of Church Government and Excommunication* (London: printed by John Field, 1646) 19, 20.

7. Samuel Rutherford, *Divine Right*, 119. The pagination is disordered and should read 109.

8. See William Ames, *The Marrow of Sacred Divinity* (London: Edward Griffin for Henry Overton, 1642) 318: "the circumstances of place, time, and the like," are "common adjuncts to religious and civil acts."

and Persons; but these circumstances are none of our holy things: they are only prudential accommodations, which are alike common to all humane Societies, both Civill and Ecclesiasticall; wherein both are directed by the same light of nature, the common rule to both in all things of that kinde; providing alwayes, that the generall rules of the Word bee observed.<sup>9</sup>

In language virtually identical to the Confession's statement relating to circumstances, George Gillespie here makes the same two points as Samuel Rutherford. First, "these circumstances are none of our holy things," meaning that they have no religious value; and secondly, "they are only prudential accommodations," that is, convenient means for carrying out the action required by God.

It is clear that Mr. Needham has gone too far in claiming that circumstances are such as are edifying and not forbidden in Scripture. This effectively creates a class of religious actions which are *beside* the word in matters of faith and worship, contrary to the limiting principle of worship as articulated by the Westminster Confession, chapter 20.2 and 21.1. He allows for human creativity in contrast to the Confession's explicit statement forbidding men to assume this prerogative which belongs to God alone.

### Singing Of Psalms.

In his treatment of the singing of psalms, Mr. Needham correctly notes "that the acts of worship the Confession explicitly authorizes are the only acts for which it finds scriptural justification" (*Westminster*, 247). He also observes that "The third ingredient of worship mentioned in Confession 21.5 is 'singing of psalms with grace in the heart'" (248). It is pointed out that *The Directory for the Publick Worship of God* contains a section entitled, "Of Singing of Psalms," and the conclusion is reached that "There can be no controversy then, that the Westminster documents regard psalm-singing as a divinely authorized act of Christian worship" (248).

Given this clear statement that psalm-singing is a divinely authorized *act of Christian worship*, it comes as something of a surprise when the author later asserts that "The authorized act of worship is to sing praises to God. What we sing—the

genre of song—then comes into the category of circumstance" (284). The Confession has clearly maintained that "psalms" are the matter to be sung in worship as plainly as it has stated that the Scriptures are the matter to be read in worship. Nevertheless, Mr. Needham feels the liberty to say that the matter of sung praise is a mere circumstance of worship. He no doubt finds this freedom in his idiosyncratic idea that the regulative principle allows for sanctified creativity in things which edify, even if such things are not positively instituted by the word of God; but it has already been shown that this concept is contrary to the Confession; the Confession teaches that anything which is offered to God in worship requires a divine warrant. *What* is sung in worship is undoubtedly intended to express honour and veneration towards God; therefore *the matter* of sung praise is a part of the instituted worship of God.

### The Historical-contextual Interpretation of "Singing of Psalms" in the Westminster formularies.

Much of the author's treatment of "singing of psalms" is concerned with showing that seventeenth century writers used the word "psalms" to refer to compositions other than the Old Testament book of Psalms. This compels him "to think twice before presuming that 'psalms' in the Westminster Confession obviously and exclusively mean the psalms of David" (250). A little later in the essay he becomes more bold and declares that exclusive psalmody is "the least probable" historical-contextual interpretation of the reference to "singing of psalms" in Confession 21.5 (280, 281). It is finally maintained that a plausible interpretation is, "That it is lawful to sing any spiritually edifying material" including extra-scriptural hymns (281).

The critical question which naturally arises at this point is whether Mr. Needham has evaluated the appropriate historical context? Is the broader seventeenth century context a sufficient indication of the movements at work in the Westminster Assembly?

It should be considered that the Parliament called the Assembly with the resolution to bring the Church of England into "nearer agreement with the Church of Scotland, and other Reformed Churches abroad."<sup>10</sup> Subsequently "The Solemn League and Covenant" made it a point of avowed duty before God that the Churches of God in the three kingdoms of Scotland, England and Ireland be brought "to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion, confession of faith, form of church-government, *directory for worship* and catechising; that we, and our posterity after us, may, as brethren, live in faith and love, and the Lord may delight to dwell in the midst of us."<sup>11</sup> The Assembly's proceedings were part and parcel of that great movement known to history as "the second reformation." Its transactions cannot therefore be considered as maintaining the seventeenth century status quo, but must be seen in the light of this solemn self-imposed

9. George Gillespie, *A Sermon Preached Before the Honourable House of Commons at their late solemne fast, Wednesday, March 27, 1644* (London: Printed for Robert Boſtock, 1644) 29. The phrase, "common circumstances and sacred ceremonies," is from the margin.

10. 'An Ordinance of the Lords and Commons assembled in Parliament, for the calling of an Assembly,' etc, 'June 12, 1643,' in *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1994 rpt.) 13.

11. 'The Solemn League and Covenant,' in *Westminster Confession*, 359. Emphasis added.

obligation to reform the worship of the church according to the word of God.

Given this impetus to bring the Church of England into a uniformity with the Church of Scotland, it is of first importance to ascertain what the Church of Scotland understood by the expression “singing of psalms” when used in the context of the ordinary parts of public worship.

According to the 1641 “Government and Order of the Church of Scotland”—usually attributed to Alexander Henderson, who would later serve as a commissioner to the Westminster Assembly—“The publike worship beginneth with prayer, and reading some portion of holy Scripture both of the Old and New Testament, which the people hear with attention and reverence, and after reading, the whole Congregation joyneth in singing some Psalm.” The Order goes on to mention another two times when the Psalms are sung in the public service, namely, after the reading and prefacing of the Scriptures and prior to the closing benediction.<sup>12</sup>

From this description of ordinary religious worship it is not made clear what is meant by “singing some Psalm,” but the historical record shows that the Psalms of David in Metre were the only songs authorised to be used in public worship. The matter has been thoroughly investigated by the able Scottish church historian, David Hay Fleming, who gathered the relevant witnesses together and showed conclusively that human additions to worship-song were “disallowed as a Prelatic innovation,” and “that human hymns were not used in God’s public worship at the second Reformation.”<sup>13</sup> It is needless to reduplicate this evidence as Mr. Needham acknowledges that “In actual liturgical practice, the Reformed Church of Scotland was exclusively psalm-singing” (*Westminster*, 274). So it is clear that when the 1641 “Order of the Church of Scotland” says that “the whole Congregation joyneth in singing some Psalm,” it undoubtedly means to refer to the Psalms of David as then used by the Church of Scotland.

Now, considering the reforming resolution of the Parliament to bring the Church of England into nearer uniformity with the practice of the Church of Scotland, the “singing of psalms” mentioned in both the Confession and Directory might naturally be understood to refer to the Psalms of David as authorised and sung in the Church of Scotland. The historical context at least points in this direction; some corroborating evidence is required to show that the Westminster Assembly did in fact make moves to adopt the Scottish practice. This evidence is to be found in the Assembly’s work on a Psalter which included a metrical version of the Old Testament book of Psalms and nothing else.<sup>14</sup>

#### The Work and Proceedings of the Westminster Assembly.

As early as October, 1643, Robert Baillie indicates that the Scottish commissioners to the Westminster Assembly went

up to London with the following prospect: “it is liklie that one of the points of our conference will be anent a new Psalter.”<sup>15</sup> The commissioners were not disappointed. On 20 November, 1643, the House of Commons resolved

That the Assembly of Divines be desired to give their Advice, whether it may not be useful and profitable to the Church, that the Psalms, set forth by Mr. Rous, be permitted to be publickly sung, the same being read before singing, until the Books be more generally dispersed.<sup>16</sup>

This resolution, besides initiating work on the new Psalter, also shows that the materials to be used in the worship-song of the Church of England at this time were those “permitted to be publickly sung,” and that the view of the Westminster divines was consulted as to what materials would be fit for this purpose.

The Assembly’s reception of Parliament’s resolution was recorded by John Lightfoot:

*Wednesday*, Nov. 22.—The first thing done this morning was, that Sir Benjamin Rudyard brought an order from the House of Commons, wherein they require our advice, whether Mr. Rous’s Psalms may not be sung in churches; and this being debated, it was at last referred to the three committees, to take every one fifty psalms.<sup>17</sup>

The Assembly did not take their commission lightly, but proceeded immediately to examine Rous’ Psalms for their fitness to be authorised for use in the Church of England.

In relation to undertaking to revise the Psalms of Rous, the Assembly Minutes record an important statement by Alexander Henderson, which connects this Psalm book to the Assembly’s work on a directory of worship as well as to the proposed uniform practice of the churches of Scotland and England:

Mr Hinderson: We had a psalme booke offered to our church made by Lord Sterling, but we would preferre this [Rous’ Psal-

12. Alexander Henderson, *The Government and Order of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Printed for James Bryson, 1641) 15–17.

13. David Hay Fleming, ‘The hymnology of the Scottish reformation,’ in *Shorter Writings of David Hay Fleming*, volume 1 (Dallas, Tex.: Naphtali Press, 2007) 49.

14. See S. W. Carruthers, *The every day work of the Westminster Assembly* (Greenville, S.C.: Reformed Academic Press, 1994) 161–167, for a brief account of this forgotten aspect of the Assembly’s work.

15. Robert Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, ed. David Laing, volume 2 (Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club, 1841–1842) 101.

16. ‘House of Commons Journal, volume 3: 20 November 1643,’ *Journal of the House of Commons*, volume 3: 1643–1644 (1802) 315–317. URL: <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=8111>.

17. John Lightfoot, ‘Journal of the Proceedings of the Assembly of Divines,’ in *Whole Works*, volume 13 (London, J. F. Dove, 1824) 60.

ter] to that, for I have seene it. Well done to revise the booke & if it come to a directory of worship, that ther might be uniformity in that in the whole Island....<sup>18</sup>

This record should not go unnoticed, for it shows that the mention of a Psalm book in the final draft of the Directory for Public Worship had a specific referent in mind, namely, a metricated version of the Old Testament book of Psalms.

Little is recorded concerning the Assembly's deliberations on the Psalter. Robert Baillie has noted that "Mr. Nye spoke much against a tie to any Psalter, and somewhat against the singing of paraphrases, as of preaching homilies; we, understand, will mightily oppose it: for the Psalter is a great part of our uniformity which we cannot let pass until our church be well advised with it" (Baillie, *Letters*, 2.121). It appears from this notice that some of the extreme opinions of the separatists found their way into the Assembly via Philip Nye. They had become so vehemently opposed to the Book of Common Prayer that they would have nothing uninspired in the worship service, not even paraphrases of the Psalms. Robert Baillie's personal opinion reflected the mind of the Scottish commissioners that the Psalter was an essential ingredient in that uniformity of worship which was sought in the Solemn League and Covenant.<sup>19</sup>

Some further notices of the Assembly's work reveal that their labours on the Psalter were concerned with accurately reflecting the original Hebrew of the Old Testament Psalms and excluded anything which did not keep closely to the text. John Lightfoot's Journal entry for December 22, 1643, records, "Mr. Gibson proposed, that a select committee of Hebricians might be chosen, to consult with Mr. Rous upon the Psalms, from Psalm to Psalm, for the solidity of the work, and the honour of the Assembly" (Lightfoot, *Journal*, 90). Robert Baillie reports that the new translation of the Psalms excluded the uninspired doxology, or conclusion, "resolving to keep punctual to the original text, without any addition." He adds that all parties were content to omit it because it was

18. As quoted in Chad Van Dixhoorn, "Reforming the Reformation: Theological debate at the Westminster Assembly, 1643-1652," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2004, Volume 4 [Appendix B: Minutes of the Westminster Assembly volume 1, Folios 198v-441v (17 November 1643 to 11 April 1644)], page 344.

19. For Robert Baillie's description of the separatists' disorders in singing during public worship, see his *Dissuasive from the Errors of the Time* (London: Printed for Samuel Gellibrand, 1646) 118, 119, where he exposes their practice of allowing an individual to "sing the hymne which himselfe had composed."

20. "January 1645: An Ordinance for taking away the Book of Common Prayer, and for establishing and putting in execution of the Directory for the publique worship of God," *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660* (1911) 582-607. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=56006>.

21. "The Directory for the Publick Worship of God," in *Westminster Confession*, 393.

an addition whereupon "the Popish and Prelaticall partie did so much dote" (Baillie, *Letters*, 2.259). The divines were not prepared to include any matter in their covenanted psalm book which did not adhere closely to the inspired text.

While work on the Psalter steadily proceeded, the Directory for Public Worship was completed by the divines and presented to the Parliament, whereupon the following ordinance was passed:

The Lords and Commons assembled in Parliament, taking into serious consideration the manifold inconveniences that have arisen by the Book of Common-Prayer in this Kingdome, and resolving, according to their Covenant, to reform Religion according to the Word of God, and the Example of the best Reformed Churches, have consulted with the Reverend, Pious, and Learned Divines called together to that purpose; And do judge it necessary, that the said Book of Common-Prayer be abolished, and the Directory for the Publique Worship of God, herein after mentioned, be established and observed in all the Churches within this Kingdome.<sup>20</sup>

The ordinance indicates, first, that the Parliament was acting in accord with its covenanted commitment to uniformity in religion; secondly, it was following through on its resolution to follow the example of the best Reformed Churches; and thirdly, that what the Assembly of divines had concluded with respect to the public worship of God was to be universally implemented throughout the churches of the kingdom.

As already noted, the Directory for Worship contains a section on the singing of psalms. In this section it is written, "That the whole congregation may join herein, every one that can read is to have a psalm book; and all others, not disabled by age or otherwise, are to be exhorted to learn to read."<sup>21</sup> It has been shown that Parliament made provision for this psalm book in directing the divines to give consideration to the suitability of Rous' psalms. At the very time the Directory was passed and enacted the divines were still completing the examination and alteration of this Psalter. In the absence of any other provision, the most logical conclusion is that the Directory's mention of "a psalm book" is a reference to the Psalms of David in Metre which they were in the process of finalising.

The psalm book was finally completed on November 13, 1645, and sent up by the Assembly to the House of Commons with this resolution:

*Ordered*—That whereas the Hon<sup>ble</sup> House of Commons hath, by an order bearing the date the 20th of November 1643, recommended the Psalms set out by Mr. Rouse to the consideration of the Assembly of Divines, the Assembly hath caused them to be carefully perused, and as they are now altered and amended, do approve of them, and humbly conceive that it

may be useful and profitable to the Church that they be permitted to be publicly sung.<sup>22</sup>

The finished product received the imprimatur of the House of Commons on November 14, which resolved, “That this Book of Psalms, set forth by Mr. Rouse, and perused by the Assembly of Divines, be forthwith printed.”<sup>23</sup>

All that was required now was the examination and approval of the Psalter in Scotland. In a public letter on November 25, 1645, Robert Baillie wrote, “The Psalms are perfyted: the best without all doubt that ever yet were extant. They are now on the presse; but not to be perused till they be sent to yow, and your animadversions returned hither, which we wish were so soon as might be.”<sup>24</sup> In two private letters he expressed a longing which he shared in common with his fellow labourers in England: “It is our earnest desyre that the Psalter might at this time be put in such a frame that we needed not to be troubled hereafter with any new translation thereof.” “These lines are likely to go up to God from many millions of tongues for many generations.”<sup>25</sup> These statements reveal that the Psalter committee in London desired their version of the Psalms to be a manual of praise which would be used for many generations and that they were not inclined to make any efforts towards producing another.

The Assembly of divines subsequently recommended the emended version of Rous and passed over another version from the pen of Mr. William Barton, which had been referred to them by the House of Lords. Barton’s Psalms had been brought to their attention on October 7, 1645; after perusal, they sent the following communication to the House of Lords on November 14, the same date that the House of Commons authorised the use of Rous’ Psalms:

in Obedience to the Order of this Honourable House, they appointed a Committee to consider thereof; and, upon the whole Matter, do find Reason to certify this Honourable House, That albeit the said Mr. Barton hath taken very good and commendable Pains in his Metaphrase, yet the other Version, so exactly perused and amended by the said Mr. Rouse and the Committee of the Assembly with long and great Labour, is so closely framed according to the Original Text, as that we humbly conceive it will be very useful for the Edification of the Church.<sup>26</sup>

From this communication it becomes clear that the Assembly considered their labours had produced a translation which closely reflected the original text, and that they were not prepared to work on another. Although the revised Psalter was sent to Scotland for further examination and correction, the Assembly of divines made no further efforts in the way of preparing materials to be sung in the public worship of God. As far as they were concerned, ample provision had been made

for fulfilling that part of the service which they entitled “the singing of psalms.”

The matter, however, was not yet concluded. On March 26, 1646, the House of Lords inquired of the Assembly of divines as to why the psalms of William Barton “may not be sung in Churches as well as other Translations, by such as are willing to use them.”<sup>27</sup> The divines sent in their answer on April 25:

whereas there are several other Translations of the Psalms already extant: We humbly conceive, that, if Liberty should be given to People to sing in Churches every one that Translation which they desire, by that Means several Translations might come to be used, yea in one and the same Congregation at the same Time, which would be a great Distraction and Hinderance to Edification.<sup>28</sup>

Not only did the Assembly confine its labours to the Psalms of David in Metre, but they would not even consider allowing more than one metrical Psalter to be used in the Church lest it cause distraction and hinder that edification which they considered the approved Psalter was fitted to promote.

This review will not trace the history of the Psalter as it moved from England to Scotland because it has no bearing on the question as to what is meant by the term “psalms” in the Westminster formularies.<sup>29</sup> It suffices at this point to simply

22. Alex F. Mitchell and John Struthers, *Minutes of the Sessions of the Westminster Assembly of Divines* (Edmonton, Canada: Still Waters Revival Books, 1991 rpt.) 163.

23. ‘House of Commons Journal Volume 4: 14 November 1645,’ *Journal of the House of Commons*, volume 4: 1644–1646 (1802) 341–342. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=23544>.

24. Robert Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, 2:326.

25. *Ibid.*, 330, 332. The letter also records the willingness of the Psalter committee to receive the corrections made by the Church of Scotland: “I can give assurance that whatever corrections comes up from yow shall not only be very kindly taken into consideration, but also followed, whenever we are able to shew that they are reasonable; for in this we find both Mr. Rouse and all the committee very tractable.”

26. ‘House of Lords Journal, volume 7: 14 November 1645,’ *Journal of the House of Lords*, volume 7: 1644 (1802) 701–705. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=33446>.

27. ‘House of Lords Journal, volume 8: 26 March 1646,’ *Journal of the House of Lords*, volume 8: 1645–1647 (1802) 236–239. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=33989>.

28. *Ibid.*, 283–286. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=34013>.

29. For further information one might consult David Laing’s useful collection of papers appended to Robert Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, 3:540–556. One will also find therein all the official information concerning the “other Scriptural songs.” Mr. Needham notes the 1647 Act of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland which recommended that “Mr. Zachary Boyd be at the pains to translate the other Scriptural Songs in metre, and to report his travails also to the Commission of the Assembly” (*Westminster*, 278). He deduces from this

show that the Commissioners considered the Assembly's work on Rous' Psalter to provide for that part of public worship which the divines called "the singing of psalms." This is

recommendation "that the General Assembly intended to have Boyd's translation of the non-Davidic songs of Scripture authorized for use in public worship," and suggests the reason why it did not follow through on this intention was "perhaps due to apathy (the common problem encountered by the liturgical innovator)" (278, 279). He further reasons that the Westminster Assembly's use of "psalms" might be interpreted as requiring all the songs of Scripture "in the light of the Church of Scotland's actions" (281). All of this, however, is mere conjecture; and even if the conjecture could be proven, it would still serve to limit "singing of psalms" to inspired songs contrary to Mr. Needham's "plausible interpretation" which allows for extra-scriptural hymns.

(1) Earlier Psalters were printed with non-Davidic compositions included with them, and Mr. Needham himself notes that competent historical authorities agree that such supplements were not authorised for public use (*Westminster*, 274). As Louis F. Benson has observed, "the addition of hymns was made so easily simply because their use in church worship was not proposed" ("The Development of the English Hymn," in *Princeton Theological Review*, volume 10 [1912]: 53). These additions were useful for private instruction, and the General Assembly may have thought the other Scriptural songs could serve the same purpose. This was the suggestion of David Hay Fleming after consulting the authority of Neil Livingston: "as Livingston has said, 'it may still have been the understanding that these songs, though they were considered susceptible of improvement, were to be used for private purposes'" (*Hymnology*, 22). Even if individuals like Zachary Boyd hoped that the other songs might be incorporated into the public service, there is no clear testimony to show that this was the mind of General Assembly. There is therefore no reason to assume they would have been authorised for use in public worship.

(2) The notion that apathy led to the failure of the General Assembly to make provision for the other Scriptural songs is groundless. When the Psalms were authorised for use in public worship it also discharged "any other than this new paraphrase, to be made use of in any congregation or family after the first day of May in the year 1650" (quoted in *Hymnology*, 22). In the absence of any other provision it is safe to conclude that the Scottish church was content with the newly appointed Psalter and exclusively adhered to it as a part of the covenanted uniformity which she was still obliged to seek with the Church of England, albeit the relationship had now become somewhat strained. The subsequent Cromwellian occupation hindered the regular meeting of General Assembly and effectively halted any procedure which could have been initiated through the ecclesiastical system. Whether it was deliberate or not, the Church of Scotland remained exclusive psalm-singing.

(3) Even if the General Assembly might have intended to authorise the other Scriptural songs for use in public worship, such an intention could not provide an interpretive key to the meaning of "psalms" in the Westminster documents because those documents had already been formulated prior to any action by the General Assembly. Moreover, the Westminster commission only recommended the metricated Psalms to the General Assembly. The most that this hypothetical intention could prove is that the General Assembly understood Westminster's use of "psalms" to include Scriptural songs in general; but this itself is negated by the fact that the "other Scriptural songs" are never referred to as "psalms."

30. "Minutes of the Commission of the General Assembly," as quoted in Robert Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, 3:540.

expressly stated in a paper by the Commissioners which was presented on December, 1646, to the Grand Committee at London, and was subsequently laid before the Commission of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland at Edinburgh on January 21, 1647, courtesy of Robert Baillie:

And because the singing of Psalmes in Churches is a part of the publike worship of God, We desire that the Paraphrase of the Psalmes in meter, as it is now examined, corrected, and approved by the Assembly of Divines here, and by the Commissioners of the Gen. Assembly in Scotland, may be lykwise authorized and established by Ordinance of Parliament.<sup>30</sup>

The corroborating evidence has now been considered. It has been demonstrated that the Church of England, in conscientiously pursuing covenanted uniformity with the Church of Scotland, sought to make provision for that part of worship called "the singing of psalms" by preparing and authorising a book of metricated Old Testament Psalms to be used throughout the kingdom. They made no further provision for the singing of any other materials in the Church of England. When this is taken in connection with the fact that nothing was to be used in public worship but what was authorised by public authority, it becomes clear that the covenanted Church of England adopted the same exclusive psalm-singing practice as the covenanted Church of Scotland. Given this state of affairs, there is really only one way of interpreting the phrase "singing of psalms" as used in the Confession of Faith and Directory for Public Worship. It must specifically refer to the Old Testament book of Psalms. There is no historical-contextual basis for a generic interpretation of the word "psalms," according to which it is taken to mean a religious song. If Mr. Needham had investigated the appropriate historical context, namely, the proceedings of the Westminster Assembly, he would have seen that the phrase "singing of psalms" was limited to the Old Testament book of Psalms.

#### External Evidence: the Milieu of 1640s London.

That the historical context of the Confession and Directory was exclusively psalm-singing is substantiated by the external evidence as found in the contemporary situation within which the Assembly undertook its work of reformation. This situation is described in a book published in 1645, the year the Assembly was hard at work in preparing a Psalter. The author was Thomas Edwards, an English Presbyterian minister, who sought to expose the religious errors which were prevalent in his day. His dislike of innovations is unmistakable:

The Prelatical faction and that Court party were great Innovators, given to change, running from one opinion

to another, being Arminians as well as Popish, yea some of them Socinians, and countenancing such, and were every day inventing some new matter in worship, adding this ceremony and the other, putting down some part of worships, and altering them by substituting other; as in putting down singing of Psalms in some Churches, and having Hymnes; in putting down all conceived Prayer, and commanding bidding of Prayer, with a multitude of such like: so our Sectaries are great Innovators, as changeable as the Moon, bringing into their Churches new opinions daily, new practices, taking away the old used in all Reformed Churches, and substituting new; taking away of singing of Psalms, and pleading for Hymnes of their own making....<sup>31</sup>

This was the milieu within which the Westminster Assembly undertook the work of reformation. According to this contemporary Presbyterian minister, the old practice used in all Reformed Churches was “singing of Psalms,” whilst the prelatical faction sought to introduce hymns and the sectaries pleaded for hymns of their own making.

After the Directory for Public Worship was published it suffered scathing criticism from these same two parties, when it was seen that the Assembly had adhered to “the singing of psalms.” Both factions stood on their liberty to sing songs other than those found in the Old Testament book of Psalms. The high church advocate was for traditional hymns whilst the high spirited enthusiast claimed individual inspiration.

The first author to comment on the Directory appears to have been the high-churchman, Dr. Henry Hammond, who condemned various parts of it because of its variance with the liturgy of the Church of England. Dr. Hammond argued for the continuance of some hymns in the service and understood “singing of psalms” in the Directory to be referring to the Psalms of David in Metre.

And thus in all Ages of the Church some Hymnes have been constantly retained to be said or sung in the Churches; I mean not only the daily lections of the Psalmes of David (which yet this Directory doth not mention, but only commands a more frequent reading of that Book, then of some other parts of Scripture) nor the singing of some of those Psalmes in Metre, (which yet this Directory doth not prescribe neither, save onely on daies of Thanksgiving, or after the Sermon, if with convenience it may be done, making it very indifferent, it seems, whether it be kept at all in the Church or no, unlesse on those speciall occasions.)<sup>32</sup>

What did this contemporary high churchman understand the Directory to prescribe when it speaks of “the singing of psalms” after sermon? The singing of the Psalms of David

in Metre. Moreover, he found this to be too restrictive and considered it contrary to the age-old tradition of singing some hymns.<sup>33</sup>

Another antagonistic commentator on the Directory was the Quaker, Francis Howgill, who was against the use of all forms in worship, and therefore wrote from the opposite perspective of Dr. Hammond. Like Dr. Hammond, he understood the Directory to be referring to the Psalms of David in Metre in its use of the phrase “singing of psalms.”

Dir[ectory]. The next comes on the performance of the worship, which is reading, preaching, with singing of Psalmes...

An[swer]. You that have nothing to quicken your affections, but to turn Davids cryings and tears into a Song...

Dir[ectory]. And now I come to the singing Psalmes, and their Mass-house, the place of their Worship, and so I have done with their traffique. First, they say, that singing of Psalmes publicly in a Congregation, with a tuneable voice, is a Christians duty.

An[swer]. Where was it enjoined by Christ, or any of his Ministers? I am ignorant, and yet the Scripture I know, but no where read in it, that singing of Prophecies, and Prayers, and other mens conditions, turned into Rime and Meeter by Poets, and Masters of Musick, in an invented tune (in the same mind which invents tunes for Ballet-mongers) and to sing such conditions amongst proud, wanton, and disdainful people....<sup>34</sup>

Whatever one may think of the rhetoric, it is undeniable that this contemporary critic of the Directory understood

31. Thomas Edwards, *Gangraena* (London, printed for Ralph Smith, 1645) 51.

32. Henry Hammond, *A view of the new directorie and a vindication of the ancient liturgie of the Church of England in answer to the reasons pretended in the ordinance and preface, for the abolishing the one, and establishing the other* (Oxford, Printed by Henry Hall, 1646) 29.

33. The high-church devotion to human hymns in contrast to the Puritan preference for metricated Psalms may be gauged from a paper drawn up in the University of Cambridge in 1636, which was endorsed by Archbishop Laud as “Certain disorders in Cambridge to be considered in my visitation.” In relation to Emmanuel College, it says, “Their Chappel is not consecrate. At surplice prayers they sing nothing but certain riming psalms of their own appointment, instead of Hymnes between the Lessons.” Quoted by James M’Cosh, ‘Life of Stephen Charnock,’ in *Works of Stephen Charnock*, volume 1 (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1864) ix.

34. Francis Howgill, *Mystery Babylon the mother of harlots ... The directorie for the publick worship of God through England, Scotland, and Ireland, which now is the chief traffick her last reformed merchants trades with, in all these nations* (London, Printed for Thomas Simmons, 1659) 35, 37.

the phrase “singing of psalms” to be referring to the Psalms of David in Metre.

It is instructive to note that a contemporary reformed commentator on the Westminster Confession of Faith specifically refutes the Quakers by means of the wording of the Confession which indicates that “singing of psalms” is a part of the ordinary worship of God. David Dickson, the Professor of Divinity successively of Glasgow and Edinburgh Universities, took his students through the Confession as a means of training them for the ministry. These lectures were later published under the title, “Truth’s Victory Over Error.” In this work he asks the question, “do not the Quakers and other sectaries err, who are against the singing of psalms, or at least tie it only to some certain persons, others being excluded?” He answers in the affirmative, and provides the following as one of the reasons by which they are confuted:

We cheer and refresh ourselves by making melody in our hearts to the Lord, Eph. v. 19. Which ariseth, first, from our conscientious going about it as a piece of the worship of God, and in so doing we are accepted in that. Secondly, From its being a part of Scripture, appointed for his praise, whether it agree with our case or not. That being the end wherefore it was designed to be sung, is sufficient warrant for our joining in the singing thereof.<sup>35</sup>

This contemporary commentator understood the Confession to teach that the psalms to be sung in worship were “a part of Scripture, appointed for his praise”—which can be none other than the Old Testament book of Psalms.

What does this external evidence demonstrate? First, that the contemporary situation amongst unreformed parties was one which allowed for the inclusion of man made hymns. On the high church side there was a concern to allow for the inclusion of traditional hymns, while the sectarian side insisted that individual freedom to express Spirit-inspired songs should not be curtailed. Secondly, that the custom in the reformed churches was to adhere to the singing of psalms to the exclusion of man-made hymns. Thirdly, that the Westminster Assembly, in seeking to bring the Church of England into nearer conformity with other reformed churches, prescribed the singing of psalms as an ordinary part of the worship of God; and fourthly, that both unreformed parties criticised the Westminster Assembly for exclusively adhering to the psalms and not allowing for man-made hymns.

35. David Dickson, *Truth’s Victory over Error* (Kilmarnock: John Wilson, 1787) 143. Although the work was not translated and published until 1684, the original Latin lectures were delivered within a few years of the Confession’s publication.

36. Thomas Ford, *Singing of Psalms: the duty of Christians under the New Testament, or a vindication of that gospel-ordinance* (London, Printed by W. B., 1659).

To date all the evidence contradicts Mr. Needham’s view that “psalms” might be taken generically for a religious song. The Church of Scotland practised exclusive psalm-singing, the Church of England was brought into uniformity with the Church of Scotland and made provision for exclusive psalm-singing, and unreformed contemporaries criticised the Westminster Assembly for prescribing exclusive psalm-singing.

#### Advocates for Exclusive Psalmody Amongst the Westminster Assembly of Divines.

It may now be added that there were members of the Westminster Assembly who advocated the practice of exclusive psalm-singing and one member who wrote an entire book to vindicate it. The author of the book was Thomas Ford; its title is significant because he uses the phrase “singing of psalms” as adopted by the Confession and Directory. Its full title is, “Singing of Psalmes the Duty of Christians under the New Testament, or, A vindication of that gospel-ordinance in V sermons upon Ephesians 5.19 wherein are asserted and cleared I. That, II. What, III. How, IV. Why we must sing.”<sup>36</sup>

As to *what* must be sung in gospel-worship, Mr. Ford found it in his text, Ephesians 5.19, which speaks of psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. The fact that hymns and songs are mentioned together with psalms did not lead him to conclude that compositions other than the Psalms of David might be sung in worship. To the contrary, he commented,

I know nothing more probable than this, viz. That Psalmes, and Hymns, and spirituall Songs, do answer to Mizmorim, Tehillim, and Shirim, which are the Hebrew names of David’s Psalmes. All the Psalmes together are called Tehillim, i.e. Praises, or songs of praise. Mizmor and Shir are in the Titles of many Psalmes, sometimes one, and sometimes the other, and sometimes both joynd together, as they know well who can read the Originall. Now the Apostle calling them by the same names by which the Greek Translation (which the New Testament so much follows) renders the Hebrew, is an argument that he means no other than David’s Psalmes (Ford, 14).

Having provided a grammatico-historical interpretation of his text, he asks the pertinent question, “But why should any man prefer his Composures before David’s Psalmes, is it because they are more excellent?” He observes, “God himself hath made and given us a Psalm-book,” and claims this will suffice for every condition of God’s people: “There can be no composures of men, that will suit the occasions, necessities, afflictions, or affections of God’s people, as the Psalmes of David” (Ford, 21). The Psalms are far superior to anything composed by uninspired men:

Let it once be granted that we must sing Psalmes, I'll warrant you David's Psalmes shall carry it; there being no art or spirit of man now, that can come near that of David.... I would fain know what occasions God's people now, or at any time, either have, or can have, which David's Psalmes may not suite with, and better than any Songs composed by an ordinary gift (Ford, 21, 22).

When it was objected that there should be freedom to compose songs as equally as there is to compose prayers, the answer is given that God prescribes a set form for singing but not for praying: "The Apostle hath prescribed us what to sing, viz. Psalmes and Hymnes, and spiritual Songs, which are the express Titles of David's Psalmes, as was shewed before." "There is a difference in this, that the Lord did not prescribe unto his people set formes of Prayer, as he prescribed set formes of Psalmes, 2 Chron. 29.30. They were to sing in the words of David and Asaph, but we read not that they were to pray in any such set form" (Ford, 27, 28). He then spends much time defending the singing of psalms in a mixed congregation and urging the people to sing the psalms of David with the spirit of David.

A second member of the assembly who advocated exclusive psalm-singing was Samuel Gibson. He has already been mentioned in association with the Assembly's labours in preparing a Psalter, where he showed a keen interest in "the solidity of the work." In a sermon before the House of Commons on September 24, 1645, he vindicates the Puritan commitment to the Bible and the use of the songs of Zion:

But it hath been often said, *Take away the Common Prayer Book, take away our Religion.* Nay, our Religion is in the Bible; there is our God, and our Christ, and our Faith, and our Creed in all points. The whole Bible was St. Paul's belief; there are the Psalmes of David, and his prayers, and the Lord's Prayer, and other prayers, by which wee may learne to pray; we have still the Lord's songs, the songs of Zion, sung by many with grace in their hearts, *making melody to the Lord*, though without Organs.<sup>37</sup>

The Lord's songs are the songs of Zion, and these Bible psalms suffice for making melody to the Lord.

Another member to make comment on the subject is Thomas Young in his work which surveys the fathers' attitudes towards sanctifying the Sabbath day. He observes that sometimes the early church sang from the Old Testament book of Psalms: "As for the hymns themselves, the Divine Oracles being sung with a sweet voice, did animate their sound, and therefore they sung sometimes David's Psalter"—Chrysostom and Augustine being consulted as authorities.<sup>38</sup> He further notes Tertullian's testimony that early Christians would

sing to God "either out of the Holy Scriptures or of his own invention," and that "Socrates mentions some Psalmes that were written by Chrysostom." He concludes, however, with the canon of the Council of Laodicea which prohibited the singing of private psalms in church:

"Conc. Laod. Can. 59. it is prohibited, that no private Psalmes be uttered in the Church. Therefore St. Austin in the aforesaid place doth blame the Donatists, for leaving Davids Psalmes, and singing Hymns which were invented by themselves" (Young, 358).

Finally, John Lightfoot, the renowned oriental scholar, has also gone on record as to what compositions should be sung in worship. He is the one and only representative of the Westminster Assembly who is quoted by Mr. Needham, but it is clear from consulting the original words of Dr. Lightfoot that he has been misquoted. Mr. Needham states that "Lightfoot mentioned the exclusive psalmodist interpretation of Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19," but that "he preferred the interpretation 'that by these three are meant the Psalmes of David, and other songs in Scripture'" (*Westminster*, 270). Dr. Lightfoot, however, does not give personal preference to this view but explicitly states that this is the interpretation of others: "Others differ upon particulars, but agree upon this, that by these three are meant the Psalmes of David, and other Songs in Scripture."<sup>39</sup> Because Mr. Needham has failed to correctly represent his source, he has no basis for this conclusion: "Thus a leading Westminster divine: all the songs of Scripture may be sung in public worship" (*Westminster*, 270). However, even if this had been a correct conclusion, the result would have been that this Westminster representative only allowed for inspired songs in worship whilst Mr. Needham considers the genre to be sung to be a mere circumstance.

If Dr. Lightfoot did not personally endorse the inspired songs interpretation, what, it might be asked, was his view on the matter to be sung in worship? He notes that the hymn sung by the Lord at the end of the Passover was "the very same that every company did, viz. The great Hallel, as it was called, which began at the CXIII. Psalm, and ended at the end of the CXVIII." This leads to a striking observation: "Here the Lord of David sings the Psalmes of David." The point is then expounded:

He that gave the Spirit to David to compose, sings what he composed. That All-blessed Copy of peace and order, could

37. Samuel Gibson, *The Ruine of the Authors and Fomentors of Civill Warres* (London: Printed by M.S., 1645) 25.

38. Thomas Young, *The Lord's Day* (London, Printed by E. Leach, 1672) 357, 358.

39. John Lightfoot, *The Works of the Reverend and learned John Lightfoot*, volume 2 (London, Printed by W. R., 1684) 1160.

have indited himself, could have inspired every Disciple to have been a David, but submits to order, which God had appointed, sings the Psalms of David, and tenders the Peace of the Church, and takes the same course the whole Church did" (Lightfoot, *Works*, 2.1160).

Another point is raised for discussion. "But had they a vulgar translation in their own tongue?" The answer is given in the affirmative, and proven from the Talmud. An inference is then drawn from this fact: "here is our warrant for our framing the Psalms into our Tongue and Metre. Thus have we seen the Example, nay institution, of our great Master" (2.1160).

Having noted that God has appointed that the Psalms of David should be sung by the whole church, that Christ Himself adhered to this divine appointment, and that His example in singing in the vulgar language is sufficient warrant to sing from a metrical translation of the Psalms, Dr. Lightfoot concludes with an appropriate application: "If you sing right, sing Davids Psalms, but make them your own. Let the skill of composure be *His*, the life of devotion *yours*" (2.1161). What, then, was Dr. Lightfoot's view on the matter to be sung in worship? The answer is, the Psalms of David. They were appointed by God, sung and instituted by Christ, and are the right matter to be sung by the whole church.

The evidence is now complete. First, the Church of Scotland practised exclusive psalm-singing. Secondly, the Westminster Assembly laboured to bring the Church of England into uniformity with Scotland's practice by making provision for singing from the Old Testament book of Psalms. Thirdly, contemporary critics of the Assembly chided the Directory for Public Worship for excluding man-made hymns and restricting the matter of worship-song to the Psalms of David. Finally, individual members of the Westminster Assembly espoused the exclusive use of the Psalms of David. In the light of this evidence, it is clear that Mr. Needham has failed to properly represent the views of the Westminster Assembly when he claims that exclusive psalmody is the least probable historical-contextual interpretation of the reference to "singing of psalms" in Confession 21.5.

#### The Wider Puritan Tradition.

What now should be made of Mr. Needham's portrayal of the wider Puritan tradition? Did the Westminster Assembly reform the Puritan tradition so as to make it exclusive

psalmodist, or is there evidence within that tradition of a commitment to exclusive psalmody? Some brief remarks on the nature of Mr. Needham's evidence should suffice to show that the Puritans did not advocate what he has attempted to extract out of their writings.

While Mr. Needham has correctly noted a diversity of opinion with respect to the interpretation of Ephesians 5.19 and Colossians 3.16, he has not established that the Puritans always saw these verses as being directly tied to the practice of public worship. In his summation of Matthew Poole's Annotations (although the places cited were not written by Matthew Poole),<sup>40</sup> Mr. Needham states, "Poole's commentary does not adopt the exclusive psalmodist interpretation of 'psalms, hymns and spiritual songs' as meaning simply the psalter" (*Westminster*, 250). The exclusive psalmodist position, however, is a position relative to the public worship of God; but at no point does Mr. Poole's continuators suggest that they consider the apostle Paul to be providing a directory for public worship.

Mr. Needham quotes Thomas Cartwright on Colossians 3.16 and Paul Baynes on Ephesians 5.19, and concludes that they "accepted the use of non-Davidic songs in public worship" (*Westminster*, 263); but one looks in vain for a direct tie of the words of the text to a public worship situation. In the case of Thomas Cartwright, Mr. Needham's only argument for non-Davidic songs is the fact that he has not referred the three terms to the Davidic psalter and that the word "spiritual" is used for songs that excite spiritual feelings. The Davidic Psalms would certainly excite such feelings, so one is at a loss to know why the Elizabethan Presbyterian must be understood as allowing for other songs.

Paul Baynes specifically denies that the terms refer to the matter to be sung: "It may be asked, what is the difference betwixt these words? *Ans.* Some take it from the matter of them, some from the manner; that of the matter will not hold."<sup>41</sup> He subsequently discusses the difference of the words in terms of the manner of singing. He does say that a spiritual song might be one which is framed according to the Scripture (Baynes, 505), but makes no suggestion that this is to be used in an ordinary public worship context. When he comes to "the sum of the verse," he speaks of "singing both in private and publick, which this Scripture and Col. 3.16 do commend;" but where he speaks of the church service he confines his terms to "Psalms"—"and all things, Psalms, Prayers in the Church must be to edify" (505). When he finally applies the passage he provides this maxim: "get the spirit of David to sing a Psalm of David" (506). There is certainly no evidence for Mr. Needham's suggestion that Paul Baynes "might have approved of newly written uninspired worship-songs other than the Davidic psalms" (*Westminster*, 267).

Mr. Needham does acknowledge two Puritan expositors

40. Edmund Calamy, *The Nonconformist's Memorial* (London, Printed for W. Harris, 1775) 135, identifies Mr. Richard Adams (Colossians), Mr. Edward Veale (Ephesians, James), and Dr. John Collinges (1 Corinthians), as the continuators of Mr. Poole's annotations on those places quoted by Mr. Needham.

41. Paul Baynes, *A commentary upon the whole Epistle of the apostle Paul to the Ephesians* (London: Printed for S. Miller, 1658) 504.

who understood the terms “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” to refer to the Davidic Psalms, namely, John Cotton and George Swinnock (271). The fact is that there was a galaxy of Puritans who understood the text in this way:

**William Perkins:** “The booke of Psalmes, which containeth sacred songes to be fitted for everie condition both of the Church and the particular members therof, and also to be sung with grace in the heart, Col. 3.16.”<sup>42</sup>

**Henry Ainsworth:** “There be three kinds of songs mentioned in this book: 1. Mizmor, in Greek psalmos, a psalm: 2. Tehillah, in Greek humnos, a hymn or praise: and 3. Shir, in Greek ode, a song or lay. All these three the apostle mentioneth together, where he willeth us to speak to ourselves with ‘psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs,’ Ephesians 5:19.”<sup>43</sup>

**Nathanael Homes:** “David’s Psalmes are so full of praises, that they are called Tehillim, praises. Therefore the Apostles in that, Ephes. 5, Coloss. 3, and Matth. 26.30, useth a Greek word of the same signification; namely, humnos, a hymn.”<sup>44</sup>

**Edward Leigh:** “as the Apostle exhorteth us to singing, so he instructeth what the matter of our Song should be, viz. Psalmes, Hymnes, and spiritual Songs. Those three are the Titles of the Songs of David, as they are delivered to us by the Holy Ghost himselfe.”<sup>45</sup>

**William Barton:** “Scripture-psalms (even David’s Psalmes, called in Hebrew by the name of Psalmes, and Hymns, and spiritual Songs), and no other, should be used in the Church; for no other are the word of Christ, and consequently cannot have that certainty, purity, authority and sufficiency that the Scripture psalms have. . . . God hath ordained and indited a Psalm-book in his Word, for the edification of his Church.”<sup>46</sup>

**Jonathan Clapham:** “The Apostle, Eph. 5 and Col. 3, where he commands singing of Psalmes, doth clearly point us to David’s Psalmes, by using those three words, Psalmes, hymnes, and spiritual songs, which answer to the three Hebrew words, Shorim, Tehillim, Mizmorim, whereby David’s Psalmes were called.”<sup>47</sup>

**Thomas Manton:** “Now these words (which are the known division of David’s psalms, and expressly answering to the Hebrew words Shurim, Tehillim, and Mizmorim, by which his psalms are distinguished and entituled), being so precisely used by the apostle in both places, do plainly point us to the Book of Psalmes.”<sup>48</sup>

**Cuthbert Sydenham:** “I find they are used in general as the title of David’s psalms, which are named promiscuously by these three words.”<sup>49</sup>

**Isaac Ambrose:** “Whether may not Christians lawfully sing Davids or Moses Psalmes? and how may it appear? Answered affirmatively: Eph. 5.19, where, under those three heads, of Psalmes, and Hymns, and Spiritual songs, Davids Psalmes are contained.”<sup>50</sup>

Finally, in 1673 an edition of the Scottish Metrical Psalter was printed for the Company of Stationers at London, which contains an introductory epistle with the following statement: “to us David’s Psalmes seem plainly intended by those terms of Psalmes and Hymns and Spiritual Songs, which the Apostle useth, Ephes. 5.19, Col. 3.16.” The epistle is subscribed by **Thomas Manton, D.D., Henry Langley, D.D., John Owen, D.D., William Jenkyn, James Innes, Thomas Watson, Thomas Lye, Matthew Poole, John Milward, John Chester, George Cokayn, Matthew Meade, Robert Francklin, Thomas Dooelittle, Thomas Vincent, Nathanael Vincent, John Ryther, William Tomson, Nicolas Blakie, Charles Morton, Edmund Calamy,**<sup>51</sup> **William Carslake, James Janeway, John Hicckes, John Baker, and Richard Mayo.**<sup>52</sup>

Mr. Needham concludes his historical examination by stating, “Almost all the Reformed commentators we have looked at failed to interpret these terms as referring to the Davidic Psalter alone” (*Westminster*, 283). The problem is that he does not appear to have consulted a sufficient number of materials in order to arrive at a fair idea as to how Ephesians 5.19 and Colossians 3.16 were understood by the Puritan tradition at large. Moreover, he has failed to appreciate the fact that his quoted commentators did not necessarily see the terms in these texts to be prescribing the matter of song to be sung in public worship, but were more concerned with the application of the Word to a godly life in general. On the other hand, the Puritans quoted in this review did consider these texts to be prescriptive of worship-song, and have expressed their conviction that the apostle intended to refer to the Psalmes of David by means of these terms. On the whole, therefore, it must be concluded that Mr. Needham has not truly represented the general thought of the Puritan tradition relative to the duty of singing psalms.

42. William Perkins, ‘The Art of Prophesying,’ in *Works*, volume 2 (London: Printed by John Legatt, 1631) 650.

43. Henry Ainsworth, ‘Annotation on Ps. 3, title,’ in *Annotations upon the book of Psalmes* (1617).

44. Nathanael Homes, *Gospel Musick, or, The Singing of David’s Psalmes* (London: Printed for Henry Overton, 1644) 16.

45. Edward Leigh, *Annotations upon all the New Testament* (London: 1650) 306.

46. William Barton, *A View of Many Errors* (London: Printed by W.D., 1656) epistle to the reader.

47. Jonathan Clapham, *A short and full Vindication of that sweet and comfortable Ordinance, of singing of Psalmes* (London: 1656) 3.

48. Thomas Manton, *Works*, volume 4 (Pennsylvania: Maranatha Publications, rpt., n.d.) 443.

49. Sydenham Cuthbert, *A Christian sober and plain exercitation* (London: Printed by Thomas Mabb, 1657) 179.

50. Isaac Ambrose, *The Compleat Works* (London, 1682) 256.

51. The son of Edmund Calamy the Westminster Divine who died in 1666.

52. As quoted in *The true psalmody* (Edinburgh: James Gemmell, 1878) 98. The subscribers’ names have been provided by David Laing, *Letters and Journals*, 553.

### Musical Instruments

Little needs to be said under this section of the review. The author states the position of the Westminster divines in no uncertain terms: “Clearly the Westminster divines did not believe in the validity of instrumental worship” (*Westminster*, 291). This review has already referred to Samuel Gibson’s sermon before the House of Commons, in which he states, “we have still the Lord’s songs, the songs of Sion, sung by many with grace in their hearts, *making melody to the Lord*, though without Organs” (Gibson, *The Ruine*, 25). Mr. Needham quotes the ordinance of Parliament made on May 9, 1644, “for the speedy demolishing of all organs,” and “none others hereafter set up in their place” (*Westminster*, 291). He notes that all appeal to the Old Testament in justification of instrumental worship “breaks itself to pieces on the reefs of the regulative principle” (296), and proves that in Old Testament worship “the noise was the worship: an audio-symbolic evocation of the majesty and glory of God . . . which passed away with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, when worship ‘in Jerusalem’ passed over into worship ‘in spirit and truth’” (298).

So far the Westminster/Puritan tradition has been well preserved. The reader, however, is soon introduced to a subtle distinction: “But what shall we make—not of instrumental *worship*—but of instrumental *accompaniment* under the New Covenant?” (299). It is shown that an appeal to the circumstantial argument could only justify the use of a single instrument to keep congregational singing in tune, and that large congregations would not really need such accompaniment. It is also clarified that instruments have a tendency to take over the worship service and that such abuse must be guarded against. In sum, though, the author thinks “the use of a single instrument, purely to keep the singing in time and in tune, can be justified as a circumstance of worship” (302).

This of course is Mr. Needham’s own opinion, and something for which he offers no support from the Westminster representatives. As noted, Parliament ordered the demolition of organs and made it clear that they were not to be set up in the future. It is doubtful, therefore, that the second reformation movement would have accepted this somewhat subtle distinction between instrumental worship and accompaniment.

### Conclusion

The spiritual insight of William Cunningham may help to capture the fundamental concern of this review:

Men, under the pretence of curing the defects and shortcomings, the nakedness and bareness, attaching to ecclesiastical arrangements as set before us in the New Testament, have

been constantly proposing innovations and improvements in government and worship. The question is, How ought these proposals to have been received? Our answer is, There is a great general scriptural principle which shuts them all out. We refuse even to enter into the consideration of what is alleged in support of them. It is enough for us that they have no positive sanction from Scripture.<sup>53</sup>

The regulative principle of worship requires positive Scriptural warrant for everything that is offered to God as a specific act of worship. Mr. Needham has affirmed the Westminster Assembly’s insistence that all worship must be instituted by God Himself, but he has weakened this principle by allowing for things which edify if they are not forbidden by the Scriptures.

Concerning the Assembly’s view relating to the singing of psalms, Mr. Needham has failed to examine the work of the Assembly in making provision for this ordinary part of public worship; the primary focus in determining the original intent of the Westminster divines should begin if not end here. His investigation of the “historical-contextual” setting is concerned with the broader Puritan tradition, and in many cases he has imposed a public worship context onto the statements of those he has quoted. It is only by following this faulty process that he is able to interpret the Westminster formularies as allowing for extra-scriptural songs. Otherwise there is no reason why they should not be understood according to what the Confession calls “the plain and common sense of the words” (chapter 22.4). The exclusive psalm-singing practice of the Church of Scotland, the Westminster Assembly’s work in preparing a Psalter, the milieu of the 1640s in which it undertook its work of reformation, the testimony of individual Westminster representatives, and the broader Puritan tradition all provide sound reasons for taking the word “psalms” as a reference to the Old Testament book of Psalms.

Finally, Mr. Needham has correctly noted that the Westminster divines did not believe in the validity of instrumental worship and that the Parliament ordered the permanent demolition of all organs. No evidence has been provided that the Assembly might have considered their use as a circumstance of worship to keep the singing in time and in tune. The circumstantial argument for mechanical instruments must therefore be considered as a personal opinion which finds no support in the work and writings of the Westminster Assembly. ■

53. William Cunningham, *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation* (Edinburgh, Scotland: Banner of Truth, 1989 rpt.) 36.