

EVANGELICALS & CATHOLICS TOGETHER RESOURCES FOR REFUTATION

by Reg Barrow

SPECIFIC REFUTATION OF ROME

Kevin Reed, of Presbyterian Heritage Publications (P.O. Box 180922, Dallas, TX, 75218 or 214-271-2595), has recently written a faithful response to the *Evangelicals & Catholics Together* (ECT hereafter) document. It is called *Making Shipwreck of the Faith: Evangelicals and Roman Catholics Together* (softcover, \$10.95 - 40% = \$6.57 Canadian funds, from Still Waters Revival Books). This is the best book, critiquing this unholy alliance, to appear yet. It is the *only* book that has gone to the heart of the issues, at the most basic level, and not merely dealt with the obvious external differences with Rome. It convincingly shows, that concerning "critical aspects of doctrine and practice," many "modern evangelicals have become very much like Rome." The two major areas dealt with are the doctrines of salvation (especially regarding justification, predestination, evangelism and the bondage of the will) and worship. Arminianism, in both these areas, has already made such inroads into "evangelicalism," that most Protestant churches would not even be recognized by their own Protestant forefathers. For example, Reed writes, "[i]f you are resting your assurance of salvation upon your 'decision,' if you think that your 'free will' or 'accepting Christ' produced the new birth within you; then you are deceived — you are no better off than a Judaizer or a Romanist. You have made your 'decision' into a work, and subverted the doctrine of salvation by grace." Furthermore, it is perceptively pointed out that "[t]oday, many Roman Catholics and evangelicals decry the sins of abortion and homosexuality as manifestations of our nation's corruptions (which they are); but these same contemporary moralists are generally silent about the heinous sin of corrupt worship" (p. 35). You would think, that for much of "evangelicalism" today, the first table of the law was never a reflection of God's *unchanging moral perfections*, or that the God of the Old Testament has forgotten His own most important moral directions to mankind — at least since the coming of Christ. If you want the biblical reasons for rejecting *man-made gospels* and *man-made worship* (whether they be found in Rome, or among the Charismatics, Baptists, independents, or other so-called "evangelicals") this book tells it like it is. Again as Reed states, "[l]iving in an era of religious pluralism, we are too apt to forget that heresy is a form of moral corruption; it is classed among 'works of the flesh' along with adultery, fornication, uncleanness, idolatry, witchcraft, murder, and drunkenness (Gal, 5:19-21). That is how the Lord views heresy. And thus heresy is dangerous to our souls; there are heresies which are 'damnable' in their nature (2 Pet. 2:1). The issues which fostered the Protestant Reformation are not simply matters for academic debate. They are great and eternal matters respecting the way of salvation and the proper worship of God" (book, p. 82). *Don't miss this important and fiery rebuke against modern apostasy!* For as our author states, "[t]o any evangelicals who have signed or supported the ECT accord, we have but one thing to say: Repent!" Also most pertinent to this renewed debate is PHP's reprint of *True and False Worship: A Vindication of the Doctrine that the Sacrifice of the Mass is Idolatry* by John Knox (from SWRB for \$3.99 Canadian). Written in 1550, it addresses the issue at hand in an uncompromising manner. Moreover, it shows why the Scottish Reformation under Knox was the most God-honoring and thoroughgoing break with Popery that the world has ever seen. The large hardcover, *Selected Writings of John Knox* (\$29.95 Canadian from SWRB), is now available too! It utterly destroys the false teaching, lies, and heresy of the Roman harlot; as well as containing many of the most influential of Knox's writings — concerning the church, state, and the individuals response to widespread declension and apostasy. It clearly shows why Knox was used of God to build a Reformed nation out of Scotland in his day.

From:
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RISE AND FALL
OF
PAPACY.

BY
THE REV. ROBERT FLEMING, JUN^R.

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A POSTSCRIPT,

CONTAINING A SHORT ACCOUNT OF THE FIRST PRINCIPLES OF THE APOCALYPTICAL INTERPRETATIONS ADVANCED IN THE PRECEDING DISCOURSE.

AFTER I had finished the foregoing Discourse, and that all the sheets were almost printed, I was earnestly urged by a friend to say something to secure the foundation I go upon, especially because the learning of Grotius and Dr Hammond had influenced many to follow another way of interpreting the Revelation, as the reputation of Mr Baxter had swayed others to think well of the same. And when I urged that Dr More, in his "Mystery of Iniquity," and Dr Cressener, in his "Demonstration of the First Principles of the Protestant Interpretations of the Apocalypse," had done this sufficiently already, he replied, that these books were both voluminous and dark, and not easy to be purchased by every one, and that therefore some short account of this matter at this time seemed to be necessary. I urged many things against this, as that this advice came too late, and that, should I contract never so much, it would swell this part of my book too much, to keep a due proportion with the other Discourses, and, indeed make the whole too bulky. But after all, importunity and the respect I bore my friend prevailed with me to say something to all those things that he thought I ought to promise.

Therefore, not to spend any longer time in giving the reasons why I did not speak to these things before in their proper place, or why I do so now, I shall give my thoughts of this book and the first principles of the right interpretation of it, in some propositions which do gradually lay the foundation of what I advanced before.

First proposition. The Revelation was written by the Apostle John, and is a sacred and canonical book of the New Testament.

I hope there is no Christian that will dispute the truth of this proposition with me; for, besides that the style of John may be easily traced in this book, notwithstanding the difference of the subject from that which he wrote of in his Gospel and Epistles, he does frequently make mention of himself, and that with such peculiar circumstances as agree with none but the apostle; as we see, Rev. i. 1, 2, 4, 9; see also xxi. 2, and xxii. 28.

I know, indeed, that some of the ancients doubted of this, as Caius, a Latin father mentioned by Eusebius (Hist., lib. iii. cap. 28); and Dionysius of Alexandria, who made a great noise against it for a while, as we see in Eusebius also. (Hist., lib. vii. cap. 4.) But yet even this man declares that he owns it to be a sacred book, though not written by the Apostle John; wherein he speaks what we must look upon to be altogether absurd. For if St John be not the author, it must be an imposture, seeing his name is inserted in it as being the penman. So that if it be not St John's, it is no sacred book; or if it be a sacred book, the author is none but the beloved apostle. But the weakness and inconsistency of this deny his reasons against this book, which are sufficiently though briefly exposed by M. Du Pin, both in his preliminary Dissertation to his "Bibliothèque des Auteurs Ecclésiastiques," and in his "History of the Canon of the Books of Scripture."

And if this were any argument against the divinity

of this book, that some persons have doubted of it, or denied it to be canonical, there is hardly one book in the New Testament that would stand the test, seeing we find in the ancient Church history that there have been not only particular men, but even sects of them that have excepted, some against one book and some against others. And we know that the Epistles of James and Jude, and the Second and Third Epistles of John, and that admirable Epistle to the Hebrews, have been controverted as well as the Apocalypse, of the authority of which neither Papist nor Protestant, Grecian nor Armenian Christian doubts at this day.

And as all Christians do now acquiesce in the Revelation as a canonical book, so excepting those I mentioned, and the heretics called Alogians, all the eminent fathers of the Church received it of old. So did Justin Martyr, Diolog. cum Tryph.; Irenæus, lib. iv. cap. 37, 50, and lib. v. cap. 30; and apud Euseb., lib. v. cap. 8; Tertullian, ady. Marc., lib. iii. cap. 5; Clemens Alexandrinus, apud Euseb., lib. iii. cap. 23; Origen in Mat. and in Joh. and apud Euseb., lib. vi. cap. 25; and Eusebius himself, Hist., lib. iv. cap. 28. Nay, all the other fathers agree in this also, namely, Epiphanius, Victorinus Theophilus, Cyprian, Methodius, Jerome, and other authors quoted by Eusebius, Epiphanius, and Jerome, namely, Melito, Hippolytus, Victorinus, &c.

But, for my own part, were all these authorities wanting, there is that in this book itself that would enforce me to own it as divine. For besides the augustness of its style, the wisdom of its contexture, and the purity of its design and counsels, there is something that I want a name for that commands my belief and veneration, and insinuates itself into my affection and conscience, as if Christ himself breathed something divine in every line. But the clear view of the fulfilling of the several parts of its prophecy is an argument that even several other books of the New Testament want.

Second proposition. The Book of the Revelation of John was written after the destruction of Jerusalem.

The notion of Grotius, upon which his interpretation of the Apocalypse is founded, is this: That the seven kings or heads of the Beast, mentioned Rev. xvii. 10, are not to be understood of seven several forms of government, but of seven particular emperors, namely, Claudius, Nero, Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian, and Titus; and that Domitian is the eighth, who was of the seventh, because, as he pretends, he governed during his father's absence.

The foundation which he lays for the probation of this, is, that John was banished into Patmos in the reign of Claudius, but that though he saw his visions then, he did not write them till Vespasian's time. For he must make this last supposition as well as the first, else his notion would be condemned immediately, seeing it is said that five of these kings were fallen (Rev. xvii. 10); that is, says he and Hammond, when he wrote, not when he saw these visions. But how false this is anybody may see with half an eye, seeing these words are not John's, but the angel's to him. And, therefore, the defenders of this opinion must find out five emperors that were fallen before Claudius, if they will restrict these heads of the beast to particular men; for if the angel spake these words to John in the days of Claudius, they must relate to them that went before, or to none.

This is enough to destroy this notion of theirs, and I know not how it is possible for any of their admirers to save their credit this way. But seeing the principal thing they found upon is this, that John saw the Apocalyptic visions in the days of Claudius, and that so all, or at least most of the Revelation relates to things that fell out before the destruction of Jerusalem, I shall say something further to disprove this assertion, and to confirm the verity of our proposition.

Now, there are only two things adduced by Grotius and Hammond to prove that John was in Patmos in Claudius's reign; the *first* is, That Claudius raised a

persecution against both Jews and Christians, and that being the first persecutor, it is probable that John was banished at that time. The *second* is, That Epiphanius does expressly assert that it was by Claudius that John was banished to Patmos.

As to the *first* of these, it is nothing but a supposition without any proof; for we have no account, either in the Acts of the Apostles or in any other writer, that Claudius did ever persecute either Jews or Christians. And Lactantius (*De Mort. Perf.*) does expressly assert that no emperor did persecute the Christians before Nero. It is true Suetonius says: *Claudius Judæos impulsore Chresto tumultuantes Roma expulit*; and Luke tells us that Claudius banished the Jews from Rome, which occasioned Aquila and Priscilla, and other Christian Jews, to retire from Rome: but neither of them say that he persecuted the Christians, or even the Jews. Now, as for the expression of Suetonius, *Impulsore Chresto* or *Christo*, the meaning must be this, that the Jews that did not believe, going about to stir up the government at Rome, as they did everywhere else (as is plain from the Book of the Acts) against the Christians, and appearing against them in a tumultuous manner, upon the occasion of Christ, complaints might probably be brought to the emperor, who, no doubt, upon this account, banished all of that nation from Rome; so that Suetonius, having a confused notion of Christ, might easily be induced to express himself this way. And now that this was all that Claudius did against the Christians is plain to me from one argument that has escaped Dr More, but is to me unanswerable, taken from the 18th chapter of the Acts, where, after the sacred historian had taken notice of Claudius's banishing the Jews out of Rome, and of Aquila and Priscilla's being lately come upon that account from Italy to Corinth, he tells us of Paul's lodging with them, because he was of the same occupation. But being pressed in spirit to preach Christ, upon the coming of Silas and Timothy from Macedonia, he goes into

their synagogue, and reasons with the Jews and proselytes there upon this head; and having converted some, particularly Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and Justus, in whose house he afterwards disputed, Crispus, no doubt, being thrown out of his office, and Sosthenes put in his stead, and Paul continuing to preach in Justus's house, which joined to the synagogue, the Jews are incensed to such a degree as to rise tumultuously against Paul. Sosthenes, therefore, the new chief ruler of the synagogue, and the rest of the unbelieving Jews, make an insurrection, and seize upon Paul, and carry him to the judgment-seat, before the proconsul Gallio, that excellent Roman, the elder brother of Seneca. He tells the Jews that if Paul, or any other man, were guilty of what was lewd, wicked, or unjust, that in that case he was obliged to punish such persons according as the Roman law and justice did require; but seeing they accused Paul of nothing of that kind, but only of doctrinal matters, relating to their own law and religion, he had nothing to do with them; and therefore he drove them all away, and set Paul at liberty, which made the Gentiles fall upon Sosthenes, the chief author of this tumult, and beat him before the judgment-seat, which Gallio permitted to be done, and connived at, either as judging that he did deserve to be so treated, or as supposing it might prevent the Jews from acting so factiously and tumultuously again. Now, after this short but exact account of this history, it will be easy to see how precarious and groundless, nay, false, Grotius's opinion is of a persecution being raised against Jews and Christians in the days of Claudius. For if there had been any such thing, or any edict for it, how came Gallio to tolerate a public synagogue of the Jews, and suffer Paul to preach openly? or if the Christians were only ordered to be persecuted, why did not the Jews use this as the reason of their accusing Paul; who, to be sure, wanted not a good-will to have done so, and were not ignorant that this would have been the main argument to prevail with the proconsul? And had there

been any such edict, can we imagine that Gallio was ignorant of it? for so he must have been, seeing he tells the Jews that he had no orders to punish any man for his religion or sentiments that way, but only those that were guilty of wickedness or lewdness in life. If any say that his temper was to care for none of these things, I answer, This expression may indeed denote his temper, but I suppose it speaks forth not only that, but his principle and sentiment, as judging it unrighteous to persecute or punish any man for mere opinion. But, whatever this had been, had there been any edict for persecuting the Christians or Jews, he durst not have neglected his orders, especially when the edict must have been so recent, and when he had what might have passed for a just reason of his punishing both the party accusing and the party accused, namely, their disturbing (as he might have represented it) of the public peace. But, indeed, it is too plain to need any further proof that Claudius's banishing the Jews out of Rome was accompanied with no persecution, either against them or against the Christians. And this Dr Hammond confirms by what he says in his Annotations on Acts xxvi. 36, forgetting that this way he destroys his own foundation of interpreting the Revelation, where, upon these words of Luke, that Agrippa, Festus, and Bernice, and the rest of the company, after they had heard Paul's defence, did conclude that he had done nothing that deserved either death or imprisonment, the Doctor observes, that the reason why they did conclude so was, because there had been as yet no edict emitted against the Christians by any of the emperors; and this was the reason also, says he, why Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia, said publicly that it was not for him to judge of things that the Roman laws had determined nothing about; for, continues the Doctor, though Claudius had commanded the Jews to leave Italy, by which the Christians Jews were forced to go away also, not as they were Christians, but because they were Jews, yet there was no law made against Christians, as such, at this

time. It is true, he says, that John was not only banished, as Aquila and Priscilla were, but confined in the Isle of Patmos; but he should have given the reason why John was the only person persecuted. However, I shall examine this assertion, and the reason that the Doctor gives for it in other places of his Annotations.

We come, therefore, now, in the *second* place, to consider the testimony of Epiphanius, upon whose credit alone Grotius and Hammond believe that John was in Patmos in Claudius's time. And here, by the way, I cannot forbear to observe the strange mistake of Dr Lightfoot, who agrees in the main with these learned men, in interpreting the Revelation in relation to the Jews before the destruction of Jerusalem, and therefore makes John to see these visions long before that; but has this peculiar to himself, that he imagines John was not banished there, but went thither voluntarily to preach the Gospel to the inhabitants; whereas, John himself doth expressly tell us that he was there as a sufferer and witness for Christ: "I, John, who also am your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." (Rev. i. 9.) So that as this refutes Dr Lightfoot, and confirms what Grotius and Hammond agree in, that John was not in Patmos as a traveller, but as a prisoner and sufferer, so it is enough to refute even them also; for the words do plainly insinuate that John was not the only persecuted man at this time, but that there was then a persecution raised against all Christians in general; and therefore we may be assured that he was not in that island in the days of Claudius, in whose time we have proved there was no persecution.

But to return: Epiphanius says, indeed, that John saw his visions in Patmos, in the reign of Claudius. (Heres., li. sect. 12, 33.) But can his single authority weigh down all antiquity that says the contrary? shall

we believe him rather than Irenæus, who lived two hundred years before him, and was the scholar of Polycarp, the scholar of John himself? Now what can be plainer than the words of Irenæus (lib. v. cap. 30), as they are preserved in the original by Eusebius (lib. v. cap. 8, Hist. Eccl.) *Εἰ γὰρ ἴδῃ ἀναφανδὸν τῶ νυν καιρῶ κηρυτθῆσθαι τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, δι' ἐκείνου ἀν' ἐρηθῆται καὶ τὴν Ἀποκαλυψὴν ἰωρακοτῶν, ὅτι, γὰρ πρὸ πολλῶν χρόνων ἰωραθῆναι, ἀλλὰ σχεδὸν ἐπὶ τῆς ἡμετέρας γενεῆς, πρὸς τῶ τελείῃ τῆς Δομιτιανῆς ἀρχῆς.* That is, "If his name (viz., that of Antichrist, or the Beast) had been openly to be divulged at this time, it would no doubt have been told by him that saw the Apocryphical visions; for it is not a long time since he saw these, but even in some sense in our own time, viz., towards the end of the reign of Domitian." And that Irenæus had just reason to say that John's seeing the Revelation was almost in his own time, or within the memory of the men of that generation, if not his own also, is plain from chronology; for he being the scholar of Polycarp, who was martyred in the year of Christ 167, and being himself put to death in the year 202, if we suppose that he wrote this but ten or twelve years before his death, yet he might justly say that there was but about an age's difference from his time and that wherein John saw the Revelation; for if John was in Patmos towards the end of Domitian's reign, it could not be sooner, in any propriety of speech, than the year 90, seeing he began his Government in the year 81, and died 96. And who can doubt but Irenæus does deliver here what his master Polycarp had told him? for as none knew the history of John better than that worthy person, so none had better opportunity to know what related to this matter than Irenæus, by reason of his long and intimate acquaintance with him. This seemed a foundation sure enough of old to Eusebius, and if some men had not some private ends to promote by opposing it, might be a sufficient foundation to all men still. Let us therefore hear what this learned historian says on this head: "In those days," says Eusebius (viz., in the days of Cerdo, Ignatius, and

Simeon, of whom he had been speaking), "the apostle John, the beloved disciple, was yet alive, inspecting the Churches of Asia, having returned, after Domitian's death from the island whither he had been banished. Now that John was then alive, it is enough to adduce the testimony of two persons of great authority, who are worthy of all belief, and were ever eminent for defending the truth; I mean Irenæus and Clemens Alexandrinus; the first of whom, in his second book against heresies, speaks thus: 'All the presbyters,' says Irenæus, 'who lived familiarly with the Apostle John in Asia, do assure us that they had this related to them from John himself; for he lived with them even unto the times of Trajan.' In his third book, also, Irenæus gives us the same account in these words: 'The Church of Ephesus, also, which was founded by the Apostle Paul, and was afterwards under the care of the Apostle John, until Trajan's time, is an eminent witness of what was delivered to us by the apostle.' And besides him, 'Clemens likewise,' says Eusebius, 'does not only take notice at the same time, but gives a particular story relating to him in that book of his, which bears this title, 'What rich man can be saved?'" (Euseb. Eccl. Hist., lib. iii. c. 23.) And then Eusebius recites the story at length, which is too long to insert here.

Now if John lived to the days of Trajan, he must have been a prodigiously old man, according to Epiphanius, who says he was ninety years of age in Claudius's time. For giving him all the allowance that can be desired, namely, that John was so old in the last year of Claudius, and that he died in the first year of Trajan, he must have been one hundred and thirty-four years old at least when he died, seeing Claudius died A.D. 54, and Trajan did not begin to reign until the year 98, though others say, with more probability, not until A.D. 100. Now, besides that it is not easy to believe that so thoughtful and laborious a man should live so long, the improbability of what Epiphanius says appears further from this, that if in the year 54 from Christ's

birth, John was ninety years of age, he must have been thirty-six older than Christ. And if so, it seems very odd that Christ should say to him from the cross: "Man, behold thy mother;" and to Mary, "Woman, behold thy son." (John xix. 26, 27.) For as this seems to say that he was at least as young as Christ, this account makes him an old man of near seventy years of age at that time; which, as it must suppose Mary to be a very aged person of between eighty and ninety at least, so it contradicts the constant and unanimous tradition of the Church, which supposes him to be very young at that time. Whence Baronius says that he was but twenty-five years old. And Nicephorus relates out of an epistle of Evodius, bishop of Antioch, that the Virgin herself was not then fifty, seeing Christ, as he asserts, was born when she was but fifteen years old.

Whence it appears how little we ought to trust Epiphanius, in opposition to all antiquity besides. Which made Drusus say: *Scimus omnes Epiphanium in multis graviter hallucinatum.* (Lib. xiv., Obser. cap. 21.) And upon the same account Petavius scruples not to correct him: for where he has it *Imperante Claudio*, he writes this short note in the margin, *Mendose pro Domitiano.*

But the truth is, though I am not willing to detract from this author's credit, yet I suspect it was not so much an error of judgment as of will, or that which some call a *pia fraus*, that made him desert the tradition of the Church in this matter. For his telling us this story is upon the occasion of an objection of the Montanists against the Apocalypse, taken from this supposition, that there was no Church in Thyatira when John wrote the Revelation; which it seems he thought would serve another turn, if he inverted it, by telling them that John said so only by way of prophecy. Whence he proceeds to prove the verity and divinity of the book; and therefore thought his argument would be the more cogent, the further he ran up the date of the Revelation and John's being in Patmos. But as this was a poor as

well as unlawful shift, so I shall leave him and his authority both to those who have more time and leisure to consider them further.

For to me there is proof enough from the Revelation itself to assure us that it was written in Domitian's time. For it is plain not only from Rev. i. 9, which I touched upon before, but from the strain of all the seven epistles which John writes to the Churches of Asia, that at the time of his being in Patmos, or rather before, there had been a severe persecution upon them. Therefore he tells the Church of Ephesus that she had laboured and endured, and had not fainted under the troubles that had come upon her. (Rev. ii. 2.) And so the Christians of Smyrna are told of their tribulation, and exhorted not to fear imprisonment or any other thing that they should suffer. (Rev. ii. 9, 10.) This being added, that they must expect tribulation for ten days; which, by the way, is no inconsiderable hint, seeing the persecution of Domitian, from the first beginning of it, lasted about ten years, which in the dialect of St John are called days. I might mention many other things; but this is plain, that the Church was under persecution everywhere at that time, if it were only from these and the like expressions: "Be thou faithful unto the death;" and, "To him that overcometh" will I do so and so. And besides all these things, mention is made of an eminent martyr of the Church of Pergamus (Rev. ii. 13), whose name was Antipas. For the Apostle John, or rather Christ, is so express in relating this, that we may deny anything in the Bible if we deny this matter of fact. I am not concerned here with the allegories some fanciful men make upon this name, when they tell us that it signifies as much as Antipater or Antipapa; nor have I anything to do with the stories that later authors tell us of him, as of his being Bishop of Pergamus, and of his being burnt in a brazen bull, with other circumstantial matters relating to his person or death. Let Aretha, therefore, Metaphrastes, Cedrenus, Pererius, Surlus, Baronius, Cornelius, a Lapide, and a thousand more, be supposed to mistake in

their relating this story, yet no man shall ever make me disbelieve what St John says of this matter. And I must have further proof than ever I expect to receive, before I can believe that all these authors are mistaken as to the foundation of their relation, when they unanimously tell us that this martyr suffered in the reign of Domitian.

And now, I suppose I have said enough to prove that John was not in Patmos before the reign of Domitian. And if so, the foundation of Grotius and his followers falls to the ground. So that these corollaries must naturally follow from what has been said, and remain as certain truths:—

First corol. The visions of the Apocalypse relate neither to the Romish nor Jewish state before the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus.

Second corol. The Revelation relates to the Church and her adversaries, as to those things that were to fall out after the eversion of the Jewish state.

Now, before I proceed, I must desire the reader to observe the distribution which Christ himself makes of the subjects treated of in this book, when he commands John, saying: *Γραφον ἃ εἶδες, καὶ ἃ εἰσι, καὶ ἃ μὲλλον γίνεσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα*; that is, "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter" (Rev. i. 19): where it is plain three things are distinguished: 1st, The things which John had seen, namely, the emblems, figures, or hieroglyphical representations, that had been objected to his eyes or imagination. (Rev. i. 12–19.) Then, 2^d, The things which were existent and in being at the time when John was in Patmos, viz., the Churches planted by the apostles, particularly the seven Asiatic ones, to which John had a peculiar relation, and to which he was ordered to direct seven epistles. And then 3^d, The things which were to fall out hereafter, namely, the prophetic part of the book, beginning with the 4th chapter; as is plain from the first verse thereof; where, after John had written what related to both the former heads, he tells us that he

heard a voice, like the voice of a trumpet, talking with him, and commanding him now to begin and write the things which he was to show him and represent to him emblematically, which were to be *μετὰ ταῦτα*, after the expiration of the other things mentioned before, which were said then to exist, namely, the then present circumstances of the Asiatic Churches.

So that this is a sufficient answer to those that object that this book cannot be supposed to contain a prophecy of the state of the Church for any long time, seeing it is said that the things prophesied of in the Revelation (i. 1) must shortly come to pass. For seeing we have a double explication of this expression, viz., Rev. i. 19, iv. 1, I ask whether we are to stick so to the letter of the first short proposition, as to reject the explication given of it in the following places? It was very proper, indeed, when some things in this book did concern the then present state of the Church, and some other things that did relate to the future condition of it, to say, as in Rev. i. 1. that the prophecy related to things that were shortly to come to pass; because not only were those things to be soon fulfilled that concerned the Churches of Asia at that time, but the other things were then also to enter upon their begun accomplishment. But that we might not imagine that the whole of this book was to be accomplished shortly, we are told (Rev. i. 19, iv. 1) that what related to future time, was to be accomplished and fall out afterwards. And that, accordingly, we might see the full extent of this prophecy, we are led down from scene to scene, till we are brought to the end and consummation of all things at last. And now, seeing we have proved that this book was written after the destruction of Jerusalem, we must desire our antagonists to find out something else to which they can accommodate all the figures of the Revelation, before we quit our interpretation, merely because they dislike it, though they can offer us nothing in the room of the same. So that until they be able to enlighten our minds with another scheme than that of Grotius, which we have suf-

ficiently though briefly refuted, I must be bold to lay down this further corollary, which is the same with our first postulatam in the preceding Discourse.

Third corol. That the Revelation contains the series of all the remarkable events and changes of the state of the Christian Church to the end of the world.

And the distribution of this book into the three parts I have mentioned, lays a sufficient foundation for another proposition also.

Third proposition. The seven epistles directed to as many Churches in the Lesser Asia, do not immediately relate to the Christian Church in general, and therefore cannot be interpreted prophetically, in any proper sense, as if they did denote so many periods of time in relation to it.

I might demonstrate this, were it needful. But seeing it makes nothing for my design which way soever men understand it, I shall say nothing to it now; especially because the learned Witsius, my professor and master formerly, has sufficiently demonstrated what I assert in this proposition, in his *Diatribes de septem Epistolarum Apocalypticarum sensu Historico et Prophetico*, published in his *Miscellanea Sacra*.

And neither have I time to prove other propositions, that might appear more necessary; only seeing the key of interpreting the Apocalypse, which the angel gives John (Rev. xvii.), is so very plain, I cannot but build another proposition upon it.

Fourth proposition. Babylon the Great, or the Apocalyptic Beast, taken in a general sense, as it is represented with its seven heads and ten horns, is no other than an emblem of the Roman Empire.

For besides that Dr Cressener and others have proved this, the text itself is demonstration enough to all those that will be at pains attentively and impartially to consider it. For seeing the angel does expressly say that by this was meant the seven-hilled city (Rev. xvii. 9),

and the city that then did reign over the kings of the earth (verse 18), I cannot imagine what he could have said more plainly upon this head.

But seeing he represents the empire under the peculiar consideration of its being governed by a woman, who is called the great whore, or adulteress, therefore this lays the foundation for another proposition.

Fifth proposition. The seven-headed Beast, more especially considered as it is represented as rid upon by the whore, doth represent Rome to us as it is under the ecclesiastical government of the Papacy, or apostate Church of Rome.

This the angel does sufficiently insinuate (Rev. xvii. 8) when he says: "The Beast which thou sawest was, and yet is not at this time;" that is, The Beast which thou sawest is indeed the same Roman Empire which was before, and was represented to thee (Rev. xiii. 1); but it is not yet, in another sense, viz., as now thou beholdest it under the rule of a whore, or the apostate Church of Rome; for this last ecclesiastical form of government is not yet come, but it is to come (when it ariseth) out of the bottomless pit, in order to go thither again into endless perdition.

And if this be once granted, then that will naturally follow which I am to represent as another proposition.

Sixth proposition. The seven kings represented by the seven heads of the Beast, are no other than the seven forms of supreme government that did successively obtain among the Romans.

This the angel doth likewise sufficiently insinuate (Rev. xvii. 10), which can never be understood of particular emperors, at least not of those Grotius fixed upon, whose opinion this way we have already refuted. And, therefore, seeing five of the forms of the Roman government were fallen in John's time, viz., kings, consuls, dictators, decemvirs, and military tribunes, as Tacitus reckons them (Annal., lib. i. sect. 1); and seeing the

imperial authority was that which was in being then, we have no reason to quit so plain and exact an interpretation, until more be said against it than ever has been yet produced to the world.

And were it not that I am confined so much now, both as to time, and lest this postscript should swell to an enormous bulk, I should not fear to attempt the demonstration of these last propositions, and to proceed to others that would lay a further and more strong foundation still of that method of interpreting the Revelation which the generality of Protestants are agreed in. But I hope I have said enough for this place to secure the principles I go upon, by which the things which I proposed at first, as *postulata*, are, I think, sufficiently proved. And seeing my principal design in writing this postscript, was to refute the hypothesis that Grotius and Hammond go upon, I leave it to the candid and impartial thoughts of the reader whether I have not said enough to prove it to be altogether precarious.

And now, seeing every one must see how much I have been straitened, both as to time and paper, in this postscript, I hope the reader will pass the more favourable construction on what defects he may observe in my performance, either as to matter, method, or the calculations of time which I have run upon; in which, if there be anything obscure or confused, the study of brevity and despatch have occasioned it. But since I have advanced nothing in relation to future time but by way of conjecture, nor indeed asserted anything (in relation to that part of the prophecy which is fulfilled) dogmatically and positively, but only proposed my thoughts after the manner of a rational probability, I suppose no man will think it worth his while to make a noise about little mistakes that perhaps I may have been guilty of through haste or inadvertency. But if any person shall take occasion, from what I have said, to study the Apocalypse to better advantage than I have attained to do, and shall give the world a better built and more clearly connected scheme of the visions of this book, I

assure him that none shall more rejoice in such a performance than I, and I shall be one of the first to return him thanks for refuting me. For truth is all I seek after; and that it may ever, and in all respects prevail, is, and shall be, my constant prayer and study.

THE END.

WAR AGAINST THE IDOLS

THE REFORMATION OF WORSHIP FROM ERASMUS TO CALVIN

(Part one of two)

Carlos M. N. Eire

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Zwingli's War Against the Idols

One of the more significant contributions made by Zwingli to the Reformation debate over idolatry was his analysis of the psychological roots of false worship. Zwingli asserts that the cause of error in religion is man's dependence on created things, and his penchant for placing trust in them. In outlining this tendency, Zwingli differentiates between the creation of inner and outer idols. The internal manifestation of false worship is what Zwingli calls an "abgott," or strange god. This word is used to describe anything in man's inner life that displaces God as an object of faith, be it money, glory, or another deity.¹ Zwingli delves into the psychology of idolatry a bit further. He asserts that as man becomes more conscious of his reliance on these strange gods, he inevitably tries to give them some specific form. The mental process, then, undergoes materialization as a result of man's need to comprehend reality through material means. What the mind of man grasps, he says, is always made into an image. Since man is by nature materially inclined, therefore, "there is no one who, as soon as he hears God spoken of, or any other thing which he has not already seen, does not picture a form for himself."² Since the externalization of the inner gods ("die abgöt-

ten") is inevitable, every strange god finds expression in a physical idol sooner or later. The idol, then, is defined by Zwingli as a portrait of a strange god that already existed in man's heart. The "götzen" are the end result of a human process of invention, for, as he says, "the strange god [der abgott] always comes before the idols [dem götzen]"³

The core of Zwingli's theology of idolatry is his opposition to any objects of faith (inner or outer) that usurp the place of God in worship. This principle is used in the *Answer to Valentin Compar*, but it is perhaps most clearly set forth in the *Commentary on True and False Religion*, which is a long and detailed exposition of this issue. In the *Commentary*, Zwingli says that true religion, or piety, "is that which clings to the one and only God."⁴ This principle is the foundation of the Reformed interpretation of worship: "Nothing, therefore, of ours, is to be added to the Word of God, and nothing taken from his Word by rashness of ours."⁵ This dictum is based on an antithesis between creature and creator between the spiritual world of God and the material world of man. The things of earth, says Zwingli, are "carnal," and carnal things are "enmity against God." The distinction between true and false worship hinges on man's attitude

1. *Huldreich Zwinglis Sämtliche werke*, edited by E. Egli, W. Köhler, F. Blanke, et al. (Berlin/Zurich, 1905—), 4.88. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are the author's own.

2. *Ibid.*, 4.97.

3. *Ibid.*, 4.96.

4. "Commentary on True and False Religion" (1525), *Latin Works*, 2.92.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

toward his creator and the rest of creation: "It is therefore ...very easy to distinguish false religion from true. It is false religion or piety when trust is put in any other than God. They, then, who trust in any created thing whatsoever are not truly pious."⁶ Later, in his *Short Exposition of the Christian Faith* (1531), Zwingli would refer to this principle as the "fountainhead" of religion and "the first foundation of faith."⁷

Calvin's War Against the Idols

Calvin speaks about the nature of worship and about the seriousness of the sin of idolatry in his 1543 treatise, *On the Necessity of Reforming the Church*, where he concentrates on the significance of worship for the Christian religion. Calvin's argument, as indicated by the title of the treatise, is that the Church had reached such a corrupt state that its reform could wait no longer. The most significant aspect of corruption singled out by Calvin is the perversion of worship, and it is in explaining this issue that he set forth the basis for his attack on idolatry.

Calvin begins by studying the place that worship holds in the Christian faith, and he concludes that it is one of the two elements that define Christianity:

If it be asked, then, by what things chiefly the Christian religion has a standing amongst us, and maintains its truth, it will be found that the following two not only occupy the principal place, but comprehend under them all the other parts, and consequently *the whole substance of Christianity*, viz., a knowledge first, of the right way to worship God; and secondly of the source from which salvation is to be sought. When these are kept out of view, though we may glory in the name of Christians, our profession is empty and vain.⁸

Calvin, thus, asserts that one cannot be a Christian without a proper knowledge of worship, and even places worship before salvation in order of cognitive importance. Correct worship not only precedes righteousness, it precedes the true knowledge of salvation.⁹

It is because he believes worship to be the foundation of theology that Calvin can answer one of the more frequent charges made against Protestantism by the Roman Catholic church. The Catholics accused the Protestants of raising disputes that were of little significance, needlessly causing a schism. Calvin responds by saying, on the contrary, that disputes over points of worship should be given precedence over all other

aspects of religion.¹⁰ Commenting further on the dispute over worship that divided Christendom, Calvin asserts that it is not an insignificant struggle at all, but rather a life and death combat over what is most essential to the Christian life: "For it is not true that we dispute about a worthless shadow. *The whole substance of the Christian religion* is brought into question."¹¹ Calvin uses equally strong language when he exhorts all Christians to assume their primary duty, that is, to struggle for the maintenance of pure worship:

There is nothing to which all men should pay more attention, nothing in which God wishes us to exhibit a more intense eagerness than in endeavoring that the glory of his name may remain undiminished, his kingdom be advanced, and the pure doctrine, which alone can guide us to true worship, flourish in full strength.¹²

Calvin ridicules Catholics for saying that Protestants are only concerned with trifles. When the pagan idolaters spoke of fighting for their altars and sacred hearths, says Calvin, they supported what they believed to be the noblest of all causes. Catholics, though also idolaters, are so confused about the nature of their worship that they regard as almost superfluous a contest that is undertaken "for the glory of God and the salvation of men."¹³ Calvin thus points to the contradiction in Catholic polemics: The Catholics cling tenaciously to their forms of worship, yet also, try to minimize the effect of the Protestant attack by arguing that only trivial matters have been brought into question. The seriousness of their corruption, Calvin adds, is evident in their failure to see that worship is the soul of the Christian life.¹⁴ Idolatry, then, is the very antithesis of religion.¹⁵

The Imperative for Spiritual Worship

Calvin maintains that the only correct form of worship that can be offered to God is "spiritual worship," which for him means two things: worship devoid of trust in material props or humanly devised ceremonies; and worship that has been commanded by God.¹⁶

10. *De necessitate*, CR 6.502.

11. *Ibid.* (italics Eire's) Calvin also said to Cardinal Sadoletto: "I have also no difficulty in conceding to you that there is nothing more dangerous to our salvation than a twisted and perverse worship of God." Reply to Sadoletto (1539), CR 5.392.

12. *De necessitate*, CR 6.530.

13. *Ibid.* CR 6.502.

14. *Institutes*, II.8.11.

15. CR 7.673. Calvin speaks of idols in *Vera Christianae pacificationis et Esslesiae reformandae ratio* as follows: "Idolum enim erigitur, non quod externam sacrarii speciem deformat, sed quod totam ecclesiae sanctitatem inquinat ac pervertat: quod labefactet totum Dei cultum, nihil in religione nostra impollutum relinquit."

16. CR 7.607. "Primum enim statuendum est spiritualem esse Dei cultum, se in externis vel caeremoniis, vel aliis quibuslibet operibus reponatur: deinde non esse legitimum, nisi ad eius

6. *Ibid.*, p. 97.

7. "A Shorter and Clear Exposition of the Christian Faith" (written in July of 1531, published posthumously in 1536), *Latin Works*, 3.241.

8. *De necessitate reformandae Ecclesiae*(1543), *Corpus Reformatorum: Joannis Calvini Opera quae supersunt omnia* (CR hereafter), edited by W. Baum, E. Cunitz, and E. Reuss (Brunswick, 1863-80), 6.459.

9. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, II.8.11.

Calvin's second dictum concerning spiritual worship states that God is to be honored only according to His commands in scripture. It is at this point that Calvin uses his hermeneutic of transcendence to attack Catholic worship. Calvin assails the established piety as something that had no sanction from the Word of God and was thoroughly corrupt.¹⁷ Not once does Calvin waver in regard to his interpretation of what scripture means by "spiritual worship." The Word of God is clear, he says, and as the rule that distinguishes between false and true worship, it has a universal and univocal application.¹⁸ God's commands stand inscribed in the pages of the Bible as an unchanging rule that man must never alter in any way:

Here indeed is pure and real religion: faith so joined with an earnest fear of God that this fear also embraces willing reverence, and carries with it such legitimate worship as is prescribed in the law.¹⁹

Worship — the Central Concern of Christians

Calvin defines the place of worship as none of his predecessors had done before. Though they had struggled against idolatry, their theology was somewhat fundamentalistic and more inclined towards action than systematic exposition. Calvin clears whatever doubt anyone could have had about the theological foundations of the Reformed struggle for "pure worship." Calvin states plainly that the war against idolatry is not merely blind obedience to scripture, but also something reasonable. Worship, he says, is *the* central

cui praestatur voluntatem sit compositus, tanquam ad suam regulam. Utramque solus quam necessarium est."

17. *De necessitate*, CR 6.463-4. Also: Peter Auski "Simplicity and Silence: the Influence of Scripture on the Aesthetic Thought of the Major Reformers," *Journal of Religious History* 10: 343-64 (1979).

18. Calvin's doctrine of scripture is best summarized in the *Institutes*, I.6-10. For further reference: J. K. S. Reid, *The Authority of Scripture* (London, 1957), pp. 29-55. Reid provides a good summary of Calvin's doctrine of scripture and supplies thorough notes in reference to the most significant scholarly debates about this subject. J. T. McNeil also provides a brief and helpful study in "The Significance of the Word of God for Calvin," *Church History*, 28: 140-5 (1959). Other studies include the following: T. H. L. Parker, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Edinburgh, 1952), pp. 41-7; E. Dowey, *Knowledge*, pp. 86-146; W. Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin* (Philadelphia, 1956), pp. 22-38; F. Wendel, *Calvin*, pp. 156-60; and more recently, H. J. Forstman, *Word and Spirit: Calvin's Doctrine of Biblical Authority* (Stanford, 1962); and H. Kraus, "Calvins Exegetische Prinzipien," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 79: 329-41 (1968). Also: W. H. Neuser, "Theologie des Worts — Schrift, Verheissung und Evangelium bei Calvin." in *Calvinus Theologus: Die Referate des Europäischen Kongress für Calvinforschung 16-19 Sept. 1974*. W. H. Neuser, ed. (Neukirchen/Vluyn, 1976), pp. 17-38; and in the same volume, A. Ganoczy, "Calvin als paulinischen Theologe. Ein Forschungsansatz zur Hermeneutik Calvins," pp. 39-70.

19. *Institutes*, I.2.2.

concern of Christians. It is not some peripheral matter, but "the whole substance"²⁰ of the Christian faith. It is the reason for human existence, the fundamental principle that alone can bring true *cognitio* to human beings, and therefore true fulfillment, since the proper end of human existence is knowledge of God and of ourselves. By making worship a necessary existential component of knowledge, Calvin turns it into the nexus between thought and action, between theology and its practical application. It is a very practical sort of theology that Calvin develops as a result of this. Religion is not merely a set of doctrines, but rather a way of worshiping, and a way of living. "True piety begets true confession."²¹ This is enormously significant. One may even argue that it becomes the fundamental defining characteristic of Calvinism.

Calvin's Struggle

The Reformation for which Calvin struggled was not so much one of doctrine, but rather one of piety, which involved profound social and cultural changes.

Calvin considered the struggle against idolatry to be an unending task, and thought that the situation of the sixteenth-century evangelicals paralleled that of the ancient Israelites: They were the chosen few, surrounded by peoples immersed in idolatry and superstition. Like their Old Testament forebears, sixteenth-century Reformed Christians had to be prepared to deal with the contagion of idolatry. Even in a Reformed community, Calvin insisted, it was necessary to speak to the faithful about the corruption around them, lest they become complacent. As had been the case with the Israelites, purity of worship was expected to be the primary response to the covenant between God and his people; and for Calvin the true Christian church always had to be reminded of the fact that it had been rescued from idolatry.²² This means, of course, that Calvin regarded the Church as a sort of real, spiritual nationhood, and that he expected commitment to the purity of the covenant to eclipse any allegiances that opposed it, even if these allegiances were demanded by one's earthly nation. This is the conflict presented to sixteenth-century Reformed Protestants by Calvin: Regarding worship, they had to choose between the demands of earthly kingdoms and the responsibilities of the spiritual kingdom of God.

Calvin's struggle against Nicodemism²³ is the logical conclusion of his effort to avoid compromise with the worship of the Roman Catholic church. Calvin proposes a model form of conduct for all Christians,

20. *De necessitate*, CR 6.459.

21. *De fugiendis*, CR 5.244.

22. "Sermon auquel tous chrestiens sont exhortez de fuir idolatrie extérieure," CR 8.377-8.

23. Beza, defending Calvin, described the Nicodemites as those who "though they had a thorough knowledge of the truth," yet consulted "their ease," and held "it enough to worship Christ in mind, while they gave outward attendance on Popish rites..." Cited earlier in the book from page 241.—ed.

and he describes his opinion in detail as he deals with each of the problems raised by the dissembling behavior of the Nicodemites. Calvin's principal dictum in regard to the Christian's relationship with "false religion" is that idolatry must be shunned at all costs, even at the risk of one's life; for as he says, the first lesson one should learn in the "school of Jesus Christ" is the renunciation of self.²⁴

But what, specifically, is the individual living in a predominantly Catholic environment supposed to do if there is to be no compromise with Rome? How is all this theology to be brought to life in the harsh, practical world of politics? Calvin offers two alternatives to those who, as he says, are living in Babylon and cannot worship God correctly in public. The first is to emigrate: One can leave behind all corruption and seek a new location (such as Geneva) where true worship can take place. For those who find it impossible to flee (and Calvin grants that there are some for whom emigration is out of the question), the second alternative is to abstain from all idolatry: to remain "pure and immaculate before God, in soul as well as in body," even under duress.²⁵

To be continued in the next newsletter in this series.

This article, edited by Reg Barrow, is taken from the book *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* by Carlos M. N. Eire, pp. 84-5; 198-202; 232-233; 255-56; 259-60. Reprinted with the permission of Cambridge University Press.

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WORSHIP

THE REGULATIVE PRINCIPLE OF WORSHIP IN HISTORY

...the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the holy Scripture (WCF 21:1).

What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it (Deut. 12:32).

But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men (Matt. 15:9).

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments (Exod. 20:4-6).

It was an amazing discovery to read, for the first time, of the regulative principle of worship about a year ago.¹ This was over ten years after my eyes had been opened to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and also after having spent a number of years in a Bible Presbyterian Church (in which I never even once heard this great controlling principle mentioned).² Sadly, this was also after a number of debates had taken place in this church over music and liturgy, all of which could have easily been settled by an appeal to the confessional standards that the BP elders had vowed to uphold (i.e. the *Westminster Confession of Faith*). The sufficiency of the WCF in this area can be easily illustrated, (especially concerning the use of instrumental music in public worship), by a quotation from pages 31-32 of James Begg's book *Anarchy in Worship*.³

When we come down to the Westminster Assembly, by which our present Standards were framed, it is unnecessary to repeat how clearly these Standards embody the same principle, viz., that pure and acceptable worship must be "prescribed," or "appointed" by God himself. But it may be important to bring out the clear evidence which we have, that during the second Reformation our ancestors insisted on uniformity of worship and the Commissioners at Westminster and the Assembly in Scotland, regarded their principle of worship as clearly excluding instrumental music, and

all other things abolished, along with the peculiarities of the temple service. By an Act of the Assembly of Scotland, 1643, a directory for worship was appointed to be prepared and reported to next assembly, to the intent "that unity and uniformity might be observed throughout the kingdom in all parts of the public worship of God." Our Commissioners to the Westminster Assembly, including the most eminent ecclesiastics then in Scotland, reported on May 20, 1644, that "plain and powerful preaching" had been set up, and "THE GREAT ORGANS AT PAUL'S AND PETER'S IN WESTMINSTER TAKEN DOWN," and "all by authority in a quiet manner, at noonday without tumult." In answer, the General Assembly here, June 4, 1644, writes to the Assembly at Westminster: "We were greatly refreshed to hear by letter from our Commissioners there with you, of your praiseworthy proceedings, and of the great good things the Lord hath wrought among you and for you. Shall it seem a small thing in our eyes that...the door of a right entry unto faithful shepherds is opened; many corruptions, as altars, images, and other monuments of idolatry and superstition, removed, defaced, and abolished; the service-book in many places forsaken; and plain and powerful preaching set up; THE GREAT ORGANS AT PAUL'S AND PETER'S TAKEN DOWN; that the royal chapel is purged and reformed; sacraments sincerely administered, and according to the pattern in the mount?" From this it is clear that the Westminster Divines, and our own Church in those days, would have made short work with the Dunse case, and with all questions of instrumental music in worship. This was certainly regarded as one of the last corruptions introduced, dating only from about the eighth century, and never having found admission into the Greek Church at all.

At this point some may be asking, What is this regulative principle? James Glasgow gives us a succinct answer,

That principle was substantially this, that for all the constituents of worship, you require the positive sanction of divine authority,

¹Fred DiLella, while visiting Edmonton had lent me his copy of *The Scriptural Law of Worship* by Carl Bogue (Presbyterian Heritage Publications, 1988), which I eagerly devoured, my journey towards the Presbyterian/Puritan view of worship having finally begun.

²I later found out that some of the elders at that BP had never heard of the regulative principle either.

³As this book (first published in 1875) is not easily accessible, SWRB is stocking copies which can be obtained (postpaid) by sending \$5.

either in the shape of direct command, or good and necessary consequence, or approved example; and that you are not at liberty to introduce anything else in connection with the worship of God, unless it comes legitimately under the apostolic heading of 'decency and order.'⁴

After citing the instance of Begg's quote concerning the Westminster Assembly (*supra*), Glasgow further illustrates this principle,

They (the Westminster Divines—RB) contended, I think unanswerably, that the truth of this principle is involved in what the Scripture teaches concerning its own sufficiency, God's exclusive right to settle the constitution, laws, and arrangements of His kingdom, the unlawfulness of will worship, and the utter unfitness of men for the function which they have so often boldly usurped in this matter.⁵

Of course, whole volumes have been written regarding this definition. But, continuing on, in that this definition has been generally accepted among Presbyterian/Puritan Christians, Cunningham sets the stage for more of our historical survey, (while at the same time excluding the charge of trifling over inconsequential matters), when he writes,

There is a strange fallacy which seems to mislead men in forming an estimate of the soundness and importance of this principle (the regulative principle—RB). Because this principle has been often brought out in connection with the discussion of matters which, viewed in themselves, are very unimportant, such as rites and ceremonies, vestments and organs, crossings, kneelings, bowings, and other such *ineptæ*, some men seem to think that it partakes of the intrinsic littleness of these things, and that the men who defend and try to enforce it, find their most congenial occupation in fighting about these small matters, and exhibit great bigotry and narrow-mindedness in bringing the authority of God and the testimony of Scripture to bear upon such a number of paltry points. Many have been led to entertain such views as these of the English Puritans and of the Scottish Presbyterians, and very much upon the ground of their maintenance of this principle. Now, it should be quite sufficient to prevent or neutralize this impression to show, as we think can be done, 1st, That the principle is taught with sufficient plainness in Scripture, and that, therefore, it ought to be professed and applied to the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs. 2d, That, viewed in itself, it is large, liberal, and comprehensive, such as seems in no way unbecoming its Divine author, and in no way unsuitable to the dignity of the church as a divine institution, giving to God His rightful place of supremacy, and to the church, as the body of Christ, its rightful position of elevated simplicity and purity. 3d, That, when contemplated in connection with the ends of the church, it is in full accordance with everything suggested by an enlightened and searching survey of the tendencies of human nature, and the testimony of all past experience. And with respect to the connection above referred to, on which the impression we are combatting is chiefly based, it is surely plain that, in so far as it exists *de facto*, this is owing, not to anything in the tendencies of the principle itself or of its supporters, but to the conduct of the men who, in defiance of this principle, would obtrude human inventions into the government and worship of the church, or who insist upon retaining them permanently after they have once got

⁴From *Heart and Voice: Instrumental Music in Christian Worship Not Divinely Authorized*, (Belfast: Aitchison & Cleeland, late 19th century), p. 4. This exceedingly rare book can also be obtained (post paid) in bound photocopy format from SWRB for \$25. This book is an exegetical treasure which demolishes what the Westminster Divines, together with the whole Puritan party (cf. Girardeau, *Instrumental Music*, pp. 137, 138), called 'the badge of Popery,' i.e. the innovation of introducing instrumental music into Christian worship.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 6.

admittance. The principle suggests no rites or ceremonies, no schemes or arrangements; it is purely negative and prohibitory. Its supporters never devise innovations and press them upon the church. The principle itself precludes this. It is the deniers of this principle, and they alone, who invent and obtrude innovations; and they are responsible for all the mischiefs that ensue from the discussions and contentions to which these things have given rise.⁶

Now we can continue to view the historical position that the Christian church has taken regarding the regulative principle (with special emphasis on instrumental music). Concerning the Early church Dr. N. R. Needham has written,

The Early church did not use instrumental music in its worship.... They considered the practice as pagan or Jewish rather than Christian. Dr. Hughes Oliphant Old, in his work *The Patristic Roots of Reformed Worship* says: "As is well known, the ancient church did not admit the use of instrumental music in worship. It was looked upon as a form of worship which like the sacrifices of the Jerusalem temple prefigured the worship in spirit and truth...." This concern for the distinctiveness of New Testament worship, and for spirituality as its central feature, was typical of the early Church fathers. In harmony with this, the situation in early Church worship was one of "plain" or unaccompanied singing of psalms.... The use of musical instruments was rejected as contrary to the tradition of the Apostles—a feature of sensuous pagan or Old Testament Jewish worship, but not of the spiritual Christian worship.⁷

Continuing our walk through history (and the instrument music example) we can observe how and by whom this principle has been greatly violated,

With reference to the time when organs were first introduced into use in the Roman Catholic Church, let us hear Bingham:⁸ "It is now generally agreed among learned men that the use of organs came into the church since the time of Thomas Aquinas, Anno 1250; for he, in his *Summs*, has these words: 'Our church does not use musical instruments, as harps and psalteries, to praise God withal, that she may not seem to Judaize....' Mr. Wharton also has observed that Marinus Sanutus, who lived about the year 1290, was the first who brought the use of wind-organs into churches, whence he was surnamed Torcellus, which is the name for an organ in the Italian tongue.... Let us pause a moment to notice the fact, supported by a mass of incontrovertible evidence, that the Christian church did not employ instrumental music in its public worship for 1200 years after Christ.... It deserves serious consideration, moreover, that notwithstanding the ever-accelerated drift towards corruption in worship as well as in doctrine and government, the Roman Catholic Church did not adopt this corrupt practice until about the middle of the thirteenth century.... When the organ was introduced into its worship it encountered strong opposition, and made its way but slowly to general acceptance. These assuredly are facts that should profoundly impress Protestant churches. How can they adopt a practice which the Roman Church, in the year 1200, had not admitted... Then came the Reformation; and the question arises, How did the Reformers deal with instrumental music in the church?... Zwingle has already been quoted to show instrumental music was one of the shadows of the old law which has been realized in the gospel. He pronounces its employment in the present dispensation "wicked perversity." There is no doubt in regard to his views on the subject, which were adopted by the Swiss Reformed churches... Calvin is very express in his con-

⁶William Cunningham, *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation*, (Edinburgh, Scotland: Banner of Truth, [1862] 1989), p. 35, 36.

⁷Musical Instruments in Worship: Historical Survey" *The Presbyterian*, issue 32, May 1990, pp. 25, 26. Available from: 9 Church Road, Thornbury, Bristol BS12 1EJ, England.

⁸Girardeau cites: *Works*, Vol. iii., p. 137, ff.

demnation of instrumental music in connection with the public worship of the Christian church...In his homily on 1 Sam. xviii. 1-9, he delivers himself emphatically and solemnly upon the subject: "In Popery there was a ridiculous and unsuitable imitation [of the Jews]. While they adorned their temples, and valued themselves as having made the worship of God more splendid and inviting, they employed organs, and many other such ludicrous things, by which the Word and worship of God are exceedingly profaned (emphasis added—RB), the people being much more attached to those rites than to the understanding of the divine Word..." Whatever may be the practice in recent times of the churches of Holland, the Synods of the Reformed Dutch Church, soon after the Reformation, pronounced very decidedly against the use of instrumental music in public worship. The National Synod at Middleburg, in 1581, declared against it, and the Synod of Holland and Zealand, in 1594, adopted this strong resolution; "That they would endeavor to obtain of the magistrate the laying aside of organs, and the singing with them in the churches..." The Provincial Synod of Dort also inveighed severely against their use...The Rev. Charles H. Spurgeon, ...upholds an apostolic simplicity of worship. The great congregation which is blessed with the privilege of listening to his instructions has no organ "to assist" them in singing...The non-prelatic churches, Independent and Presbyterian, began their development on the American continent without instrumental music. They followed the English Puritans and the Scottish Church, which had adopted the principles of the Calvinistic Reformed Church...It has thus been proved by an appeal to historical facts, that the church, although lapsing more and more into defection from the truth and into a corruption of apostolic practice, had no instrumental music for twelve hundred years; and that the Calvinistic Reformed Church ejected it from its services as an element of Popery, even the Church of England having come very nigh to its extrusion from her worship. The historical argument, therefore, combines with the scriptural and the confessional to raise a solemn and powerful protest against its employment by the Presbyterian Church. It is heresy in the sphere of worship.⁹

Though our standard is unequivocally *sola Scriptura*, the historical argument illustrates how a practice which was a *very* late comer to church practice, (not to mention instituted by the Pope of Rome), has gained almost universal acceptance in our day of declension. Without strict adherence to the regulative principle, as historically exegeted and espoused by our Presbyterian and Puritan forefathers, the door to unscriptural innovation in worship is endless. This principle in worship is the equivalent of God's sovereignty in soteriology. That is, the "Christian" humanists (Arminians) try to ascribe salvation to their *own wills* and not to God's will as the Bible clearly proclaims (John 1:13, Romans 9). Similarly the Bible condemns human invention in worship as *will worship* (Col 2:23), the only acceptable worship being that which is mandated via God's own will as revealed in the scripture. Girardeau cites Calvin's commentary on the Psalms, pinpointing the error in this particular practice and also exposing *the source* of many of the ecclesiastical abuses of worship that have crept into the modern church,

"To sing the praises of God upon the harp and psaltery," says Calvin, "unquestionably formed a part of the training of the law and of the service of God under that dispensation of *shadows and figures*; but they are not now to be used in public thanksgiving."¹⁰ He says again: "With respect to the *tabret, harp, and psaltery*, we have formerly observed, and will find it necessary afterwards to repeat the same remark, that the Levites, under the law, were

justified in making use of instrumental music in the worship of God; it having been his will to train his people, while they were yet tender and like children, by such rudiments until the coming of Christ. But now, when the clear light of the gospel has dissipated the *shadows* of the law and taught us that God is to be served in a simpler form, it would be to act a foolish and mistaken part to imitate that which the prophet enjoined only upon those of his own time."¹¹ He further observes: "We are to remember that the worship of God was never understood to consist in such outward services, which were only necessary to help forward a people as yet weak and rude in knowledge in the spiritual worship of God. A difference is to be observed in this respect between his people under the Old and under the New Testament; for now that Christ has appeared, and the church has reached full age, it were only to bury the light of the gospel should we introduce the *shadows* of a departed dispensation. From this it appears that the Papists, as I shall have occasion to show elsewhere, in employing instrumental music cannot be said so much to imitate the practice of God's ancient people as to ape it in a senseless and absurd manner, exhibiting a silly delight in that worship of the Old Testament which was *figurative* and terminated with the gospel."¹²

Once again citing a lengthy section from Girardeau, (which ends the first chapter of his *Instrumental Music in Public Worship*, the "General Arguments from Scripture"), we read,

The principal (the regulative principle, scripturally proved in the preceding 22 pages of this highly recommended book—RB) that has been emphasized *is in direct opposition to that maintained by Romanists and Prelatists, and I regret to say by lax Presbyterians, that what is not forbidden in the Scriptures is permitted.* The Church of England, in her twentieth article, concedes to the church "a power to decree rites and ceremonies," with this limitation alone upon its exercise, "that it is not lawful for the church to ordain anything that is contrary to God's written word." The principle of the discretionary power of the church in regard to *things not commanded by Christ in his Word*, was the chief fountain from which flowed the gradually increasing tide of corruptions that swept the Latin church into apostasy from the gospel of God's grace. And as surely as causes produce their appropriate effects, and history repeats itself in obedience to that law, any Protestant church which embodies that principle in its creed is destined, sooner or later, to experience a similar fate. The same, too, may be affirmed of a church which formally rejects it and practically conforms to it. The reason is plain. The only bridle that checks the degenerating tendency of the church—a tendency manifested in all ages—is the Word of God: for the Spirit of grace Himself ordinarily operates only in connection with that Word. If this restraint be discarded, the downward lapse is sure. The words of the great theologian, John Owen—and the British Isles have produced no greater—are solemn and deserve to be seriously pondered: "*The principle that the church hath power to institute any thing or ceremony belonging to the worship of God, either as to matter or manner, beyond the observance of such circumstances as necessarily attend such ordinances as Christ Himself hath instituted, lies at the bottom of all the horrible superstition and idolatry, of all the confusion, blood, persecution, and wars, that have for so long a season spread themselves over the face of the Christian world* (all emphases added)."

In view of such considerations as these, confirmed, as they are, by the facts of all past history, it is easy to see how irrelevant and baseless is the taunt flung by high churchmen, ritualists and latitudinarians of every stripe against the maintainers of the opposite principle, that they are narrow-minded bigots who take delight in insisting upon trivial details. The truth is exactly the other way. The principle upon which this cheap ridicule is cast is simple,

⁹John L. Girardeau, *Instrumental Music in the Public Worship of the Church* (Havertown, PA.: New Covenant Publ. Society, [1888] 1983), pp. 158, 159, 161, 165, 170, 179. Again this book is available in bound photocopied format (postpaid) from SWRB for \$25.

¹⁰Calvin on Ps. lxxi. 22.

¹¹Calvin on Ps. lxxxi. 3.

¹²Calvin on Ps. xcii. 1. All Calvin cited in Girardeau, *Instrumental Music*, pp. 63, 64.

broad, majestic. It affirms only the things that God has commanded, the institutions and ordinances that he has prescribed, and besides this, discharges only a negative office which sweeps away every trifling invention of man's meretricious fancy. It is not the supporters of this principle, but their opponents, who delight in insisting upon crossings, genuflections and bowings to the east, upon vestments, altars and candles, upon organs and cornets, and "the dear antiphonies that so bewitch their prelates and their chapters with the goodly echo they make;" in fine, upon all that finical trumpery which, inherited from the woman clothed in scarlet, marks the trend backward to the Rubicon and the seven-hilled mart of souls.

But whatever others may think or do, Presbyterians cannot forsake this principle without the guilt of defection from their own venerable standards and from the testimonies sealed by the blood of their fathers. Among the principles that the Reformers extracted from the rubbish of corruption and held up to the light again, none were more comprehensive, far-reaching and profoundly reforming than this. It struck at the root of every false doctrine and practice, and demanded the restoration of the true. Germany has been infinitely the worse because of Luther's failure to apply it to the full. Calvin enforced it more fully. The great French Protestant Church, with the exception of retaining a liturgical relic of popery, gave it a grand application, and France suffered an irreparable loss when she dragooned almost out of existence the body that maintained it. John Knox stamped it upon the heart of the Scottish Church, and it constituted the glory of the English Puritans. Alas! that it is passing into decadence in the Presbyterian churches of England, Scotland and America. What remains but that those who still see it, and cling to it as to something dearer than life itself, should continue to utter, however feebly, however inoperatively, their unchanging testimony to its truth? It is the acropolis of the church's liberties, the palladium of her purity. That gone, nothing will be left to hope, but to strain its gaze towards the dawn of the millennial day. Then—we are entitled to expect—a more thorough-going and glorious reformation will be effected than any that has blessed the church and the world since the magnificent propagation of Christianity by the labors of the inspired apostles themselves.¹³

So as not to leave myself open to the objection that little exegetical proof has been cited in this short newsletter format, I offer the following three considerations.

First, it would be ridiculous to think that all (or even a slight percentage) of the testimonies herein adduced, in favor of the regulative principle, were reached on a basis other than intense scriptural exegesis. A close inspection of the sources cited in the footnotes will amply testify of the careful and precise exegetical work that has been done in this area.

Second, the historical testimony should be recognized as coming from those who have held the highest regard for scripture. Many of the men holding to this position put their lives on the line over Scripture, while those opposing them often tried to mute their testimony with persecution and even death. Furthermore, this Presbyterian/Puritan testimony for the regulative principle (and against the use of musical instruments in public worship) makes up the most totally unanimous historical witness I have come across in any contested area of theology. At least equal in clearness to that of the sovereignty of God in *salvation*—this being the sovereignty of God in *worship*.

Third, in conjunction with all this, it is clear that many of the most abominable innovations in worship were intro-

duced by Rome. The cavil that the Reformers were *merely* reacting to Rome *per se*, in upholding the regulative principle, is simplistic at best. It is admitted that the earlier Reformers were reacting, but righteously reacting against Rome's false and Judaizing hermeneutic. This hermeneutic, drawing from the *shadows, figures and types of the abolished ceremony* of the Old Testament (Heb. 7-10), justified not only musical instruments in public worship, but also the mass (a false sacrifice), a false priesthood, and any number of other detestable practices. Moreover, it implies that the work of Christ in fulfillment of *these shadows and types* is not satisfactory or complete. Rome's "harlot hermeneutic," being as it is, radically opposed to *sola Scriptura*—the great cry of the Reformers and the Reformation—necessitates an unbiblical deviation in worship. This is not surprising. What is surprising is that some of the Romanist innovations in worship (such as instrumental music in public worship) are now being practiced by denominations that profess to hold to the Reformed faith, Confessions and hermeneutic.

In conclusion I will simply state that any Reconstruction of the Church must begin with a thorough understanding (and the subsequent practice) of the regulative principle. To deviate here is to open the floodgates of humanistic innovation in worship, condoning worship devised by a false hermeneutic and therefore the will of man—*Arminianism in worship in short*. This is the seedbed of idolatry and a sure route to a shipwrecked church. John Knox's battle to reform Scotland and his call for purity of worship is most instructive here. Knox states,

The matter is not of so small importance, as some suppose. The question is, whether God or man ought to be obeyed in matters of religion? In mouth, all do confess that only God is worthy of sovereignty. But after many—by the instigation of the devil, and by the presumptuous arrogance of carnal wisdom and worldly policy—have defaced God's holy ordinance, men fear not to follow what laws and common consent (mother of all mischief) have established and commanded. But thus continually I can do nothing but hold, and affirm all things polluted, yea, execrable and accursed, which God by his Word has not sanctified in his religion. God grant you his Holy Spirit rightly to judge.¹⁴

Will-worship has proved disastrous in the past, thus we must heed the warnings of history, a history *also* filled with testimony to the clear Biblically based hermeneutic of our Presbyterian and Puritan forefathers—proclaiming the sovereignty of God in worship and over every area of life!

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¹³Girardeau, *Instrumental Music*, pp. 23-26.

¹⁴Knox, *Works VI:14* cited in John Knox, *True and False Worship* (Presbyterian Heritage Publications, rpt. 1988), p. x.

Psalm Singing in Scripture and History

The reading of the Scriptures with godly fear; the sound preaching, and conscionable hearing of the word, in obedience unto God, with understanding, faith, and reverence; singing of psalms with grace in the heart; as also the due administration and worthy receiving of the sacraments instituted by Christ; are all parts of the ordinary religious worship of God.. (WCF 21:5).

Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms (James 5:13).

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. (Col. 3:16).

Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; (Eph. 5:19).

This newsletter will be concerned with establishing that the only legitimate *historical, confessional* and most importantly *biblical* means of addressing God in public worship-song is via the Psalms. I will grant at the outset that this is a tall order for one short newsletter. But if all I accomplish here is to encourage some to delve further into this important issue, a measure of success will have already been attained. Having observed that much of the Reformed community is not even acquainted with their *own heritage* of exclusive Psalmody, much less the virtually unassailable exegetical strength of this position, I hope that this encouragement to search the scriptures will fall upon hearing ears. Furthermore, many fine books have been published regarding this topic, some of which are quoted herein, and their perusal will be found to be most rewarding.

I am assuming throughout this newsletter that the reader is acquainted with the Presbyterian-Reformed-Puritan understanding of the regulative principle for worship.¹

The Historical Testimony

Psalm singing is one of the great joys of the Christian life. Returning the praises of God to the Almighty in a manner which He has instituted (and is "pleased" by) can only lead to great blessing upon those who practice it. The historical testimony reveals to us a most intriguing picture. In it our Lord shows us that at the times in which He has been pleased to visit this Earth with great light, He has also given the great majority of His human light bearers the grace to practice exclusive Psalmody in public worship. In fact this testimony is so clear that it is rarely contested, often readily conceded even by those opposed to exclusive Psalmody. Gary Crampton, in a recent article, is one example, when he states that "there is little question that through the centuries

of church history exclusive Psalmody has been heavily endorsed by those within the Reformed community."²

The Early Church

Concerning the early Church, Bushell notes that, "The introduction of uninspired hymns into the worship of the Church was a gradual process, and it was not until the fourth century that the practice became widespread."³ G. I. Williamson further points out that a "second noteworthy fact is that when uninspired hymns first made their appearance, it was not among the orthodox Churches but rather the heretical groups....If the Church from the beginning had received authority from the Apostles to make and use uninspired hymns, it would be expected that it would have done so. But it did not. Rather it was among those who departed from the faith that they first appeared."⁴ This historical testimony raises a number of interesting questions for those who claim to adhere to the regulative principle of worship and yet maintain the use of uninspired hymns in public worship. *First*, if the Psalter had been insufficient why is there *no command* to produce new songs for worship, *only commands* to sing that which was *already in existence*? *Second*, if a new manual of praise was necessary, why is it that the Apostles did not write any new songs under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit? *Third*, why can't we find even one fragment or mention of the use of uninspired "hymns" among orthodox Christians until they began to be written in reply to the heretical "hymns" that had already surfaced late

¹ If you are not familiar with this biblically controlling principle of worship, it was dealt with in the last issue of *Christian Reconstruction Today*, #15-16, entitled "Worship."

² "Psalms Hymns & Spiritual Songs" *Counsel of Chalcedon*, May 1991, p. 9.

³ Michael Bushell, *The Songs of Zion* (Pittsburgh, PA: Crown and Covenant Publ., 1980), p. 122.

⁴ G. I. Williamson, *The Singing of Psalms in the Worship of God* (Reformed Presbyterian Church of Northern Ireland, n.d.), pp. 16-17.

in the second century?⁵ *Fourth*, why was there still strong opposition to the introduction of uninspired hymns well into the fifth century? The Synod of Laodicea (A.D. 343) and the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) both opposed the introduction of uninspired "hymns." In addition to this Bushell states that "as late as the ninth century we find appeals to the earlier Councils in support of a pure psalmody."⁶

The Protestant Reformation

As we reach the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century we find that "the same clericalism which denied the Bible to the common people eventually denied them the Psalter as well and replaced congregational singing with choral productions in a tongue unknown to the vast majority of the worshippers."⁷ As the Reformation progressed we encounter an almost complete return to exclusive Psalmody (excluding the Lutherans, who had not extended the principle of *sola scriptura* to their worship). Bushell states,

The Scottish Reformer John Knox not surprisingly followed Calvin in this matter, and the Reformed Church as a whole followed their lead. "This meant that at a stroke the Reformed Church cut itself loose from the entire mass of Latin hymns and from the use of hymnody in general, and adopted the Psalms of the Old Testament as the sole medium of Church praise."⁸ Hence forth to be a Calvinist was to be a Psalm-singer. For some two and a half centuries the Reformed churches as a rule sang nothing but the Psalms in worship.... The metrical Psalter was born in Geneva where it was nurtured and cherished by all who embraced the principles of Calvinism.⁹

The importance that Calvin placed on Psalm singing can be seen in the following account,

When Calvin and Farel were banished from Geneva (April 23, 1538) for refusal to submit to the liturgical practices which the Council had taken over from Bern, they appealed their case to the Synod which met at Zurich on April 29, 1538. At that time they presented a paper drawn up by Calvin containing 14 articles specifying the terms upon which they were willing to return to Geneva. They admitted that they had been too rigid and were willing to concede a number of the disputed practices.... But on several other points they stood firm. They insisted on...the more frequent administration of the Lord's Supper...and *the institution of the singing of Psalms as a part of public worship* (emphasis added).¹⁰

This was an extremely bold stand for truth and as we know Calvin returned to Geneva and Psalm singing commenced. As he *matured* Calvin insisted on and instituted the *practice* of the *exclusive* (*acappella*) singing of Psalms in Geneva's public worship.¹¹ Another interesting historical note concerning the development (and strength) of Calvin's argu-

ments against uninspired hymns is placed in context by the following conclusion reached by Bushell,

Calvin knew, as well as we ought to know, that in the last analysis a "counsel of prudence" and a "case of conscience" amount to the same thing. In worship-song, as in other things, God deserves the best that we have to offer. No pious man can in clear conscience offer up one sacrifice of praise to God when prudence dictates that another would be better. Calvin says as much in the passage which we just quoted. How one can read Calvin's conclusion that "no one can sing things worthy of God, unless he has received them from God Himself" and yet conclude that "he had no scruples of conscience against the use of human songs" is quite beyond our comprehension. These sentiments, which Calvin borrows from Augustine (on Psalm 31, sermon 1) and takes as his own, are at the very heart of all arguments against the use of uninspired hymns in the religious worship of God. Calvin's own practice, his insistence on the inspired superiority of the Psalms, and his defense of the Regulative Principle, all point toward the unavoidable conclusion that Calvin limited himself to the Psalms and a few Biblical songs or paraphrases because he thought it would have been wrong to do otherwise.

The Reformed Church as a whole followed him in this belief and clung to it tenaciously for over two centuries. Modern Presbyterian worship practice has no claim to Calvin's name at this juncture. Calvin would have wept bitterly to behold the songs sung today in those churches which claim to have followed in his footsteps...*the fact remains that in practice the Genevan Reformer was as strict a Psalm-singer as ever there was* (emphasis added).¹²

The "Signature of Puritanism"

Psalm singing has been called the "signature of Puritanism."¹³ "The English Puritans, being Calvinists and not Lutherans, held to the view that the only proper worship-song was that provided of God once and for all in the Book of Psalms (and Biblical canticles). This was Calvin's conviction, and a metrical Psalm before and after the sermon was the usual practice at Geneva."¹⁴ Again Bushell points out, "Our Calvinistic heritage, then, is a Psalm-singing heritage, and our Reformed churches, to the extent that they have chosen to forsake that heritage, are no longer Calvinistic in their patterns of worship."¹⁵

The Westminster Confession of Faith

A Survey of English and Scottish Psalmody would not be complete without a reference to the work of the Westminster Assembly. Since the Westminster standards still have creedal authority in some of the smaller Presbyterian bodies which, however, are no longer committed to exclusive Psalmody, it is worth pointing out here that *the Westminster Divines sanctioned nothing but the use of Psalms in the religious worship of God* (emphasis added).¹⁶

It is here that the weakness of those attempting to uphold the Westminster Confession *along with* the use of uninspired "hymns" in worship becomes most apparent. The writers of the Confession were well aware of the fact that the regula-

⁵ The first use of uninspired "hymns" was found among a heretical group called the Bardessanes, Cf. Williamson, *Singing of Psalms*, p. 16.

⁶ Bushell, *Songs of Zion*, p. 125.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

⁸ Bushell cites Millar Patrick, *Four Centuries of Scottish Psalmody* (London, 1949), p. 9., *Songs*, p. 131.

⁹ Bushell, *Songs*, p. 131, 132.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 141.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

tive principle of Scriptural worship demands divine institution for all *elements* in the *public worship service*. Thus, to suppose that the writers of the Confession would sanction that which they could not find divine institution in scripture for and also *did not include in the the Confession* under this section, belies a misunderstanding of the regulative principle itself. It imports the Lutheran idea that that which is not forbidden is permissible in public worship, rather than the Calvinistic conviction that *only* that which is *instituted* or *prescribed* by scripture is permissible. This is a common error today, even among Presbyterians—who, of all people, should know better. In fact, as far as we know, the idea that uninspired “hymns” were suitable worship-song was not even discussed at the Westminster Assembly, “the only disputes of any magnitude being over the practice of ‘lining out’ the Psalms and over whether to use the Psalter version of Rous or the ‘Metaphrase’ of Barton.”¹⁷ Thus, I think it is fair and can be stated unequivocally, that *one is of necessity in violation of both the spirit and letter of the Westminster Confession of Faith* outside of the practice of exclusive Psalmody (regarding public worship-song).

Bushell summarizes our rundown of Reformed thought,

It is remarkable that, in spite of the absence of any creedal constraints and in spite of the influence that must have been exerted on the Reformed Church by other communions where uninspired hymns flourished, the practice of exclusive Psalmody in the Reformed and Presbyterian churches was so uniform for two centuries after the Reformation that there exists today no undisputed evidence of ecclesiastically sanctioned hymnody in their services of worship during that period.¹⁸

Now, it can readily be seen, even in this short historical presentation, why those of Reformed persuasion concede the historical argument to the exclusive Psalm singers.

***Sola Scriptura* in Worship**

Since scripture, and not history (as helpful as it is), must be our final authority, it is to the scripture we will go. Some positions against exclusive Psalmody can be dismissed at the outset. *First*, unless one is ready to institute the use of *literal* altars, incense, etc. in public worship, the highly symbolic and figurative nature of the book of Revelation can be no safe guide for worship (here and now).¹⁹ *Second*, it should be noted that most (if not all) arguments against exclusive Psalmody are of a negative nature. These anti-Psalms arguments could *possibly* prove the Psalm singers position incorrect, but for those holding to the regulative principle, you can not prove the *positive institution* of uninspired hymns by a *negative* argument *against* exclusive Psalmody. I have personally requested proof for the *biblical* institution

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

¹⁹ One could even do away with marriage trying to use heaven as a guide for that which takes place here and now (see Luke 20:35). Clearly the argument that runs to the book of Revelation for support of *worship practices*, by trying to transfer what is clearly symbolic and typical into that which is literal, proves too much, and if applied consistently would (and has) lead to ridiculous extremes. Cf. James Glasgow, *Heart and Voice: Instrumental Music in Christian Worship Not Divinely Authorized*, (Belfast, late nineteenth century, available for \$20 from SWRB), or send \$5 to SWRB for a bound photocopy of *The True Psalmody*, which deals with this issue and is also an irrefutable defense of exclusive Psalmody.

of uninspired hymns from one prominent minister who says that he upholds the regulative principle, and have yet to receive any answer. This is really the crux of the matter for those espousing uninspired hymns: *Where is the biblical institution for uninspired songs in public (New Testament) worship?* Williamson is succinct and to the point in conjunction with this insurmountable obstacle faced by those promoting such an innovation (i.e. modern “hymn” singers):

It is of no small importance that textual proof has never been demonstrated for the use of uninspired songs in worship. No one has yet found even a single scripture text to prove that God commands His Church to sing other than the psalms of the Bible in worship. And it is not because men have not searched diligently! A few years ago a Committee of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church made such a search. This Committee had a majority in favour of the use of uninspired hymns in worship. And yet, after an exhaustive search through scripture requiring a number of years to complete, such proof could not be found. The Committee Chairman admitted that it is ‘impossible to prove that uninspired songs are authorized in scripture.’ He even said that ‘to demand such proof before one can in good conscience sing uninspired songs is to demand the impossible!’ (*The Presbyterian Guardian*, Vol. 17, p. 73) This is a grave admission. But it is no more than the facts require. For the bare truth is that no one has found so much as a single text of scripture commanding the use of uninspired songs in divine worship. And remember, we are not to worship God in any other way not commanded in His word.²⁰

At this point those promoting uninspired songs in worship are probably protesting that I have forgotten about Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, but such is not the case. Having come out of that tradition these scriptures were my first protest against the position that I now hold. So let's take a look at them. A lengthy quote from G.I. Williamson is most instructive here,

The proper interpretation of scripture terms requires that we discover, not *what we mean* by these terms when we use them today, but *what the inspired writer meant* when he used them. And it is one of the oddities of biblical interpretation that this rule is commonly observed with reference to the term ‘psalms’, and commonly disregarded with respect to the terms ‘hymns’ and ‘songs’. For the fact is that *all three of these terms* are used in the Bible to designate various selections contained in the Old Testament Psalter. In the Greek version of the Old Testament familiar to the Ephesians and Colossians the entire Psalter is entitled ‘Psalms’. In sixty-seven of the titles within the book the word ‘psalm’ is used. However, in six titles the word ‘hymn’ is used, rather than ‘psalm’, and in thirty-five the word ‘song’ appears. Even more important twelve titles use both ‘psalm’ and ‘song’, and two have ‘psalm’ and ‘hymn’. Psalm seventy-six is designated ‘psalm, hymn and song’. And at the end of the first seventy two psalms we read that ‘the hymns of David the son of Jesse are ended’. (Ps. 72:20.) In other words, there is no more reason to think that the Apostle referred to psalms when he said ‘psalms’, than when he said ‘hymns’ and ‘songs’, for the simple reason that all three were biblical terms for psalms in the book of psalms itself. We are in the habit of using the terms ‘hymns’ and ‘songs’ for those compositions that are not

²⁰ Williamson, *Singing of Psalms*, p. 18.

psalms. But Paul and the Christians at Ephesus and Colossae used these terms as the Bible itself uses them, namely, as titles for the various psalms in the Old Testament Psalter. To us it may seem strange, or even unnecessary, that the Holy Spirit would use a variety of titles to describe His inspired compositions. But the fact is that He did so. Just as the Holy Spirit speaks of His 'commandments and his statutes and his judgements' (Duet. 30:16, etc.), and of 'miracles and wonders and signs' (Acts 2:22), so He speaks of His 'psalms, hymns and songs' (Acts 2:22), as commandments, statues and judgements are all divine laws in the language of scripture; as miracles and wonders and signs are all supernatural works of God in the language of scripture; so psalms, hymns and songs are the inspired compositions of the Psalter, in the language of scripture itself.

The New Testament evidence sustains this conclusion. On the night of the Last Supper Jesus and His disciples sang 'an hymn'. (Matt. 26:30) Bible expositors admit that this was 'the second part of the Hallel Psalms (115-118)' which was always sung at the Passover. (*New Bible Commentary*, p. 835.) Matthew called this psalm a 'hymn' because a psalm is a hymn in the terminology of the Bible. To the same effect is the Old Testament quotation in Hebrews 2:12, in which the Greek word 'hymn' is quoted from Psalm 22:22. In this quotation from an Old Testament psalm, the word 'hymn' is used to denote the singing of psalms because the Old Testament makes no distinction between the two. But if Scripture itself says that psalms are hymns, and that hymns are psalms, why should we make any distinction between them? If we grant that the Apostle used biblical language in a biblical sense there is no more reason to think that he spoke of uninspired hymns in these texts (Col. 3:16, Eph. 5:19) than to think that he spoke of uninspired psalms, because hymns are inspired psalms in the holy scriptures.²¹

Furthermore, to reject Mr. Williamson's explanation regarding these verses leads to some major problems. We have already seen that no evidence exists that any uninspired "hymns" existed during the period when these verses were written. Only the inspired Psalms (i.e. psalms, hymns and spiritual songs) were in use as public worship-song at that time, and no biblical command is found anywhere to produce additional songs above those already contain in the existing book of divine praise—the Psalms. Is the regulative principle then in error? We think not. Why then were no new songs produced by the early church if these verses were understood to call for them? The Apostles themselves did not produce any such songs, either inspired or uninspired—not even one that we know of—demonstrating that they did not interpret these verses as modern hymn-singers do. Thus, to approach these verses by importing a modern meaning into the words "hymns and spiritual songs," not only rests on very shaky ground—leaving much room for doubt—and in no way fulfilling the requirements of regulative principle for clear biblical warrant for worship practices, but would also destroy the basis for Grammatico-Historical interpretation of scripture.²² Therefore, we can see that Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16 cannot possibly mean what those opposing the position of exclusive Psalmody say they mean, because their interpretation does not fit any of the

existing biblical (or historical) data—while the Psalm singers interpretation fits perfectly.

Finally and probably most importantly, Bushell has dug down to the root of the problem in the matter of human innovation regarding worship,

Arrogance, pride and self-assertion are at the very heart of all attempts to find a musical replacement for the Psalter. William Romaine makes some very pointed comments in this connection, to which advocates of uninspired song in worship would do well to listen: "I want a name for that man who should pretend that he could make better hymns than the Holy Ghost. His collection is large enough: it wants no addition. It is perfect, as its author, and not capable of any improvement. Why in such a case would any man in the world take it into his head to write hymns for the use of the Church? It is just the same as if he was to write a new Bible, not only better than the old, but so much better, that the old may be thrown aside. What a blasphemous attempt! And yet our hymn-mongers, inadvertently, I hope, have come very near to this blasphemy; for they shut out the Psalms, introduce their own verses into the Church, sing them with great delight, and as they fancy with great profit; although the whole practice be in direct opposition with the blessing of God." We see, therefore, that the sufficiency and divine origin of the Psalter are in themselves adequate arguments for its exclusive use in worship. As we have pointed out a number of times already, the very fact that the Bible contains a book of inspired psalms immediately places worship-song in the same category as the authoritative reading of the Scriptures in worship. The former is but the musical counterpart of the latter, and as such is incompatible with the use of uninspired hymns in worship.²³

Of course there are a number of other issues left untouched and yet to be dealt with in regard to this issue (maybe we'll get to them in a future newsletter or book). Here I have only endeavored to introduce what I consider some of the most obvious aspects of the debate over public worship-song. I would strongly encourage all Christians, whether Psalm singers or not, to read both G. I. Williamson's short pamphlet, *The Singing of Psalms in the Worship of God* (available from Still Waters Revival Books or Crown and Covenant Publications, 7418 Penn Ave. Pittsburgh, PA 15208-2531) and Michael Bushell's full length treatment of this subject, *The Songs of Zion*.²⁴ As stated at the beginning of this short work, God has been pleased to revive Psalm singing in the context of greater revivals—and if the present trends are any indication of the direction of progress in this matter, I think we all have cause for rejoicing!

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²¹ Williamson, *Singing of Psalms*, pp. 10, 11.

²² Regarding Grammatico-Historical interpretation see Milton Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1895), pp. 70, 101-140.

²³ Bushell, *Songs*, p. 102.

²⁴ This book is presently under revision and due for republication soon from Crown and Covenant Publications.

REVIVAL REVIEW

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AN ANTIDOTE AGAINST ARMINIANISM by Christopher Ness (1700)

Of Arminianism in General

It has ever been the lot of truth (like the Lord of it) to be crucified between right-hand and left-hand thieves. Truth's enemies, on all hands, are various. While some men consider the Bible to be an imposition on the world, and treat salvation by Christ as mere priestcraft and deception, there are others who tell us they have Christ, and are one with Christ, and yet with audacious effrontery cry down the ordinances of the gospel, and consider the means of grace as too burdensome for a free-born conscience, and too low and carnal for a seraphic spirit. There is as much beyond the truth as on this side thereof; as much in outrunning the flock of Christ and the Lamb that leads them, as in straggling and loitering behind.

The Socinians decry the divinity of Christ and His satisfaction, as if His sufferings were **exemplary** only, not **expiatory**. The Roman Catholics turn the true worship of God into will worship, and teach their own traditions for the commandments of God, spoiling God's institutions with man's inventions. And the **Arminians** do call the justice of God to the bar of reason; they dare confidently wade in the deep ocean of divine mysteries, and in stating the decrees of God, where blessed Paul could find no bottom, but cried out "O the depth" etc. (Rom. 11:33); they dare undertake to fetch the Apostle from off his nonplus, saying, "God foresaw that Jacob **would** believe, and that Esau **would not** believe; therefore the one was loved and the other hated." Thus Arminius' school teacheth deeper divinity than what Paul learned in the third heaven. And they do not only with the Socinians, gratify the pride of man's reason, but also the pride of man's **will**, in extenuating and lessening both the guilt and filth of original sin; even as Popery, their elder sister, doth gratify the pride of outward sense.

Hence Dr. Leighton calls Arminianism "the Pope's Benjamin, the last and greatest monster of the man of sin; the elixer of Anti-Christianism; the mystery of the mystery of iniquity; the Pope's cabinet; the very quintessence of equivocation;" Alike hereunto Mr. Rous (Master of Eton College) addeth, saying, "Arminianism is the spawn of Popery, which the warmth of favour may easily turn into frogs of the bottomless pit." and what are the new Arminians but the varnished offspring of the old Pelagians, that makes the grace of God to lacquey it at the foot, or rather, the will of man?

that makes the sheep to keep the shepard? that puts God into the same extremity with Darius, who would gladly have saved Daniel but could not (Dan. 6: 14)?

What else can their doctrine signify which they call a prescience of foreknowledge in God, the truth whereof depends, not on the decree of God, but on the free will of the creature? This is to make the creature have no dependence on the Creator, and to fetter Divine Providence. Thus that fatal necessity, which they would lay at our doors, unavoidably remains at theirs, and (according to their scheme) God must say thus to man, "O My poor creature! that fatal fortune which hath harmed you must be endured more than bewailed, for it was from all eternity, before My providence, I could not hinder, I could not but consent to those fatal contingencies; and unavoidable Fate hath, whether I will or no, pronounced the inevitable sentence." What else is this but to overthrow all those graces of Faith. Hope, etc., to expectorate (to cast off) all vital godliness; and to pull the great Jehovah Himself out of His throne of glory, setting up dame Fortune to be worshipped in His stead?

These and many other great abominations have been discovered in the "chambers of imagery" in our days, and are nothing but measuring supernatural mysteries with the crooked metewand of degenerate reason. "Wisdom is too high for a fool" (Prov. 24:7). In these points it was once well said, "Give me a mortified reason," for, to prescribe to God's infinite understanding, and to allow Him no reasons to guide His determinations by, but what we are acquainted with, is extremely arrogant. Reason must neither be the rule to measure faith by, nor the judge thereof. We may give a reason of our believing, to wit, "because it is written," but not of all things believed, as why Jacob was loved and Esau hated before they had done either good or evil—this was the counsel of God's own will. Touching such sublime mysteries our faith stands upon two sure bottoms; the first is, that being, wisdom, and power of God doth infinitely transcend ours; so may reveal matters far above our reach; the second is; that whatsoever God reveals is undoubtedly true, and to be believed, although the bottom of it cannot be sounded by the line of our reason; because man's reason is not absolute, but variously limited, perplexed with his own frailty, and defective in its own acting.

*Extracted complete from pages 1 to 4 of the book.

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Who are the Covenanted Reformed Presbyterian Church?

We are the remnant of those that hold to the whole of the Covenanted work of Reformation as attained in Scotland between the years 1638 and 1649. We trace our spiritual lineage through the Covenanters who fought against both ecclesiastical and civil tyranny. It is a line including such men as George and Patrick Gillespie, Samuel Rutherford, John Brown (of Wamphray), Robert M'Ward, Richard Cameron, Donald Cargill, William Guthrie and James Renwick, men who contended earnestly for the faith once delivered. At the Revolution establishment, in 1690, our spiritual forefathers refused to join with the usurped Church of Scotland in their latitudinarian basis of union. Their remaining three ministers did join this establishment and, thus, they were left without public gospel ordinances. However, they continued to meet in societies (i.e. fellowship meetings) to worship according to the dictates of sanctified conscience. The United Societies (as they were known in Scotland) were left without preaching, sacraments or government from 1690 until 1706. In 1706, Mr. John M'Millan, a minister of the Church of Scotland, acceded to the Societies and remained the only ordained minister among them until 1743. In 1743, Mr. Thomas Nairn, an ordained minister of the Secession Church, dissatisfied with the way in which the Seceders had renewed the Covenants (i.e. National and Solemn League), acceded to the Societies. Thus, in 1743, the Reformed Presbytery was organized. This root grew into the Reformed Presbyterian churches, which are found throughout various parts of the world.

In 1761, the Reformed Presbytery emitted its "Act, Declaration and Testimony, for the Whole of our Covenanted Reformation, as Attained to, and Established in, Britain and Ireland; Particularly Betwixt the Years 1638 and 1649, Inclusive." In this document, the Reformed Presbytery defends the crown rights of Jesus Christ in Church and State. It utilises history to demonstrate that the Church of Scotland, at the Revolution, was established on principles antithetical to the Reformational principles

attained in Scotland. It uses argument to show the inconsistency of Seceder principles with Reformational principles, on the head of Civil Magistracy. It testifies on behalf of the received doctrine, government, worship and discipline of the Church of Scotland in her purest (i.e. reforming) periods.

This document, together with the Westminster Standards as received by the Church of Scotland, forms the basis of ecclesiastical union and communion. It was to seal the doctrine, government, worship and discipline herein displayed that countless martyrs died (see the "Cloud of Witnesses;" reprinted by Sprinkle).

In 1712, at Auchensaugh, the Covenants, National and Solemn League, were renewed by the Societies (known as "Covenanters"), under the leadership of Mr. John M'Millan and a licentiate, who was never ordained (he died before the Presbytery was organized), named Mr. John M'Neil. At the renewal, the covenant bonds were recognized as binding the descendants of those who first entered into those bonds. The Covenanters, however, sought to display the true intent of those Covenants with marginal notes. These notes explained that the Church of Jesus Christ, in Scotland (and around the world), must not join hands with any political power in rebellion to the crown rights of King Jesus. The Covenanters pledged the Covenanted Reformed Presbyterian Church to the support of lawful magistracy (i.e. magistracy which conformed itself to the precepts of God's Word) and declared themselves and their posterity against support of any power, in Church or State, which lacked biblical authority.

Why do we say "Covenanted?" Because, we believe that our fathers had the right to bind us to faithfulness to the crown rights of Christ. We believe that there is nothing unbiblical or antibiblical in these bonds as sworn originally; and, that the true intent of these bonds was faithfully displayed in the Auchensaugh renovation, in 1712. The federal principle, combined with the thoroughly biblical nature of these covenants, led our forefathers to view them as such and we concur. We believe that the Covenants, National and Solemn League, continue to bind all presbyterian bodies descended from the original

Covenanters; their denial of such notwithstanding. The duties therein sworn, being an expression of the moral law, we believe to oblige beyond geographical boundaries. A person who marries in one country does not cease to be married by crossing national boundaries (and the Church is a moral person—the Bride of Christ, etc.). These covenants, like that of the covenant of marriage, continue to bind until the ends contemplated in the "vows" are fulfilled. Therefore, we are constrained to declare that all presbyterian bodies which refuse to recognise the "vow" are guilty of duplicity against their solemn engagements to the Lord. Furthermore, we declare that those bodies which persist in breaking the terms of these bonds are guilty, not only of breaking God's moral law (since the terms are founded upon that), and, therefore, are idolaters (i.e. spiritual adulterers), but they add to their spiritual harlotry the sin of covenant breaking.

Why do we say "Reformed?" Because, we have been reformed from the popish and prelatric perversions of biblical doctrine, government, worship and discipline. We seek to maintain the faithful testimony on behalf of true protestantism against the spirit of Antichristian Romanism; whether maintained by the Roman Catholic church or so-called "protestant" churches which are manifestly daughters of that Mother of Harlots. We are Calvinistic in doctrine, presbyterian in government, and puritan and reformed in worship and discipline.

Why do we say "Presbyterian?" Because, we believe that the government of the Church of Jesus Christ derives from its Head. All power in the Church is purely ministerial and declarative. Any power exercised in the Church without reference to the precepts of the King of Zion is usurped. Any power which is exercised to the tearing down of our Covenanted work of Reformation is backsliding. Any power usurped or backsliding does not exist in the Church by divine precept and is, therefore, unlawful (i.e. lacking the authority of the Lord). Such power is, in reality, ecclesiastical tyranny. It is the duty of believers to submit to those over them in the Lord, but not those over them by ecclesiastical tyranny.

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ROBERT FLEMING

(EXCERPTED FROM *THE RISE AND FALL OF THE PAPACY*, 1848)