

CHALCEDON *Report*

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SUPER~ NATURALISM

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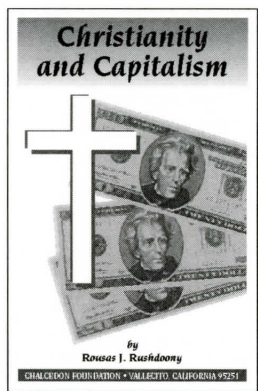
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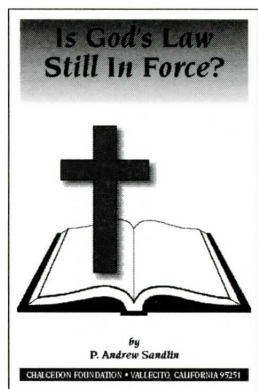


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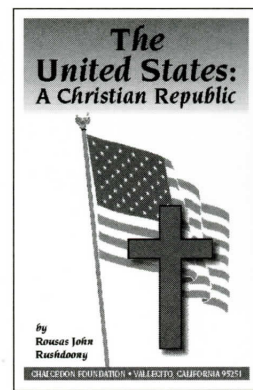
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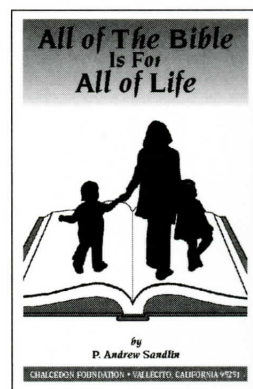
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CHALCEDON Report

A Monthly Report Dealing With the Relationship of Christian Faith to the World

Christian Supernaturalism

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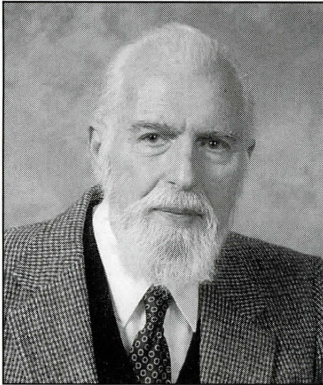
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Blind Faith

By Rev. R. J. Rushdoony



I was in the eighth grade when I read Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species*. I read it at first receptively and then with shock. It was difficult reading because it demonstrated nothing, but was written as an act of faith, a colossal and blind faith. It was widely accepted when first published in 1859 and the first printing sold out in two days. As George

Bernard Shaw, who accepted Darwin, observed, the book was seen as man's liberation from the God of Christianity.

Today, this false liberation continues to dominate civilization. Men want freedom from Christ, not truth. They will not consider alternatives to their blind faith in Darwinism. We live therefore in a culture based on this. Many civilizations

have done this before us, and their end has been death. Since roughly 1660, humanism has dominated the Western world, and now most other areas. Since the rise of public education, it has been extended to all classes and is now dominant in virtually all major churches.

Despite high hopes for the twenty-first century, its prospects are very bad unless it returns to Christ. The twentieth century has been called by able scholars the bloodiest and most evil of all centuries. Without a return to the Faith, the twenty-first will be worse.

A common view in many churches is that the Christian gospel is comprehended by being born again. This, however, is the beginning, not the end, of faith. When it becomes the totality of the Faith, it is a departure from Christ. Its goal is then self-centered and wrong.

The Triune God redeems us to fulfill Adam's calling to exercise dominion, and if we fail to do so, we leave all things under the dominion of the Fall. Our faith becomes a man-centered one, and we sin against our Lord.

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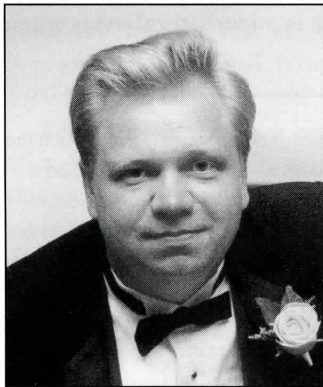
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Creation and the Miraculous

By Rev. P. Andrew Sandlin



Two errors afflict a great deal of the thinking about God's activities in the present world. The first error swallows up creation in the miraculous. The second error sequesters the miraculous from the created world as it exists today. These errors are somewhat analogous to the Christological heresies of the patristic era.

There was a tendency, on the one hand, to blend Christ's deity and humanity (Monophysitism); on the other hand, some wished to create virtually two persons of Jesus Christ, thus isolating His deity from His humanity (Nestorianism). The Creed of Chalcedon rightly recognizes that the union of humanity and deity in Jesus Christ is "without confusion, without change, without division, without separation" The relationship of God to the present world is similar.

Merging the Miraculous and Creation

Unfortunately, some Christians, while properly recognizing God's intimate involvement in the world, merge the miraculous and creation. More accurately, they blur the line between the miraculous and the non-miraculous. This is the error of many modern evangelicals, charismatics, and Pentecostals. In the laudable attempt to preserve the miraculous, they conclude by undercutting the miraculous. They discover demons under the bed, experience God's miraculous hand in shifting from third to fourth gear to get through a yellow light, and expect routine healings of everything from migraines to hemorrhoids to ingrown toenails. Their great error is not in presuming that the realm of the present world is the realm of the supernatural; it surely is. Rather, their great mistake is in presuming that the supernatural *necessitates the miraculous*. This tends to severely diminish the impact of the truly miraculous. The creation of the world in six days, the universal flood, the Exodus from Egypt, the virgin birth and bodily resurrection of Christ, and His second coming are all miraculous, non-repeatable historical events. For that matter, so are God's miracles in the modern world — immediate, dramatic, physical healing; preservation from harm in dire circumstances; and unique, subjective promptings. Interestingly, many Calvinists, while correctly opposing the charismatics' (and others') practice of

submerging the miraculous in creation, deny in practice the cornerstone of the theology they loudly affirm — the sovereignty of God. The Reformed, however, in exposing charlatans among the divine healers, had better be careful not to repudiate *divine healing* and God's other miraculous works in the world. To do so is to deny God's sovereignty and succumb to procedural Arminianism — that man calls the shots in all of life.

Their great error is not in presuming that the realm of the present world is the realm of the supernatural; it surely is. Rather, their great mistake is in presuming that the supernatural necessitates the miraculous.

The error against which these Reformed are reacting is nonetheless a real and severe error. If breathing oxygen, eating tofu, and catching baseballs are miracles, the opening of the Red Sea and the resurrection of Jesus Christ lose a great deal of their distinctiveness. Not surprisingly, many of those who embrace this imbalanced view often do not recognize the distinctive character of the great redemptive events of history, particularly those of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. What is important to them is not so much what Jesus Christ did definitively 2,000 years ago; it is what He can do in our lives today. The fact is, however, what He can do in our lives today is fully dependent on what He did 2,000 years ago at Calvary and from the tomb.

Practicing a Functional Deism

A more prominent error over the last 300 years has been a functional deism. The deistic heresy originated on English soil and posited a highly "rational," "scientific" religion. God made the world, and then, for all practical purposes, stepped back and allowed His "laws of nature" to take over. Deism is not Christianity, and no orthodox

Christian could possibly espouse it. Nonetheless, professedly orthodox Christians do espouse a diluted version of it. They push God's activities to the far reaches of the universe; miraculous things go on in heaven, not earth. To them, the age of the miraculous is over until Christ returns. They must, of course, necessarily draw the line at regeneration; for, after all, one of the greatest miracles of all is God's resurrecting a dead sinner (*Jn. 3:1-8; Eph. 2:1-7*). But since regeneration is not observed with the senses, it is a "safe" miracle. But beyond that — and sometimes even regeneration is considered embarrassingly miraculous — there is little interest in God's immediate activity in the earth.

Functional deism pervades many sectors of the church, and it eviscerates the Christian religion wherever it touches it. Some use the expression "dead orthodoxy" to describe it, but that description is a misnomer; *a form of alleged Christianity which denies God's miraculous work in the earth is not orthodox in any sense*. The Bible teaches that God upholds all things by the word of Christ's power (*Heb. 1:3*). Every act in dealing with man and the rest of creation is a supernatural act. The fact that it is not miraculous does not mean that it is less than supernatural.¹ Creation itself is the province of the supernatural (without immersing the miraculous in creation). God miraculously answers prayer; God heals the sick; God sends His blessings and judgment in

miraculous ways. *To exclude the miraculous from creation is to deny God.*

Let us be careful to avoid the twin dangers of assuming that all of God's work must be miraculous, or that it can *never* be miraculous. Both are wrong. God's miracles are unique events. Today's creation is not replete with one miracle after another. The God we serve, nonetheless, operates supernaturally — and sometimes miraculously — in this world, and His work is supernatural even when not miraculous.

¹ Those of us who are cessationists (the apostolic gifts have ceased with the age of the apostles) may agree with Richard B. Gaffin, Jr.: "If it is necessary to say so here, the issue is *not* whether all spiritual gifts have ceased; they have not (what is at issue is whether or not revelatory word gifts continue). Even less is the issue that all who hold to the cessation of gifts, like prophecy and tongues, do so because they are trapped in an Enlightenment, deistic mind-set that has no place for the direct, supernatural activity of God in creation or within believers (although that may be true of some cessationists). . . , "Challenges of the Charismatic Movement to the Reformed Tradition," in *Proceedings of the International Conference of Reformed Churches, October 15-23, 1997, Seoul, Korea* (Neerlandia, Alberta, Canada, 1997), 176, n. 39, emphasis in original. To argue for strict cessationism (whether Biblically or historically) is not *ipso facto* to deny the miraculous in today's world.

CHALCEDON'S FUTURE AND YOURS

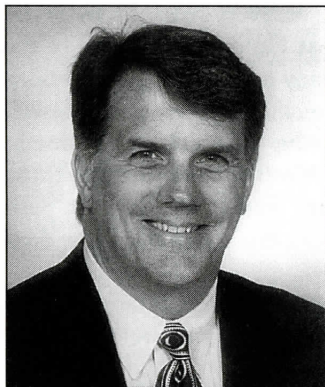
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Adding Glitter to Gold

By Rev. Monte E. Wilson III



I was part of the charismatic movement from January of 1972 until early 1983. I wrote my letter of resignation but never could figure out whom to send it to. It wasn't that I ceased believing in the miraculous: that would reduce Christianity to a moralistic philosophy. It was more a case of some

major doctrinal differences and no longer wishing to be identified with the foolish antics and heterodox behavior that defined the movement.

I was troubled from the beginning. I remember hearing Kenneth Hagin in Shreveport, Louisiana in 1973. I had prayed for an infant with a bleeding brain tumor who died hours later. I knew God's will had been done, but at the same time felt that I had failed. I know that is a contradiction but, hey, I was 21. Anyway, Hagin stood up and declared, "If you drive a Volkswagen it's because you have Volkswagen-faith. I drive a Cadillac because I have Cadillac-faith." He went on to explain that, if your prayers were not answered, it was because you had no faith. I knew in my heart that this was nonsense. Further, as I thought about his comments over the next days, I knew that it was worse than nonsense; it was unmitigated arrogance. It got worse.

People who did not speak in tongues were being told that they were not filled with the Holy Spirit. There were church services where hundreds and thousands of people would show up with little brown paper bags into which they would cough up their demons. There were people "slain in the Spirit" who were actually being pushed over: hard. (Question for Benny Hinn: If God is knocking these people down, why then do you need "catchers" to keep the people from being hurt? If God is knocking these people over, can't He catch them? Who caught John when He went out in the Spirit?) I saw people dragged out of wheel chairs and condemned because they could not walk after the Faith Healer had assured them that they were healed. Words of knowledge about someone present having migraines were given and received in hushed tones of reverence when everyone knows that in a crowd of 1,000 people *someone* is sure to be suffering with migraines. I could go on and on about gnosticism, mass hysteria being called the anointing or a "Laughing Revival," allergies to sound doctrine, and Richard Roberts

and his ilk talking directly to God and pretending that He was speaking to them audibly while the amazed and not-so-spiritual beheld the conversation. I say "beheld" and not "listened to" because no one else could hear the Almighty but the Anointed One. And what can we say about Paul Crouch and his merry troupe of heretics on Trinity Broadcasting Network.

It is not that other traditions do not have their own forms of weirdness and nonsense: no tradition is without its crazy cousins and fringe factions. Before some of you Reformed folk deny this, remember two words: Robert Schuller. The wild and weird are like the poor about whom Jesus spoke; they will always be with us. The problem is when these people take over and define the movement's doctrine and practices.

What follows are three particular problems and erroneous mindsets that I believe are systemic, infecting the entire Charismatic Movement. This is not to say that there are not godly, wise people within the movement, only that such people tragically are not the ones defining the movement. I give most of my attention to the problem of the paradigm with which most charismatics approach life because I believe it underlies most every other problem within the movement.

Who Has the Spirit?

If you have been converted, you have been baptized by one Spirit into the body of Christ. All believers have the Holy Spirit or else they could not say, "Jesus is Lord." The question then is: how can we call some believers who have the Holy Spirit "charismatics," but others who *also* have the Holy Spirit "non-charismatics"? The mainstream Pentecostal and charismatic (neo-Pentecostal) answer is that one must speak in tongues to demonstrate the fullness of the Spirit's presence. However, the notion that there is a single sign-gift that verifies one's filling cannot be proven. In the book of Acts, some spoke in tongues, and some didn't. I assert that all we can say is that, if one is filled with the Holy Spirit, then there will be supernatural evidence of that filling. Doesn't the gift of service or administration or the abundant evidence of personal transformation demonstrate His presence? (For a thorough, fair and provocative discussion of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, I recommend D. A. Carson's *Showing the Spirit: I Corinthians 12-14*.)

Can people be ignorant of their spiritual gifting? Yes. Can Christians be spiritually bankrupt? Yes. Do Christians need to be educated regarding the ministry of the Holy Spirit through the believer and the church? Yes.

Do Christians need to be exhorted to keep being filled with the Holy Spirit? Yes.

I believe that the nomenclature “charismatic” has caused severe damage within the church and should be avoided whenever possible. It is condescending — however unintentional — and judgmental at heart. “I have Him and you do not.” Or at least, “You do not have Him to the *degree* I do.” This sort of attitude inevitably causes strife and friction within a community.

Faith as Magic

Another problem in the charismatic movement is that it has mistaken magical spells for confessions of faith. “In the Name of Jesus” is not an incantation: it is an entreaty or profession. Yet, all too often in the Charismatic Movement, it is a phrase thought to be endowed with magical powers. Simply say these five words in faith and it is the equivalent of rubbing Aladdin’s lamp. This mindset permeates the entire movement.

I was in too many meetings where ministers and business people insisted that, if we would just speak the Name of Jesus over all we were planning, then the blessings of God would fall like rain in the days of Noah’s Ark. Did not Paul profess the Name? Did not the early church profess His name? And were they not martyred, failing, from the modern charismatic standpoint, to see the fruit of their faithfulness? Interestingly, many of those making this assertion had no outward evidence of God’s blessings, yet they were forever pronouncing His Name over their activities!

When Jesus (*Jn. 15*) said that those who abide in Him could ask for whatever they wished and it would be done, the presupposition was that those who so abided would be asking for God’s will to be done. People abiding in Christ are conformed to Him. Did Jesus heal everyone who came to Him? No. Did He perform miracles on a day-to-day basis? No. Was His life centered on the supernatural, or rather on doing His Father’s will?

The devastation and condemnation of others that follows this magical mindset is overwhelming. No matter how loudly one speaks or deeply one feels the Spirit when repeating these five words, life still shows up with day-to-day struggles that will not disappear into thin air. Faith does not always deliver us from conflicts. It will, however, bring us through those conflicts in a manner that glorifies Christ. Go back and read about Jesus’ struggles in Gethsemane. While He prayed for supernatural deliverance, His commitment was to God’s will being done.

In Hebrews 11 we read of God’s Hall of Fame regarding the heroes of the Faith. Here we catch a glimpse of how faith-filled people live. Interestingly enough, there is very little mention of anything miraculous. The people of faith are obedient (*v. 8*), people whose lives are about looking for and extending God’s city (*vv. 10, 16*). Their faith is not centered on gifts or things but upon the Person of God. One very obvious fruit of their faith is that they are always growing, always moving forward, always pressing on toward increased

understanding and maturity (*v. 9*). Moreover, these people of faith left fruit behind that kept testifying to God after they had gone to their grave (*v. 4*). *The ultimate test of faith is post-mortem.*

The Paradigm of Living by Divine Intervention

When most charismatics read the Bible, they see *Divine Intervention* erupting on every page. There is the calling of Abraham, the Great Exodus, the giving of the Ten Commandments, and many miraculous interventions to save the children of Israel while they were in the desert. There is the coming of the Messiah, His death, resurrection, and ascension. Of course, there are also those interventions where Christians were delivered from peril in the Book of Acts. What does this tell them? How does this *read* to them?

How it reads is this: *Life is a series of miraculously orchestrated divine escapes.* Not just those we read of in Scripture, but those that occurred throughout history: The Reformation, the Great Awakenings and other such supernatural out-pourings of God’s Spirit. These interventions are *The Norm*. But can we define supernatural interventions as “norms”?

Think about it. What if the Bible is strictly all about redemption, which we translate to mean “divine intervention”? If such intervention is the normal stuff of life, then what about *my life*? Do I experience Abraham-like callings? Do I cross over a Red Sea watching my enemies drown? Am I slapped on the side by an angel and led out of prison? Hardly. And how, then, do I evaluate my life? It is all so . . . so . . . so boring. The temptation that many fall into here is to begin seeking to sprinkle glitter over their lives so as to make it look more special, more supernatural, more spiritual.

This limited and narrow paradigm leaves one with a faulty understanding of the Christian life and, consequently, a low view of the mind and the need for wisdom. Where some wish to live from intervention-to-intervention, with supernatural direction and deliverance being the *normal Christian life*, the Bible reveals a much more “human” existence for us.

Look at the life of Paul. He was knocked off his donkey and told to go see Ananias. Here at this brother’s house, Paul was told he was to go to the Gentiles. In Acts 13, Paul is prophetically commissioned as an Apostle. Later he has a dream calling him to Macedonia. Toward the end of his life he was prophetically warned not to go to Jerusalem where death awaited him (he went anyway). Now, forgetting the supernatural experiences involved in penning his Epistles, what we have here is only a handful of divine interventions. What was Paul doing in the meantime? How did he live? How did he make decisions? How did he know where to go and when?

Consider the experience of Adam in the Garden of Eden. God shows him the Garden, defines his responsibilities, and notes the prohibition concerning the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. He then leaves Adam to carry on. He does not “prophesy” to Adam, “Behold, call this animal an Elephant.” He does not

tell Adam what part of the Garden to tend to first. No, Adam is left to his considerable endowments. In brief, Adam was expected to take his best shot, increasing in wisdom and maturity each day of his life. This is exactly what Paul did in considering how he should live, move, and make his way through life. He utilized his mind, under the tutelage of Scripture, and increased in wisdom.

When we consider our redemption, we think about God's divine intervention on our behalf. He seeks us out, convicts us, grants us repentance and faith in Christ, and fills us with His Holy Spirit. But why? Is it so that we can sit around and experience daily interventions? Is it so that we can merely wait for the biggest intervention of all, "The Rapture"? Or is God after something else?

Those whom God "saves" He immediately places in the process of restoration. Believers are expected to mature in the use of all of their God-given faculties. This includes their minds and the need for intelligence and wisdom. Any doctrine or paradigm that calls on people to forfeit their reason and the need for sound decision-making systems is counterproductive to the believers' process of transformation. Further, any paradigm that does not equip the believer for dealing with the ongoing difficulties and vicissitudes of life is dangerous.

Read the book of *Proverbs*. This book is all about *how to live*. These maxims tell us how life usually works out. I say "usually" because these words of wisdom are not magical. For example, just because we raise our children in a godly manner doesn't mean they will *always* turn out

to be Christ-like. And yet, because so many of us approach Scripture with a limited paradigm, we think these maxims will tell us how to escape this life with no harm, no failures, no sicknesses and no chocolate mess. However, this book tells us how to get through life — how it is to be lived — not how to escape it. It is a book of wisdom, not magic. It is a book that implicitly tells us that our minds are to be used, not ignored, that life is not about escaping problems but overcoming them.

Indictments on the Church's Failures

Someone once said that the pseudo-Christian cults were indictments on the church's failures. The church failed to emphasize certain practices, and these cults rushed in with all their error and fanaticism to fill the vacuum. The same can be said in regard to the Charismatic Movement (without implying that it is a cult). The church forgot the present ministry of the Holy Spirit, denied the miraculous, and behaved as if we did not really need Him. It will not do to simply rail against the error and abuse of charismania. Churches must address the doctrine of the Person of the Holy Spirit and His ministry today.

Dr. Monte E. Wilson is a noted Reformed speaker and writer. He can be contacted at (770)740-1401, montethird@aol.com, or P.O. Box 22, Alpharetta, GA 30239. He is available for preaching, lectures, and conferences.

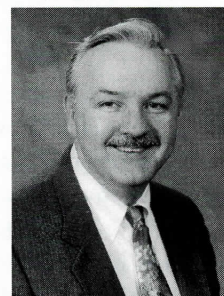
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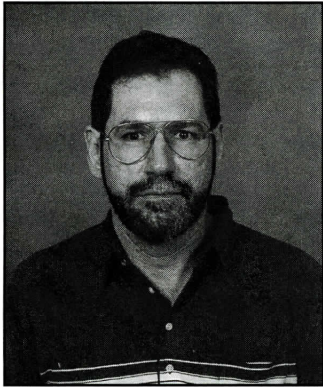
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True Pentecostalism

By Joseph P. Braswell



Pentecost is simply another name for the Old Testament holy day known as “the Feast of Weeks.” The Feast of Weeks, one of three annual feasts appointed in the law of Moses for Israel to observe in the Land, was a holy convocation of the whole people in Jerusalem each spring

for a celebration of the harvest (*Lev. 23:15-22; Dt. 16:9-12*). The term “Pentecost” refers to the fact that this was the fiftieth day after the wave offering of a sheaf of grain, signifying the first fruits of the springtime harvest. The offering of first fruits was made when Israel first put the sickle to the grain to begin the process of reaping, and seven weeks after was the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost.

Interestingly, the first fruits offering took place in the midst of the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread that began with Passover. Israel was to offer the first fruits while still partaking of the bread of affliction and haste, the bread by which she remembers her bondage in Egypt and her redemption (*Dt. 16:3*). On the third day, while still looking back and still partaking of the provisions of her journey out of bondage (the rations of a nomadic life on the road), she begins looking forward in anticipation of new life, to reaping the blessings of the Land into which God brought her. To have been led into this Land involves immediate reaping of a bounty graciously given; there is no sowing, only a reaping that is to be done in constant mindfulness of her sojourn in Egypt and her liberation from servitude by God. Though Israel must go forth to labor in the fields, the fields are already white unto harvest. God gives the increase and provides the fruitful fields for the leavened bread of settled existence at rest. Israel reaps what she did not sow, being blessed of God and not by her own hand.

We are thus to connect this harvest festival with the great exodus-event. It celebrates the goal of the exodus — Israel’s entry into the Promised Land, a land of milk and honey. A covenantally faithful Israel in Canaan, as God’s chosen people, would enjoy bountiful harvests, reaping the rich blessings of God’s gracious provisions of abundant life, being fed and satisfied and lacking

nothing (*Dt. 8:6-18*). The plenteous harvests were signs of Israel’s blessedness, signs of God’s favor and beneficence, signs of God’s covenant faithfulness in caring and providing for His people. They were a fruit of covenant life. The first fruits of the harvest, anticipating in faith and hope the fullness to follow, were consecrated holy unto God as a thanksgiving offering that celebrated this blessedness, this enjoyment of the end-result of the Passover/exodus that brought them to the Land and entry into covenant blessedness, thus fulfilling the redemption from Egypt. First fruits was a celebration of hope. The seven sevens (seven weeks) between the first fruits and Pentecost had eschatological significance, pointing to the fullness of rest and enjoyment, the Sabbath of Sabbaths or *Jubilee*.

Clearly, the Day of Pentecost in A. D. 30, fifty days after the Easter-event, must be understood as signifying the eschatological harvest. Israel’s calling as the people of God was not an end in itself, for the purpose of blessing Israel only. Israel was a servant-nation, called to be the instrument through which God would bless the nations. The law given to Israel was to be her wisdom and righteousness before the nations (*Dt. 4:6-8*); Israel as the Servant of Yahweh was to be a light in the midst of the nations, attracting all peoples to come to worship the true God — the God of Israel. Israel’s solemn assembly each year at Pentecost was the gathering of this people as themselves the first fruits of God’s of a larger harvest-gathering, a harvesting of the fruit of a salvation that would extend to the nations and secure the obedience of the nations. After the exodus Jesus accomplished at Jerusalem (*Lk. 9:31*) as the antitypical Passover, a first fruits of the gospel-harvest is gathered, representing, anticipating, *commencing* the fullness of the eschatological harvest that is to be reaped from the uttermost parts of the earth. In this gathering of the first fruits, the Jewish *diaspora* is the first gathered and added to God’s eschatological *restored* Israel, but they are gathered into the New-Covenant community as tokens of a harvest that is to include the nations in its scope as well. Restored Israel — the Pentecost assembly — is to publish the glad tidings out from Zion to the ends of the earth, heralding the established reign of God.

Jewish tradition associated Pentecost with the giving of the law at Sinai. Pentecost in Judaism was therefore the day of the assembly, the feast signifying the day of holy convocation when God established His covenant and constituted Israel as the holy priest-nation. Luke’s account

in Acts clearly has this in mind and thus expects us to understand the *ekklesia* in terms of Sinai-typology, the antitype-fulfillment of the Sinai-event. In the last days the nations would come to Mt. Zion; the law would issue forth out of Zion (*Is. 2:2-4*). This Zion-torah and Zion-assembly was the fulfillment of Israel's mission as the people of God, issuing in the blessing of the nations and a worldwide harvest. The theological significance of the Day of Pentecost in Acts is that this gathering in of the eschatological harvest of the nations has begun. The one who baptizes with the Spirit has gathered the wheat into His granary (*Mt. 3:11-12*).

In Acts the outpouring of the Spirit is to be understood as the eschatological-antitypical giving of the law in a New Covenant act of God — the giving of the Zion-torah to New Covenant Israel. Because of the sins of covenant-breaking Israel polluting the Land, only when the Spirit would be poured out from on high as latter-day rain from heaven would the Land yield its fruit of covenantal blessing (*Is. 32:13-18, 45:8; Joel 2:18-29; 3:18*), bestowing the sure mercies of David (*Is. 55*) that would raise up the fallen tabernacle of David (*Am. 9:11-15*) and so exalt Zion (*Is. 2:2-4*). The Spirit put into the hearts of the people is a New-Covenantal blessing, the circumcision of the hearts of the people

by God and the writing of His law upon their hearts (*Ex. 11:19-20; 36:26-27; Dt. 30:6; Jer. 31:31-34; 33:37-42*).

We are a *Pentecostal* people. To be invested with the Spirit of God is to be transformed into an obedient people. The righteous requirements of the law are to be fulfilled in us by the Spirit (*Rom. 8:4*), making us doers of the law and not (as was Old-Covenant Israel) hearers only. Moreover, Pentecost is power from on high that equips us to be effective witnesses. We are empowered by the Spirit to successful mission, enabled to reap the fullness of the harvest, and we are sent forth to bring in the sheaves. The season of Pentecost is a time of growth and maturation, a time in which we should recommit ourselves to what it means for us to be a Spirit-people, a time to pursue sanctification (and thus theonomic life) and to engage in kingdom mission — the discipling of the nations.

The late Joseph Braswell did undergraduate and graduate work in philosophy at the University of South Florida, but his real interest was in theology and Biblical studies. He published several articles in various journals (including the Westminster Theological Journal, The Journal of Christian Reconstruction, and the Chalcedon Report).

The Glorious Foundation of Christ: The Missing Clincher Argument in the Tongues Debate

By Rev. Jim West, (67 pages)

Review by Kurt Snow

The Church has failed to present a persuasive argument for the cessation of tongues-speaking. The extent of this failure is illustrated not only by the growth of tongues-speaking in Pentecostal and Charismatic churches, but by scores of non-Charismatic Christians who are puzzled why the gift of tongues is not exercised in their own churches.

In *The Glorious Foundation of Christ*, Jim West presents an argument that most of us have never before considered. Writing clearly, and yet with kind regard to his Christian brethren in Charismatic churches, he argues that tongues are part of the completed foundation of the Christ's glorious work: the church. Because a foundation can be laid only once, and since tongues is a foundation gift of the Spirit, tongues-speaking is also a one-time gift. His cogent Biblical exposition

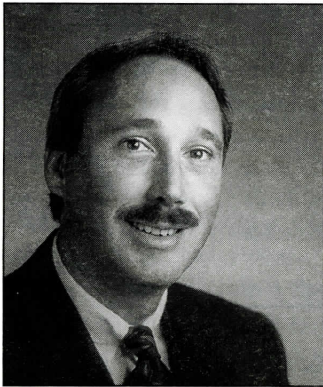
demonstrates that the gift of speaking in tongues was exclusively for the founding of the church during the first century, and not for our day.

Kurt Snow is a political consultant in Sacramento. He attends Covenant Reformed Church in Sacramento with his wife and three children.

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Experiencing the Supernatural Fullness of Spirit-Filled Living

By Craig R. Dumont, Sr.



Time for full disclosure: I'm a Pentecostal/charismatic. Not a rookie, either: third generation. In fact, a great uncle of mine was a Pentecostal preacher who was burned out of brush arbors, and I don't even know what a brush arbor is. (As the "preacher" of the family, I inherited his Bible with sermon notes

from my grandmother and, frankly, I know why he was burned out!) Growing up, all my friends were Pentecostals, with my best friend's grandfather playing a role in establishing our home church back in the forties. In other words, my worldview was constructed with an expectation that God could and will do supernatural things and that a Christian lives a supernatural life. While conceding that there is much to be desired in Pentecostal/charismatic theology (or the lack thereof), I continue to hold to the supernatural worldview that I grew up with, albeit from a more Scripturally informed base.

There are several examples I'd like to use to illustrate why I believe in, anticipate, and even expect the Holy Spirit's supernatural work in my life, the lives of my church members, and, indeed, within the entire body of Christ.

Regeneration

First, it's obvious that the act of becoming a Christian itself is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit who leads and directs us to Christ. No man naturally seeks after God, but is drawn by (one may say "apprehended by") the Holy Spirit. We're then given the faith to believe that Christ died for our sins and was supernaturally resurrected from the dead and, by the power of God, we're transported into the kingdom of the Son of God's love. Not one part of this is "natural." Further, we learn upon studying God's Word that the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead dwells in us, giving us new life, and empowering us to please God. Pleasing God is something that by Biblical definition is unequivocally supernatural, for without the faith that God Himself grants me by His grace, it is impossible to please Him. As the Westminster Confession puts it (yes, charismatics can read and even "interpret" these things!):

Works done by unregenerate men, although for the matter of them they may be things God commands; and of good use both to themselves and others: Yet, because they proceed not from an hearing of faith; nor are done in the right manner, according to the Word; nor to the right end, the Glory of God, they are therefore sinful and cannot please God.

Of course, we all know this to be true. But the Christian cannot stop there, for we are also told that God intimately directs and controls the affairs of man and the universe. He upholds all things by the Word of His power while setting kings and kingdoms up and pulling kings and kingdoms down. Truly "the heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord and He turns it any way that He desires." Yet God is not only concerned about great cosmic events and earthly rulers, but directs the path of the righteous in every way. The Christian would never say that he believes in chance (one would hope not anyway), so that leaves only one option: believing that God is in supernatural control of our lives. So I think it fair and safe to say that to this point all Christians would be in agreement.

Health and Long Life

Building upon this, the second area I anticipate living supernaturally in and by the Spirit is in the area of health and long life. First, God can supernaturally grant that we are healthy and stay healthy; second, if we do get sick, He can supernaturally heal us. The televangelists who have created the modern "health and wealth" message have twisted and abused this aspect of the gospel, but that's no reason to reject the very Biblical basis for a fundamental truth. One of the powerful promises God made to Israel was, "If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you" (*Ex. 15:26*). David sang about God's supernatural blessing of health and healing when he instructed us to "forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases" (*Ps. 103:2-3*). The implication of Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:17-32 is that the Holy Spirit was actively blessing believers with health or cursing them with sickness or death according to attitudes and actions at the Lord's Table. Further, Paul recalls a promise embodied in the Ten Commandments as an important

incentive: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother,’ which is the first commandment with promise: ‘that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth’” (*Eph. 6:1-3*). Do we not think that God honors His promises by supernaturally blessing covenant obedience? In an age of disposable parents, I expect God to extend health and long life to my church members as a testimony to His Word and to allow the gospel light to shine in a sea of darkness. How can that be controversial among Christians?

If we are sick, we are instructed to do a very unnatural thing — if we have sinned, we are to confess and pray for a supernatural act: “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (*Jas. 5:14-16*). While I thank the Lord for doctors and utilize their services on regular occasions (we have three doctors in our church), I make no apologies for believing that God not only theoretically can heal us, but can and will do so when we act upon His Word in expectant faith through prayer.

Prosperity

Third, I expect, based not upon presumption, but upon His covenant promises, for God to work supernaturally in the area of prosperity. Again, simply because this has been abused does not mean we should forsake it. God took an enslaved, oppressed, and impoverished people, transferred an incredible amount of wealth overnight into their possession, led them into a land flowing with “milk and honey,” and then transferred even more wealth to them. After this, in Deuteronomy 8 He reiterates that it was a supernatural blessing and that they should not think it was the natural result of either their brilliance or effort. The warning was “say [not] in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth’”; rather they were to “remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day” (*vs. 17-18*). Deuteronomy 28 specifically tells us that if we obey His Word, He will bless us in “the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks.” There’s no vague notion of “bless me spiritually” here — this is objective, usable wealth.

Obedience in tithing and offerings carries a promise of supernatural prosperity as stated in Malachi 3:8-12. It’s interesting to note that this is the one area that God says to “test Me” and see if the promise is not true. On the negative “supernatural” side, God declares that covenant breakers will be even more frustrated because they will

earn wages but that those wages will be “put into a bag with holes” (*Hag. 1:6*).

God grants us productivity and fruitfulness in our work (and work we must — no magic formula here) and He bestows upon us wisdom and skill to the point that we stand before kings: “Do you see a man who excels in his work? He will stand before kings; He will not stand before unknown men” (*Pr. 22:29*). We are given favor with men not because we’re brilliant or clever, but because “if God is for us, who can be against us?” We work towards dominion for the glory of God who gives us the “power to get wealth” and stand before kings as a testimony of God’s goodness and faithfulness so that His covenant is established on earth. In the hands of greedy false teachers God’s covenantal promises have been turned into a magical formula or a “natural law” that operates independently of any ethical or unethical action. They must be rebuked, but God’s supernatural promises should not be forsaken because of the unfaithfulness of man.

Answered Prayer

Fourth, Christians’ prayers reflect the supernatural aspect of our faith as our prayer life regularly acknowledges an active supernatural God who hears the prayers of His people and answers those prayers. Think about the area of spiritual warfare for a moment. We have been given not carnal nor natural weapons to engage the enemy, but spiritual ones that are mighty in God for pulling down strongholds (*1 Cor. 10:4*). These include the imprecatory prayers of the Bible, which allow us to prosecute, in Ray Sutton’s words, a covenant lawsuit against the wicked before the throne of God. Imprecatory prayers actively call for God to supernaturally judge the wicked and move to destroy them. In the overwhelming number of cases, Christians must not pick up a rifle and revolt against a civil government, nor should they bomb an abortion clinic, precisely because we have the assurance that we serve a supernatural God who hears the prayers of His saints.

Do we not believe that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever? If so, why are we hesitant to hope for or acknowledge supernatural judgement on wicked men such as Herod, who was struck down by an angel of the Lord and became food for worms (*Ac. 12:23*)? R. J. Rushdoony notes the supernatural act of God protecting His church in the death of Arius. In *The Foundations of Social Order* he writes:

Arius, after Nicea, regained power through political influence. On his recall, Alexander, Primate of Alexandria, in tears prostrated himself in the sacrarium, praying, “If Arius comes tomorrow to the church, take me away, and let me not perish with the guilty. But if Thou pittiest Thy Church, as Thou dost pity it, take Arius away, lest when he enters heresy enter with him.” The next morning, on his triumphant procession to the church to be formally and publicly reconciled on

imperial authority, Arius stopped and left the procession suddenly because of gastric pain. After waiting some time, his followers investigated and found that the old man Arius had collapsed in blood and fallen headlong into the open latrine. The orthodox party triumphantly recalled the words concerning Judas' death, who "falling headlong, burst asunder in the midst" and died (*Ac. 1:18*). Arius' manner of death was used by the orthodox to discomfit the heretics and encourage the saints, and it was declared an act of God.

If the only thing we give consideration to is natural means, we spend all of our time building a man-made church or man-made political party rather than the kingdom of God. However, what would happen if one or two Supreme Court Justices were struck dead immediately following their vote to sustain and further partial birth abortions? Frankly, it wouldn't be too long before any judge, whether appointed by Republican or Democrat, would have a quick change of heart!

In summary, every aspect of my life is permeated with the expectation of the Spirit of God performing

supernatural acts that extend the kingdom of God and glorifies Christ Jesus. Is this only a "charismatic thing"? I hope not, and frankly, I don't think so. I think it's a Biblical thing. If I didn't believe in God's supernatural activity in the affairs of men, I could never preach another sermon, pray for my church members and the body of Christ around the world, nor conceive of putting forth anything so bold as Christian reconstruction. Pentecostals/charismatics may have their many faults, and I'm grateful to Chalcedon and others for providing a solid, dynamic Biblical theology that I had missed growing up, but I'm also thankful that the Pentecostal expectation of supernatural living is so deeply imbedded within me that I anticipate both our church and my members will not only reminisce about God's power in the past and long for it in the future, but experience it today.

Craig R. Dumont, Sr. is the pastor of both Okemos Christian Center and Grand Ledge Christian Center near Lansing, Michigan. He can be reached at lwcog@tcimet.net and www.biblicallyspeaking.com.

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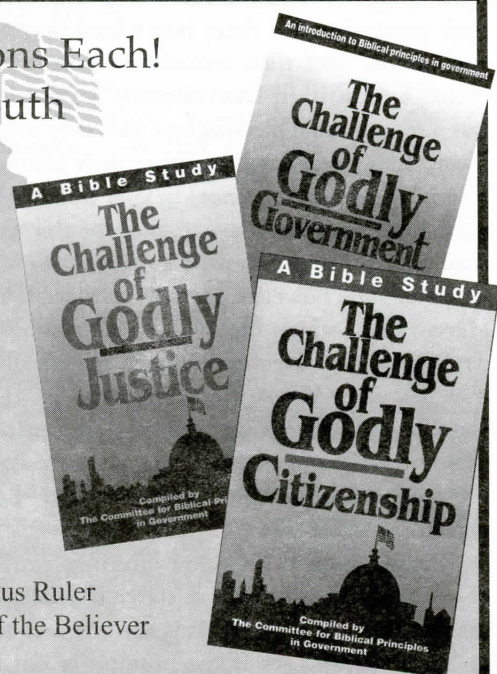
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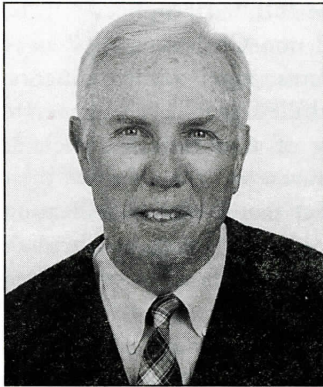
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Recognizing False Prophets

By Rev. Ford Schwartz



Through science, prospective parents can peer through the mother's belly and determine which color of clothes to buy. Through science, we can know where a hurricane is likely to hit land. Through science, we can see pictures of where a new star will be born. Truly these are wonders. We are blessed.

What is this science? Noah Webster defined it in 1828 as, "In a general sense, knowledge or certain knowledge; the comprehension or understanding of truth or facts by the mind. (The science of God must be perfect.)"

Yet the everyday understanding of science that most of us have is very different. For example, a news report of some discovery has us thinking in terms of "3a: knowledge or a system of knowledge covering general truths or the operation of general laws especially as obtained and tested through scientific method b: such knowledge or such a system of knowledge concerned with the physical world and its phenomena" (<http://www.m-w.com>, 20 Jan 2000). One can hardly imagine this sense of the word including Webster's usage example, "The science of God must be perfect."

The Truth about the Scientific Method

Historically, modern science developed from Christian culture in which men who valued truth prevailed. These men sought truth even when it proved them or the "powers that be" wrong. This was an unheard-of system — imagine devising a system of research that could not be bent to flatter the king or falsely bring glory to the experimenter. Far from evil, scientific method is a crown jewel in the civilization once known as Christendom. Adherence to the truth and valuing the truth is absolutely requisite for scientific research. It is an aspect of God's grace, an outworking of the Spirit of Truth. The results of scientific method are results that can be repeated — repeated in different locations by different experimenters. Scientific method produces the ability of man to predict the future. Your lamp will *always* produce light if plugged into a working electrical outlet and the light bulb or lamp has not burned out.

This science has been a great blessing. We live surrounded by technological wonders. Some have and do help missionaries develop credibility so that people listen.

Western medicine, with its predictive treatments and prescriptions, helped overthrow the chokehold of demonic witch doctors and shamans. From cars to computers and weather satellites, we enjoy the results of scientific method. We work to purchase them. When we get sick, they heal us. We can see our babies still in the womb.

Awesome credibility has accrued to somebody. Science today means how we know things, the system of research that produces certain knowledge, the kind of knowledge that splits atoms and safely puts men on the moon.

Religion today is a system or notion of beliefs. Belief today means "state or habit of mind in which trust or confidence is placed in some person or thing . . . [Faith as a synonym:] Faith almost always implies certitude even where there is no evidence or proof. . ." (<http://www.m-w.com>, 20 Jan 2000). Scientific method produces certainty in limited areas. But modern man believes that science is how we know every important matter, while religion produces suspect knowledge of a lower order. Born again believers do have firsthand, certain knowledge in keeping with the older definition of science (a modified version of which still exists in the dictionary but is rapidly falling into disuse). However, by today's redefinition and orientation, our God does not measure up. As the Definer of all things, however, He will not fit into the confining box His enemies have prepared for Him, so they seek to discard Him entirely. He cannot and will not be weighed or measured; therefore, to them He is not relevant.

Deuteronomy 13:1-5 tells us:

If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him. And the prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the Lord thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee.

The predictive power of science has given it great credibility. When men use the credibility of science to "go

after other gods," they are false prophets. We swim in a sea of false prophecy of this type.

The Power of Scientific Predictions

What today masquerades as science is a very old religion. Eve presented Adam with "scientific" evidence. She obtained it by failing to fear God enough to shut off Satan (the false prophet) as soon as he spoke of violating God's clear command. The serpent prophesied that Eve would not die. As she presented the case to Adam, very much still living and breathing, Satan's credibility was very high. Satan is still running the same powerful con. Satan has proved capable of constructing very compelling and credible arguments for the short term.

The credibility of this new religion — science — is so great that in areas where it clearly has not produced verifiable knowledge, its theories are accepted in full faith by millions. The false prophets of our day declare their triumph over the "dark ages" which were the product of religious dogma. Fictions regarding the origins of life are presented to children as scientific fact. Many would complain that such things are only theories which are presented by non-scientists as fact to forward their own purposes. They are, of course, correct, but such foolishness is "scientifically" (older sense) predictable. A discipline which does not fear God will attract and produce fools. It is certain knowledge that is presented in Proverbs 1:7, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction." Such fools will prefer science fiction, but the battle has never been science *vs.* religion, but true religion *vs.* false religion.

The False Prophecies of Science

Please observe that this powerful form of false prophecy, while it may entail massive evidence of the power of evil, is not outside God's control. In fact, it has a purpose in God's economy. By it we are *tested* and *proven*. You say you love God; you say you only wish to serve His kingdom and you desire to follow His laws. How do you or anyone else know you are truly sincere until you are proven? Through testing, others learn if whether the Lord your God is the God of Scripture or some other invention of your own. Your actions demonstrate whether you love the God of Scripture with all your heart and soul.

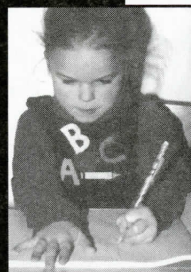
Science, like every other godly area, serves only God. Adam's work, assigned by God, was to name (classify) the animals. Naming meant knowing. This opened the door to many forms of research and knowledge: physics, molecular biology, etc. Further, man has been given a dominion mandate and scientific method as a tool to subdue nature. However, once we abandon or are lured away from the fear of God, we decide which laws of His to follow. We cannot pretend that we have "put on the full armor of God" if we continue to pick and choose among the commandments of Almighty God. This tactic has proved no challenge for our adversary. When we

decide to disregard Deuteronomy 13:1-5, we leave ourselves defenseless to the power of satanic and demonic false prophecy.

When a man, a group, or a school of thought can predict the future reliably, it generates great credibility. It is prophecy whether the glory is given to God, to Baal, or to some other power. If the glory is not given to the Living God, most likely the fulfilled prophecy will be used to lead Christians and non-Christians alike away from God's Holy Scriptures and commandments. Utilizing the evidence of fulfilled prophecy to generate credibility in the packaging of a subtle sales pitch or indoctrination, people are proven and the object of their adoration uncovered. The fact that Western civilization (*i.e.*, "Christendom") has divorced itself from its Christian roots evidences how poorly we have fared as we've been tested.

Ford Schwartz lives in San Jose, CA and works as a internet leasing manager at a car dealership. He was ordained to the ministry in 1995 and serves as pastor of Emmaus Christian Fellowship in San Jose. He is on the Board of Ross House Books, which publishes R. J. Rushdoony's books and is co-director of Friends of Chalcedon. He and his wife, Andrea, have been married for 23 years and have 3 children. He can be reached at (408)997-9866 or via e-mail at ecf_sj@ix.netcom.com.

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Random Notes, 84

By Rev. R. J. Rushdoony

1. Our daughter, Rebecca, reminded me of an incident from when we were living on the Indian Reservation over fifty years ago. She and Joanna played with the Indian children across the road, both Shoshones. One day, after an argument, Rebecca came home crying because Monty had called her a name, *tybo*, a white person. Rebecca was startled and amazed when I told her that she was indeed a *tybo*!

2. At a family dinner recently, twenty-one of us, some children and their spouses, grandchildren, and one great granddaughter, Rebecca reminded me of my father's marvelous memory. He could recall the names, authors, and content of all his schoolbooks from grade one through graduate school. Facing blindness like his father before him, but differently, he memorized virtually all the Bible in Armenian and English. Rebecca, then about ten or so, asked him about the chapters of "begats," whereupon my father with delight recited for her 1 Chronicles, chapters one through nine! His father, my grandfather, whom I never saw, was a priest in the Church of Armenia. First blinded by the Turks to end his ministry, he continued, having memorized all the Bible and the liturgy. Then they killed him. My memory is good, but nothing like that. I have often echoed Elijah's words, "I am not better than my fathers" (1 Kin. 19:10) in my own prayers.

3. *The Armenian Observer*, January 26, 2000, has a front page story entitled "Clinton: INS Freedom of Emigration Shows 'Compliance' with Policy." President Clinton's letter is on page 4. The United States is requiring an open door with respect to access and egress of peoples into these countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Nzbekistan. The goal is a one-world union of peoples apart from religion, race, or cultures.

Christians too want a one-world order, but one based on Christ, on faith, not compulsion. The U. S. policy is based on law, not faith; on compulsion, not grace.

Our policies are increasingly anti-freedom and anti-Christianity. We are applying them to ourselves and others.

4. I have always enjoyed humor. I have tried to take my faith very seriously, but not myself. I have not always been successful with the latter. My father's readiness to laugh was an example to me. In spite of all the hell he had experienced, including two massacres and a death march, he was always ready to laugh. When television began, he watched nothing except the news and "Groucho" Marx. Once having overheard "Groucho's" program, he never missed it thereafter.

5. One of the horrifying developments of recent years has been the revival of "classical" education in supposedly Christian schools. Have they ever really studied the

classical scholars, these educators who find a gospel in them? Socrates and Plato, for example, were homosexuals. Plato's *Republic* was a blueprint for a dictatorship more extreme than those of Stalin and Hitler. How dare these men advocate the classics, which at their best are blueprints for tyranny?

If you do not separate yourself from classicism, you will, in time, separate yourself from Christ. The Reformation was a separation from classicism to the Bible and Christ, and now some men are abandoning that victory.

6. The lead article in *The Armenian Observer*, February 16, 2000, is titled "Turkey Warns France Relations Will 'Suffer' if the Armenian Genocide Bill Is Adopted." The meaning escapes most people because they assume that what happened in history is history, but, increasingly, it is not. What the state declares is history is more and more "real" history. At this late date, France may recognize as history the Armenian massacres of 1915. If Turkey's pressure is sufficient, the massacres will not be history! Meanwhile, national archives are seeing such records as of the massacres quietly destroyed.

7. Many historical facts are quietly being forgotten. Little is written now to offend Moslems with the truth. Thus, it was very good to read in Dr. A. Chalabian's *Armenia After the Coming of Islam*, 1999 (\$38 from Dr. A. Chalabean, 17264 Melrose St., Southfield, Michigan 48075-4227) that the early Moslem empire of the Arabs stripped Armenians of all their gold, silver, and other valuables. Then even the dead were taxed. Priests were tortured to reveal the names of all the deceased so that their families could be taxed for them. All forms of property and wealth were plundered in Armenia, Persia, Egypt, and elsewhere (56).

8. A notable PBS historical account dealt ably with Andrew Carnegie, but left out a key fact. His radical ruthlessness towards labor was based on his religious faith in Darwin and the idea of the struggle for survival. The libraries he endowed were intended to help the "fittest."

The ugly influence of Darwinism in business, education, religion, and more has not been properly reported.

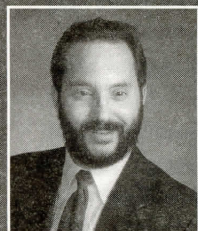
9. Chalabian's excellent history which I mentioned earlier is about Arabic, Persians, Byzantine Greek, Seljuk Turkish, Turkoman Mongol, Tatar, and Ottoman Turkish history, all in conjunction with Armenian history.

10. At 84, I find myself remembering the past, as the elderly are prone to do. I used to be annoyed, when younger, at some old folks who overdid it, and I resolved to avoid doing so. But now I have the same habit! So much for earnest resolutions. So many "plans" for my old age are being countermanded by God, Who knows so much better!

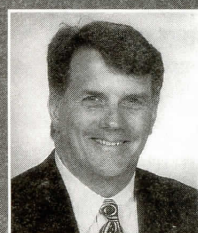
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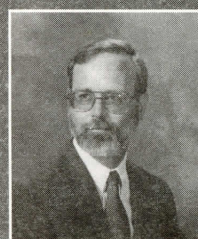
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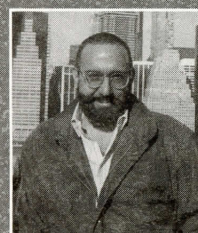
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Letter to the Editor on the RPW

Dear Friends in Christ,

The Rev. Steve Schlissel's recent articles in favor of junking the Regulative Principle of Worship (RPW) and replacing it with the Steve Schlissel Principle of Worship (SSPW) are provocative, interesting, and in need of a Reformed response. I say, in need of a "Reformed response" because our friend's position is indeed outside of the Reformed position as proclaimed in our creeds, be they the Westminster Standards or the Three Forms of Unity. Steve is indeed a good personal friend and we wish none of the following to be taken as a personal attack, as I am certain it is not his purpose that his articles be taken as a personal affront by any who disagree with him. We are happy that at times he expressed himself as being somewhat tentative about his ideas.

First of all, it needs to be clear that the RPW is indeed at the heart of the Reformed Reformation. Worship centered in the Word of God rather than in the sacraments was considered by the Reformed Reformers as an essential Biblical requirement, not as a man-made innovation preferable on the grounds of human reason or esthetics. There is an excellent book on this issue written by Carlos Eire and published in 1986. It has recently been available from Sprinkle Publications. The book is entitled *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin*. It is an excellent corrective to the callous disregard for the differences between the Lutheran and Reformed Reformations which has too often been a feature of Reformation studies in the last 100 years.

The SSPW is in historical terms very close to the Lutheran principle, which is that God allows what He does not forbid. I believe there is some confusion on this principle in Rev. Schlissel's articles in that he calls this the Roman Catholic principle. The Roman principle is that worship is to be done as the Church institutes it on the basis of Scripture and tradition.

Certainly this allows what Scripture does not forbid, but it also does a whole lot more. The main point is that Reformed worship is at the heart of being Reformed. The RPW is no more of an option for Reformed people than is the sovereignty of God, which of course is why it is in our creeds.

In our opinion our good brother makes several exegetical mistakes and jumps in logic to reach his position. He also quotes RPW exegesis of peripheral texts by those who are interested in proving Exclusive Psalmody (EP) rather than from exegesis of the main RPW texts (RPW and EP are not co-extensive, indeed EP is a product of the "Second Reformation" rather than of the first in which the RPW was discovered and laid down as a Reformed principle).

Brother Schlissel's main argument against the NT application of the RPW is that it applies even in the OT only to offerings. This is a facile conjecture, but no more than that. The OT does indeed give great detail concerning the offerings made to God, and says little about the form of worship on the weekly Sabbath in each community as required by Leviticus 23:3. However, there are several much better answers to why this is true, than to jump to the conclusion that only the offerings are regulated. First of all, and almost certainly true, is the fact that Hebrew families and their predecessors had been engaging in weekly worship since the time of Adam. They knew what to do; they didn't have to have additional detailed instruction. A good understanding of what worship is makes this quite clear.

Worship is fellowship with God mainly through words (even the sacraments need the word for their validity; as Luther said, "Without the word the sacraments are empty ceremonies"). Worship is, according to Psalm 95 (which speaks nothing of offerings), 1) meeting with God (*v. 2*), 2) bowing down before God (*v. 6*), and 3) listening obediently to God's word (*vv. 7b-8a*). Even in the daily offering, the central meaning of worship is found in "where I will meet you to speak with you" (*Ex. 29:42*). Worship for the Hebrews consisted in reading or reciting God's words handed down to them, words of song and prayer, and words of confession and commitment. We see this in that Jacob knew exactly what to do when God appeared to him at Bethel (*Gen. 28:16-22*). The offerings of the OT were sacraments, as is clear from their "shadow nature" (see *Heb. 9:23*). Their form was very important, and thus the detailed instructions, just as is the form of the sacraments today (a sacrament is a ceremony pointing to Christ's work in which both the form and the keeping of it are commanded).

A second reason that the Hebrews needed little instruction about the weekly "holy convocation" of Leviticus 23 is that its form was simple. Once one knows the essential elements as they are found in the meetings of God with Abraham and his son and grandson, not much else is needed (see, for example, Genesis 18-19, where again there is prayer and fellowship but no offering).

A third answer to this supposed "lack" of instruction, is that there is instruction indeed in Leviticus 23. There are three fundamental instructions, all of them understandable to the Israelites. One, these are "feasts of the LORD." This is not just a day of rest and meeting for worship (the holy convocation); it is a day of celebration. Second, it is a day of rest; ordinary work may not be done. How can they "feast" without working? This is covered already in Exodus 12:16: "that which is

necessary to eat — that only may be prepared by you.” Third, these days, including the weekly Sabbath, are to be “a holy convocation.” Again, Israel had already learned from Moses, if not from their parents while in Egypt, what a “holy convocation” is. This was done during the holy convocations connected with the Passover. If any Israelite did not know what to do at a holy convocation while he was still in Egypt, he did by the time he left.

Therefore Rev. Schlissel’s assertion that God regulates only the offerings in the OT is pure assertion. There is no whisper of this anywhere in the words of Scripture, indeed quite the opposite.

Rev. Schlissel’s assertion about the RPW applying only to offerings is directly contradicted by the teaching of Scripture. First, the Commandment which requires the RPW is the Second Commandment, as the Reformed creeds agree (Heidelberg Q&A #96, Westminster Confession, Chapter 21, Section 1), a commandment which speaks of the spiritual purity of worship in general and only indirectly of offerings. Indeed, offerings are not even mentioned specifically in the Second Commandment because sacraments are not essential to worship.

The issues in the Second Commandment are the spiritual nature of God, which is why pictures and images are forbidden, and the commitment of men’s hearts, which is why the Commandment speaks of loving and hating God as well as of keeping His commandments. Worship and service of God must be done according to His commandments both outwardly in form, and inwardly in our hearts (the NIV does us a disservice by confusing worship and service, see also Paul’s allusion in *Rom. 1:25*). The point is that worshipping and serving God must be done according to His laws (see also *Dt. 4:2*), and not according to the imagination of man’s heart, which is the source of idolatrous images and of man-made ideas for worship and service (see *Hab. 2:18-20*). The latter verses here apply the Second Commandment by saying in effect, “shut off your imagination and listen to God’s Word.”

There can then be no doubt whatsoever that the Second Commandment applies its restriction to ALL worship and that Rev. Schlissel’s assertion to the contrary is simply mistaken.

Much of Mr. Schlissel’s assertion about the RPW referring only to offerings rests on His view of Deuteronomy 12. God does in this chapter restrict the *place* of offerings, to the one place in the promised land that He will choose by “placing my name there.” This section on offerings, however, ends with verse 28. Not only is verse 28 clearly a summary of what goes before, verse 29 just as clearly begins a new subject, that not of the place of worship but of *how* the Israelites are to worship God. Therefore Mr. Schlissel’s attempt to apply verse 32 only to the offerings mentioned in verses 1-28 will not work. Remember that the chapters were placed in the Bible during Medieval times, not the

best time for perfect selection of subject differentiation. The subject matter of Deuteronomy 12:29-32 is certainly related to the place of worship, but it is indeed a different subject.

Second, the language of Deuteronomy 12:29-32 clearly speaks of worship in general, and is not in any way limited to offerings, which are never mentioned in these verses. The commandment is not to ask, “How did these nations serve their Gods?” This is the most general language one could use. Limiting it to offerings is purely arbitrary and unjustified. This generality of language is also true of Deuteronomy 12:32 itself. It speaks not of offerings but of “whatsoever I command you” with respect to worshiping and serving God. There is indeed a connection between the RPW of Deuteronomy 12:32 and the offerings of verses 1-29, but that is because 12:32 speaks of all worship, and offerings certainly are a part of OT worship. Nevertheless the first 28 verses of the chapter are about the location of worship; these last four verses are about the purity of all worship. Thus the two are not unconnected, but to limit Deuteronomy 12:32 to offerings alone is entirely unjustified by the language and subject matter in the words of Scripture itself.

Another reason for not applying the RPW of Deuteronomy 12:32 is that its commandment about worship, “Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it,” is repeated in a negative fashion by our Lord Jesus Christ when talking about worship in the New Testament. Jesus says, quoting Isaiah, “And in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men” (*Mk. 7:7*). Thus the RPW is repeated negatively both in Isaiah 29:13 and in Christ’s own words. What is wrong with human-designed worship is that it is according to man’s commandments and not God’s commandments. Therefore it is empty; it does not honor God but displeases Him. This is emphasized by Christ’s coordinate quote of Isaiah saying, “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me” (*Mk. 7:6*). Worship that is not according to the RPW ends up, as Paul puts it, “worship[ing] and serv[ing] the creature more than the Creator” (*Rom. 1:25*). It is less than worthless (as Luther held); it is sin (as Zwingli and his Reformed progeny held).

A final text we would look at in this connection is John 4:24, another re-iteration of the RPW. Jesus said, “God is a Spirit, and they that worship him *must* worship him in spirit and in truth.”

This text not only forbids all but one kind of worship, which is what the RPW is all about; it provides the basis for the Second Commandment and the RPW itself. It is the very nature of God as a Spirit that makes it impossible and sinful to try to worship Him with physical means, such as pictures and images. The Second Commandment forbids pictures and images just for this reason, “God is a Spirit.” However, this command of Christ also tells us that we must worship God in truth. This is because God

is the source of all truth and all His ways are truth. Is this so of man? Can man design TRUE methods of worship? I am afraid this is the position Brother Schlissel must take if he is to be true to his SSPW. I know certainly that Steve does not want to do this, in fact, I am sure he recoils at the idea as much as we do. And that is the problem with the SSPW; it puts man in an untenable position, the position of being able to ignore God's laws by adding to them, which according to Scripture is just as bad as subtracting from them. The reason for this is, as Christ says, "That which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God." Trusting man to decide what is truly worshipful, or right and wrong in any way, is simply unscriptural.

Another of Rev. Schlissel's arguments against the RPW comes from his distorted view of the place of the Jewish synagogue. What is perverted here is not the fact that the NT Church grew up in the fabric of the synagogue, but the idea that the synagogue as practiced by the Jews at the time of Christ can claim some authority over the Christian church. Associated also with that is the equivalence he makes between the sacrificial system and heavenly worship, claiming a two-tiered system of worship in which the temple-tabernacle system is assumed to be the higher tier and synagogue worship the lower tier. If we had to make a Biblical choice, it would have to be in favor of the worship of fellowship through word, also in the OT, because the Temple was preceded by such worship and it is certainly cast aside in the NT. Even the sacrifice of Christ is not the central element of worship but is designed to facilitate worship by cleansing the worshipers. As Samuel said to Saul, "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams" (*1 Sam. 15:22*). Brother Schlissel certainly has an inventive mind. He has produced a number of unique ideas he claims to be scriptural, even though they have never been found before in the history of Bible study. This in itself should put us on guard. Again we would have to point out that this guiding relation of the synagogue of the Jews to the "synagogue of Christ," as he puts it, is not nearly as clear in the Bible as Steve claims. In fact, the Lord Himself calls the unbelieving Jews the "synagogue of Satan" (*Rev. 3:9*). Also, his two-tiered worship scheme simply finds no evidence whatsoever in the Bible itself. It is possible for us to make this distinction, but making contrasts or separations between things we can distinguish is an old exegetical fallacy. If the words of Scripture do not point us to a separation (as we pointed out, Exodus 29:42 puts the word and sacraments together), then we may not make one for ourselves. This construction, I believe, is an example of just why the principle is "do not add to or subtract from God's commandments."

Brother Schlissel's use of the "moral dilemma tactic" to cloud the issue of right and wrong concerning worship is just that, a tactic that can be used to prove just about anything. The Bible's either/or about sex is not a conjecture borne out of our inability to understand and

apply God's law. Sex in marriage is a blessed gift of God; outside of marriage it is an abomination. So the choice is not between hussies or ugly women, but between adultery and chastity. Part of chastity is modest dress. Really not a big deal. When we read Paul in the context of the styles of his day, rings, shiny braided hair, etc. were the dress of prostitutes. No Christian woman should dress like a prostitute. That is why Paul does not say, "I don't allow rings, . . . etc." But, "whose adorning let it not be." It is one thing to outlaw something period, as the Bible does with adultery and uncommanded elements of worship; it is another thing to point to the sinful use of things and warn people to avoid such uses. The same is true, for example, of the use of alcohol in beverages. The Word of God absolutely forbids drunkenness, which is an effect of too much alcohol, but does not forbid the substance itself. Indeed, on several occasions it is commended for its good effects.

To avoid becoming tedious, let us end this response. I think Brother Schlissel's own statements militate against his arguments. He says that he does not want to change Reformed worship but only expunge its foundation in the RPW, which he believes is mistaken. The problem is that what Rev. Schlissel accepts as good worship comes from people who have strictly held to the RPW. Steve might well have titled his articles, "Everything I Know About Worship I Did Not Learn From the Regulative Principle, But I Did Learn From Those Who Hold to the Regulative Principle." In other words, there is somewhat of a contradiction here. I believe our Brother needs to read the classical works of the first Reformation on worship and then think about his position. I find him working against somewhat of a straw man in that respect. The RPW as applied by the Reformers was not picayune. It dealt with the fundamental nature of worship in accord with John 4:24, and with the rejection of idols in accord with the Second Commandment. These men concluded (rightly) that this is a large matter to which God speaks very clearly. The placement of the RPW into the creeds of Reformed churches was no mistake, and it is not one that needs to be changed today.

Let me say that Rev. Schlissel has revived a very important discussion. For quite a number of years Reformed and Presbyterian churches have been willing to give lip service to the RPW but have not applied it very well. Indeed, through this neglect the RPW has become almost the exclusive property of the Exclusive Psalmidists. This writer is convinced that the EPs are mistaken in their application of the RPW, but to drop it as a Biblical principle is to become less than Reformed. My best wishes to Brother Steve, and all of us, as we consider this fundamental question of Reformation theology.

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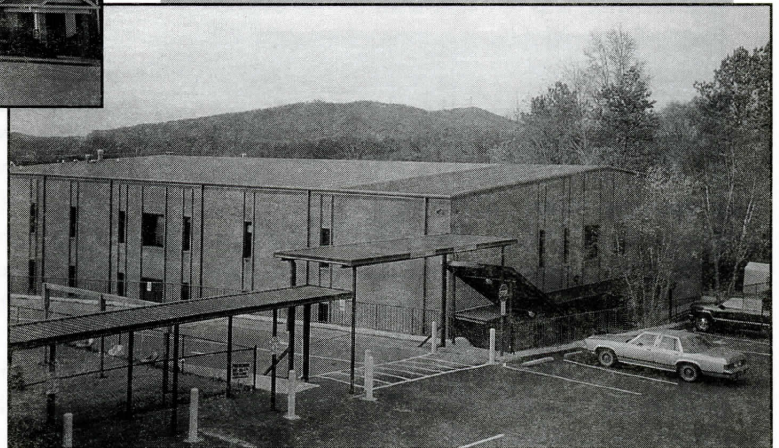
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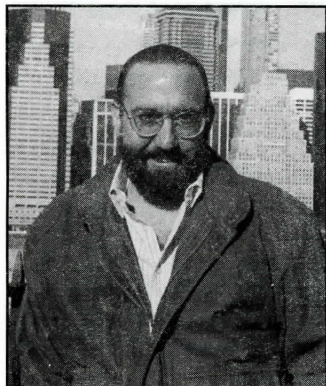
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All I Really Need to Know About Worship ... I Don't Learn from the Regulative Principle (Part X)

By Rev. Steve M. Schlissel



When I was recently instructed to take the Nassau Expressway to get my Rebecca to a certification course, I thought, "Where is the Nassau Expressway? It sounds familiar but I just can't place it."

It turns out that it was the first road listed on a sign near Kennedy Airport, a sign which I had passed thousands of times. But because I had never needed to take that particular thoroughfare, I had never paid any attention to the first line.

Our ability not to see what is right in front of us for want of really looking is a well-known fact of experience. In this series on worship we have been attempting to point out that there are a great many things in Scripture which, it seems, regulativists have overlooked, things which negate the proposition that the Regulative Principle of Worship is an adequate principle to govern worship in the New Order ushered in by Christ's completed work. We have been pleading with those who tenaciously hold to the RPW — *if it is not commanded, expressly or by good and necessary consequence, it is forbidden* — to consider if they may have missed lines on the sign, lines which would redirect them in their search for the *actual* will of God on this matter.

We began by expressing our sympathy for the RPW. Like other extreme remedies, it offered a sort of relief. The teetotaler is preferred to the drunk, the prig to the strumpet. But these are not our only choices when we consider *all* that the Scripture says. Temperate use of alcohol is permitted by God, no matter how much it might be abused by the weak and/or foolish. Adornment is permitted to women regardless of how many brazen trollops give make-up a bad name. The wrong use of a thing does not disprove the propriety of its moderate, fit use.

So also, the Scriptures, taken in sum, simply do not teach that unless God has commanded a thing, it may not be done in worship. The RPW may be an effective shortcut to a desirable sort of worship service, but when it pretends to be God's own definitive word on the matter

it must be reined in. And there is no better way to rein in errant theologies than to look at the whole Word of God. For it seems my regulativist brethren were looking only at the lines on the sign that they thought pertained to them. They ignored, to a greater or lesser degree, the rest. And we have merely been seeking to point out some of "the rest" in this series.

The first thing we did was pull the camera back from their favorite texts. We discovered that their so-called proof texts were consistently isolated from meaning-impacting contexts.

Next we explained how the real RPW governed only centralized Temple worship in the Old Testament and was *never* the rule — before or after Sinai — for decentralized sacred assemblies. Similarly, in the New Order, it is the Gospel of Jesus Christ that is strictly regulated, not sacred assemblies.

We demonstrated that regulativists fail to account fairly for an abundance of so-called "man-made" worship elements found in Scripture which God regarded as benign or fine.

And we looked at some of the failures of regulativism which would, if applied consistently, leave the New Order churches songless and with other pitiable maladies.

In short, we sought to measure the Regulative Principle against the standard of God's Word. It was measured and found wanting. In what might be considered a corroborating proof of our thesis, no cogent, coherent refutation of this evidence has been offered. Of course, this does not mean that one *could not* be offered, but we have not seen it. Instead, we have been treated to tomes which tell us how terrible Steve Schlissel is. But we thought *that* was an incontrovertible fact. Otherwise, we could have proven that proposition to your satisfaction and proven it sooner, more fully, and with abundant examples and illustrations. We just didn't think that was the issue under discussion.

When You Assume. . .

The issue under discussion has been the Regulative Principle of Worship — if it is not commanded, it is forbidden. And, as we've said before, our colleagues on the other side of the aisle seem unable to argue for it without first assuming it *and* dismissing any and all of the abundant Biblical or historical evidence which goes against it. They are like the trawlermen who, after

boasting that their net caught *all* kinds of fish, were shown several varieties their net had missed. “Oh, those ain’t really fish!” they replied.

Regulativists 1) assume the RPW in Bible history even when it isn’t found, 2) assume it in the Westminster Confession when it isn’t uniformly applied in the appended Directory of Worship, 3) assume it in the Law when it’s not what the Law says, and 4) assume it in all Reformed churches when it isn’t what all Reformed churches have held. As the famous preacher, Jerry Lee Lewis, once (sort of) said, “There’s a whole lot of assumin’ goin’ on.”

Our first example of this assuming behavior: In our treatment of the question, we considered the glaring fact that there are no commands in the Bible concerning the elements of worship to be employed in the synagogue, an institution recognized by most as providing the organizational foundation of the Christian churches.¹ If, as the regulativists claim, sacred assemblies may do *only* what God has *commanded* to be done, and if there are no discernible inscripturated commands telling Israel what they may do in sacred assemblies, then Israel (if RPW-compliant) was permitted, in fact, to do nothing in the synagogues.

Feeling the weight (if not the power) of this argument, regulativists, unable to find inscripturated commands governing the elements of synagogue worship, resort to assumptions. Their response has been uniform: Since we cannot find where God has commanded what was to take place in sacred assemblies, but since the RPW must be true no matter what, therefore God *must have* told some prophet how to organize the worship in the synagogue. Now just hold on to their assertion a moment and add to it another. Regulativists have argued that “the regulative principle grows out of the *sola scriptura* rule of Protestant theology.” Never mind that they run around in a circle here, *assuming* that the RPW is God’s mind revealed in Scripture on the matter (while it most certainly is not). I wish only to draw your attention to their claim that the RPW and *sola scriptura* are organically linked.

Those who hold to the Informed Principle of Worship — *if it is not commanded, it might be permitted: it depends* — account for the synagogue without resorting to sleight of hand. IPW-ists find no command, other than one which requires synagogues, or decentralized sacred assemblies, to exist (*Lev. 23:3*). The elements employed therein would and did develop within the bounds of revealed scriptural principles as understood by the covenant community. No explicit command was required. *Sola scriptura* stands firm.

But how do regulativists imagine themselves as supporting the doctrine of *sola scriptura* when they argue that the synagogue elements *must have been revealed in some non-inscripturated source*? In fact, what they very clearly do here is *negate* the doctrine of “Scripture alone” by making their system dependent upon an

uninscripturated word. They *postulate* a word which was *supposedly* given to govern the synagogue service, a word *we know nothing about*, a word that is merely *assumed* to have been. And clearly the only reason they insist that it *must have been* given is because, as always, they start out with their principle, not the Bible, as the unchallengeable given and then seek to force the Bible to conform to it. If it’s not in the Bible, they’ll invent an authoritative tradition that surely must have said what they think should have been said in the Bible.

This whole line of reasoning is hauntingly familiar to me. Let me tell you where I’ve heard it: In the Jewish “proofs” for the necessity of the Oral Law. Listen carefully to those a bit more self-conscious in their denial of *sola scriptura*:

At Exodus 35:3 — “*You shall not kindle fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath day*” — the Stone Edition of the Torah contains this note: “The Torah can be understood only as it is interpreted by the Oral Law, which God taught to Moses, and which he transmitted to the nation. The Oral Law makes clear that only the creation of a fire and such use of it as cooking and baking are forbidden, but there is no prohibition against enjoying its light and heat.” A shot is then taken at Jews who have suggested that the Bible, as given, is sufficient: “Deviant sects that deny the teaching of the Sages [*i.e.*, the Oral Law — sms] misinterpreted this passage ... they sat in spiritual darkness all their lives.”

Meyer Waxman, in *The History of Jewish Literature*, argues that the traditions of the Scribes as recorded in the Oral Law were not “new additions, but merely an unfolding of the contents of the Law.” He believes, like the regulativists, that the Law itself implicitly *requires* the positing of an Oral Law. Waxman says:

As an illustration of the insufficiency of the Written Law, if taken literally, and that if it was practiced, it must necessarily have been supplemented... we will cite [the following example]. The injunction that one who desecrates the Sabbath is [to be] punished by death is repeated several times, but nowhere is there a definition given as to what is meant by the term, work. Only three kinds of labor are specified, kindling of fire (*Ex. 35:3*), walking beyond a certain limit (*Ex. 16:29*), and cording or hewing of wood (*Numb. 15:32-36*). But, it is self-evident that there are hundreds of forms of labor which fall under the term *work*. How then could the Sabbath be observed without any supplementary instruction as to what constitutes work and what not? Undoubtedly, such instructions and supplements have existed from the very time of the giving of the Law, and they were included in the Mosaic Oral Law.

It seems never to have occurred to those who hold this Jewish view that God’s mind might, in deed and in fact, have been adequately revealed in the very *generality* of the

prohibitions and that He has neither requested nor required such detailed supplementation.

Now You See It, Now You Don't

So too, the regulativists. The idea that God had not given inspired, *explicit* instructions concerning what was to be done in the synagogue is simply unimaginable to them. But while both the orthodox Jews and the regulativists treat the Word of God as insufficient, only the Jews admit it.² The regulativists introduce the idea of uninscriptured commands as a *deus ex machina*. But by so doing, they undermine their own principles while they beg their own questions. And, instead of supporting *sola scriptura*, they lead us to ask if what we have now might best be regarded as a Vestigial Bible, those former revelations having somehow fallen away.

At this point, perhaps we can begin to see how easily regulativism can become yet another body for the spirit of the Pharisees³ to inhabit. Dr. J. Douma's analysis of the Sabbath controversy between the Pharisees and our Lord⁴ provides to-the-point insight. The Pharisees were dissatisfied with God's *general* command forbidding work. Ultimately, the Mishna would provide 39 discrete categories of forbidden labor. This desire for exhaustive control of the covenant people has its mirror in the RPW which (ostensibly) forbids *anything* not commanded.

"Without a doubt," says Dr. Douma — whom I will quote freely in this section — "underlying the extensive work of the scribes was a deep-seated respect for the Sabbath." So also, underlying the intentions of regulativists is a deep-seated respect for the corporate worship of the Triune God. Would that all God's people would yearn after God-centered, God-glorifying worship! The danger, of course, is when, in the pursuit of a noble end, one displaces or distorts, according to the dictates of man, Scripture's actual words. As in the case of the RPW, so in the case of the Pharisaical Sabbath, "Not Scripture, but the tradition of the 'ancients,' functioned authoritatively." Here we need to listen carefully to Dr. Douma:

Within a detailed casuistry, it is no longer possible to quiet one's hunger on the Sabbath by plucking heads of grain in a grain field. For whoever picks a head of grain is busy harvesting [one of the 39 forbidden categories of labor], and whoever rubs that head of grain between his fingers is busy threshing [another forbidden category]. Someone who healed a man on the Sabbath, as Jesus did, was performing work that could have waited until the following day. Someone who picked up his mattress and walked away with it, after he had been healed, was making himself guilty of Sabbath desecration because he was carrying a burden on the Sabbath from one place to another.

So, too, the regulativist sifts through his artificial grid any element of worship for which he can find no authorizing command. "No 'man-made' hymns!" he cries,

suggesting that the corporate singing of "*All Glory Be to Thee, Most High*" is unmitigated effrontery. "No musical instruments!" he demands, calling their employment in any form indulgent sensuality and carnality. "No this, no that, no the other. God approves only what *we say* He approves, no matter what He might say to the contrary!"

"... But Not For Me"

As Douma noted:

Jesus condemned this casuistry [regarding the Sabbath]. Although it can be dressed in clothes of piety, it can nonetheless be a form of hypocrisy. What people withhold from others (permission to work, for example) they grant to themselves.

As we have seen, regulativists grant to themselves the right to sing in worship when such can be easily controverted *on their principles*. But beyond that, the RPW, despite its apparent simplicity, is ultimately like the Mishna: arbitrary in what it permits or forbids. For good and necessary consequence is, in the end, a measure which exists mainly in the mind of the beholder.

Even in the vaunted *Directory for the Publick Worship of God of the Westminster Assembly* — a perfectly lovely order of worship, on our principles — we discover numerous requirements which can claim justification neither by express command nor by necessary consequence.⁵ One can account for this anomaly by suggesting that the Westminster Divines did not intend to teach the Regulative Principle, or that they found it inconvenient or impossible to apply. In any case, there is certainly "room" for those who subscribe to the Westminster Standards to challenge the proposition that subscription *requires* strict adherence to the rule: if it is not commanded to be performed in worship, it is forbidden.

For in the preface to the *Directory for Publick Worship*, the divines use the language of the Informed Principle, stating that their "*care hath been to hold forth such things as are of divine institution in every ordinance; and other things we have endeavoured to set forth according to the rules of Christian prudence, agreeable to the general rules of the word of God.*"

Consider what my Presbyterian friend, Chris Coldwell, has to say about the Directory's authority: "The Directory was approved by 'Act of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland'... The Government of Scotland approved and established the Directory three days later. *Thus the Directory for Worship was actually more widely authorized than the Confession of Faith*, or Larger Catechism, which never received the assent of the English Parliament. It represents the approved views regarding worship of not only the Assembly, but of the governments of England and Scotland, as well as the Church of Scotland."

Fine. Let me cite two areas in the Directory — the first a bit lengthy (dealing with Christian baptism), the

second quite brief (dealing with Scripture reading) — where the Westminster divines forsake the standard which requires command (RPW) and embrace the standard of agreement with the general rules of the Word (IPW). Some have recently said that “all Protestants hold to the Regulative Principle.” I disagree. Many, no doubt, hold to it *pro forma*, but in practice it is another matter. The Directory for Worship suggests that, behind the rhetoric, all Reformed people *actually* hold to the IPW. Witness: *First*, the administration of Christian baptism is saddled in the Directory with *requirements* neither commanded in Scripture nor the result of good and *necessary* consequence. We’ll focus on two requirements (man-made impositions?) which we find particularly noteworthy, especially for their being found in the Directory for Worship of the supposedly strictest of the RPW-leaning confessions.

The Directory’s rule is that baptism *must* be performed by a minister. Yet this does not comport with Scripture. Thus its origin is in man, *i.e.*, in a human tradition.⁶ The Old Testament antecedent, circumcision, did not *require* the rite to be performed by someone specially called. Zipporah’s circumcision of her and Moses’ son was *valid*. God Himself approved of it and accepted it (*Ex. 4:25, 26*).

The same unconcern with administrators is true in the New Testament. Kistemaker, commenting on the baptism of Cornelius’s household in Acts 10:48, is unafraid to accept the obvious: “Peter, as the Greek text implies, orders the . . . Jewish Christians to baptize the Gentile converts.” These Jewish Christians were simply “some of the brothers” (*Ac. 10:23*) — the common term — not “some other ministers.” The apostle apparently regarded these ordinary, male Jewish Christians as covenantally competent to perform the rite of baptism. “The apostles, then, place the emphasis not on themselves but on the name of Jesus.” Barnes agrees, explaining that “it seems not to have been the practice of the apostles themselves to baptize very extensively.” J. A. Alexander is forceful on this point: “It can scarcely be a mere fortuitous coincidence, that Peter, Paul, and Christ himself, should all have left this rite to be administered by others. ‘Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples’ (*Jn. 4:2*). ‘I thank God that I baptized none of you, save Crispus, etc.’ (*1 Cor. 1:14*). ‘Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel’ (*ib. v. 17*).”

Baptisms were performed under the apostles’ supervision, but not necessarily by their hands. Such was obviously good enough for Peter and Paul, but not for the Westminster Assembly.

Perhaps the stalwarts of the Faith who composed the Standards really were, *in the last analysis*, practitioners of the Informed — not the Regulative — Principle of Worship. “If it is not commanded, it might be permitted: It depends!” The idea is plausible.

For the Directory further *requires* that baptism be performed as part of Christian worship services. It insists

that baptism is not “to be administered in private places, or privately, but *in the places of publick worship*, and *in the face of the congregation . . .*” Here, contrary to their alleged principle, *they add an element to worship*. Where is it commanded in Scripture that baptism is to be performed during a public worship service? Nowhere. Then perhaps we can find examples of such which would constitute “good and necessary consequence”?

Alas, no. In the case of circumcision, the antecedent of Christian baptism, there is not a trace of evidence that God *required* it to be performed either in the Temple or in the synagogue. And as for baptism itself, in the instances found in the New Testament, none is performed in what we would call or recognize as a worship service. The three thousand on the Day of Pentecost were baptized in conjunction with, at most, an evangelistic meeting, not a worship service. The same is true of the Samaritans in Acts 8. Saul was not baptized at a worship service but at the house of Judas on Straight Street by Ananias (a “mere” disciple, by the way — Acts 9:10 — not a “minister”). Cornelius’s family was baptized in his house without benefit of its being part of a “worship service.” The Philippian jailer was certainly not baptized in a worship service. Lydia was baptized after hearing the message at a prayer meeting. (Such prayer meetings were *substitutes* for worship services, Jewish tradition requiring that worship services not be performed with less than ten *men*.) Crispus (*Ac. 18:8*) was baptized *after* a worship service.

Baptism tied to evangelistic meetings? Perhaps. Prayer meetings? Maybe. Homes? Sure. Church worship services? No. One might even reasonably conclude from the Scripture’s evidence that one *had to* be baptized *outside* the church service in order to gain the right to enter. Yet the Directory *forbids* baptism from occurring any place except a church service! Hardly very RPW-ish. After all, there was no need for such an “intrusion upon the consciences of God’s people.” There was a ready work-around available.

For just as regulativists believe all Christian children ought to be catechized, yet don’t require (or allow!) that catechizing to be done in worship services, so they could have easily demanded that all Christian children (and other fit candidates) be baptized in public but without adding the requirement that it be done in public *worship*. In fact, on their principle they ought to *forbid* that it be brought into a worship service since it is lacking in Divine command.⁷ Most regulativists allow hymn-singing and instruments in private worship,⁸ excluding them from corporate worship only because these elements, they say, are not commanded to be enjoyed therein. *They should do the same with baptism, if they believed their principle*. Now in my mind’s ear I can hear my regulativist brothers groaning, “That’s ridiculous!” Why is it any more ridiculous to exclude baptism than to exclude hymns if the basis for inclusion is express warrant or approved example?

Already we can begin to see that, while many at that great Assembly may well have held in principle to the RPW, *in practice* they — like a very great number of Reformed churches since the Reformation — were clearly governed by the covenantal freedom expressed in the Informed Principle of Worship.⁹ Perhaps it's time to let the cat out of the bag: there are no "strict regulativists" in practice. And the 57 varieties of those who claim to be such only prove that it is, at bottom, a subjective principle.

Regulate as We Say, Not as We Do

Second, the Directory dictates, "It is requisite [*required, necessary, indispensable — sms*] that all the canonical books be read *over and in order* . . . and, ordinarily, where the reading in either Testament endeth on one Lord's day, it is to begin the next." No one should deny that this, like baptizing during worship, is a fine practice — if a church so chooses it. But where in Scripture has God commanded this? From what might this "requirement" be deduced as *necessary*? How does this differ from the use of, say, Scripture songs (non-Psalms) being made requisite in worship, a practice condemned by "strict" RPW-ites? The sons of Westminster who insist on a strict RPW must be forced to admit that such a strict principle was not in their foundational documents taken as a whole. The Directory, after all, *required* that the main prayer occur before the sermon, a requirement for which there can be found no command in Scripture.

But it seems that even strict regulativists allow to themselves what they deny to others: freedom to employ covenantal good sense. As Douma said, "And what else can you expect? Legalism always lives in tension with the normal development of life and sooner or later will shipwreck on the realistic and wholesome demands of practicality."

What the Pharisees did to the Sabbath, regulativists often do to worship. "The attitude [of the Pharisees] robbed the Sabbath of its characteristic gratitude for liberation. Gratitude had to make way for precisionist obedience, freedom was replaced with a new bondage." If you have any doubt how accommodating the RPW-flesh is to the Pharisee-spirit, it will be dispelled when you read its most consistent advocates.

Ignorance of the Law Is No Excuse

Several regulativist brethren have sought to teach me that the critical point in this debate is the Second Commandment. "The Second Commandment," they claim, "is where the Regulative Principle is not only taught, but carved in stone as an eternal rule for the worship of the church."

Okay. Let's look at the Second Commandment. "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 shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."

Where is the RPW here? I do not see it. The commandment forbids making images. It seems to me that discovering the RPW here is at best a bit ticklish. First, the RPW claims to govern corporate worship. Would the regulativist suggest that this command's scope is limited to corporate worship, that it is okay to make idols for use outside of corporate worship? Of course not. But would the regulativist then ask that this command be applied exhaustively so as to exclude the making of any image whatsoever for use in any area of life? Would the regulativist suggest that all sculpture, all painting, all photography, all image-containing adornment, is excluded by this command? Of course not. God Himself commanded various "images" and representations to be made, even for use in Tabernacle/Temple worship (*Ex. 26:1; 28:33; 37:7ff.*; etc.).

In the first case, the regulativist concedes that the command is not limited to corporate worship. In the second, he concedes that it does not absolutely prohibit images. Sounds IPW-ish so far. How then does this command support the Regulative Principle of Worship? Perhaps he is thinking of the exposition of the Second Commandment in the Heidelberg Catechism? There we read:

Q 96. What does God require in the Second Commandment?

A 96. That we in no way make any image of God, nor worship Him in any other way than He has commanded us in His Word.

So far so good. The question then becomes, "Just *how* has God commanded in His Word that He be worshipped?" I answer, "He has forbidden certain things, as this commandment, among other texts, proves. He has also commanded that He be approached only through His own provided atonement. He has also given us many principles which serve as borders within which we may freely employ faithful, covenantal sense, taking into consideration always the general rules of the Word." That is how He has commanded that He be worshipped.

The regulativist, however, answers by saying, "God's will is that if He has not commanded a thing, it is forbidden." But where does he find that *in the Second Commandment*? He does not. He has obviously first *assumed* it and then *imposed* it.

In fact, what the Second Command does — and this might be a shock to some — is to forbid idolatry and the use of images as representations of God or as objects of worship. Most humble readers of the Bible would conclude this without help.

Indeed, this simple truth has not been lost in our Reformed tradition. Dr. Nelson Kloosterman has brought

to my attention “G. Voetius’ two-volume treatment (compendium, really) on the Heidelberg Catechism. In his five-page question-and-answer exposition of Heidelberg #96, Voetius nowhere discusses ‘the RPW,’ but rather focuses on why and for what purpose God forbade images of Himself as worship aids. In Voetius, we find page after page about the idolatry of Papists, Jews, and Mohammedans, page after page about the superstitious ceremonies and rituals of Romanists, but no exposition about ‘what is not commanded is forbidden.’ (You’ll notice the same lacuna with regard to ‘the RPW’ in Herman Hoeksema’s *Triple Knowledge*.)”

I might add that you’ll find it, too, in Dr. Douma’s treatment of the Second Commandment and, indeed, in most places where the RPW has not *first* been assumed.

Flip-Floppin’ Away

Moreover, the regulativist has not generally proven himself faithful to the flip-side of his principle. Many examples could be given, but let’s be brief. If God forbids in worship all that He has not commanded, may we not rightly assume, following regulativist-style reasoning, that He requires in worship *all* He *has* commanded? If it is God’s will that *only* Psalms be used in worship, does He require that we sing *all* the Psalms? If so, during what period of time should they be completed? Once in every service? Month? Year? Never?

This is not as ridiculous a question as one might suppose. Many Jews, for example, do indeed typically recite the *entire Psalter* (very often performed by heart, I might add) at least once, and in some cases thirteen or more times, in any given year. It seems that the Jews, by this practice, trump the regulativists who well may sing only Psalms but not *all* the Psalms, at least not each year. And what about men being *commanded* to “lift up holy hands” in prayer? This, of course, they reduce to a “circumstance” that does not have to be obeyed. And what about greeting one another with a holy kiss? Here we find a command issued *four times over* to the churches of Christ. *Greet one another with a holy kiss. Greet one another with a holy kiss. Greet one another with a holy kiss. Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss.* (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thes. 5:26.) Do regulativists obey it? Their principle becomes very flexible when it causes them social discomfort, it seems. Or else their principle is extremely arbitrary, wouldn’t you say? Meticulously excluding what they can’t find commanded, while excluding much that is commanded.

And we haven’t even mentioned the explicit command *not to forbid speaking in tongues*. I’ve yet to hear tongues employed in an RPW church (a fact which should move us all to rejoice).¹⁰ No, the RPW is profoundly inadequate if advanced as *the* rule to govern worship in the churches. The point is they want to invert the Second Commandment (saying it forbids what is not commanded when all it says is that what is forbidden may not be done) but they won’t flip their own principle (by saying that what is commanded must be done).

Allow me just one more flip-flop illustration, please. In Answer 99 (part 4) of the Westminster Larger Catechism, we read as a rule for interpreting the commandments, “where a duty is commanded, the contrary sin is forbidden; and, where a sin is forbidden, the contrary duty is commanded.” Now let’s apply that to the Second Commandment. We are forbidden to bow down to idols. Is it not then commanded that we *do* bow down to the Lord? But regulativists do not bow down in their worship services. I remind you that such an omission is perfectly acceptable if we are governed by the IPW, but I cannot understand its absence in RPW churches. What is the excuse? That the architecture and layout of the churches make it inconvenient? Then change the architecture. Islamic worship, you surely know, requires bowing down and their worship centers are built to accommodate their practice. RPW advocates should do the same. Is it just a circumstance of worship, a (convenient) category which provides latitude in compliance? Then why not do the same for instruments or hymns? Where is the list in Scripture which tells us which things are flexible “circumstances” and which are fixed “elements”? The word “humbug” comes to mind. Thus, when we peek inside RPW churches we see therein not only the supposed exclusion of things not commanded, we find the actual exclusion of things certainly commanded.

I trust you are able to see just how impossible it is to accept the proposition that the Regulative Principle of Worship — *if it is not commanded, explicitly or by good and necessary consequence, it is forbidden in worship* — is an adequate rule reflecting Scripture’s actual teaching. And understand this, I beg you: If the RPW is presented as anything *but a stand-alone*, fully adequate rule, it is not the RPW you are looking at. For once a man says there *are* other considerations besides what is stated in the RPW, he has embraced the IPW: If it is not commanded, it *might* be permitted. It depends. (See 1 Cor. 10:23.) This is an important point because many, legion, are they who want to continue using the title “regulativist,” but who, in fact, do not believe the Regulative Principle as historically received. Such posturing is not helpful. Well could Rev. John van Popta (of the Canadian Reformed Churches) complain to a “strict” regulativist:

What do you understand to be the practical working out of “what is not commanded is forbidden”? What has been commanded? Is silent prayer in the worship service commanded? If not, is it forbidden? May there be a call to worship? Is the votum commanded? The salutation? The blessing? Or are these only because of good and proper inference? The (infamous) handshake (of many Reformed churches), has it been commanded? And if not should I tell my elders that we must cease and desist forthwith for we are engaged in self-styled worship? Are liturgical forms for baptism, and the Lord’s Supper commanded? Should office-bearers be ordained in a worship service? Where are the commands for this? The list could go on. I think that

- ¹ Some have suggested that what the synagogue did/offered was not properly called "worship" at all, thus thrusting us back to the Temple as our only legitimate model for "worship." I would ask those entertaining such a notion: Is your church ruled by priests or by elders? Are these assisted by Levites or by deacons? Is the order of service built around recurring sacrifices and ceremonial washings or around the reading/preaching/hearing of the Word of God? Is there an altar or a pulpit? Is there an area into which no one ordinarily may enter? Is there a separate section for women? A separate section for those outside the covenant? What's that you say? You have elder-supervised, deacon-aided, Word-centered, family-oriented, and inviting worship? Well, welcome to synagogue "worship" — or whatever you care to call it. For in the last analysis, suggesting that the synagogue and Reformed church services are not "worship" leads to little more than word-wrangling. On that, see 2 Timothy 2:14. It is also worth noting that Scripture reading itself was not part of the Temple service at all before the Babylonian period, and is not commanded to be an element of Temple service in Scripture, as far as I know. Note further that prayer was, at best, a very minor part of the Temple service, and what was commanded was given in the form of rote, liturgical — not spontaneous — prayer. The Temple doesn't really help in the quest for a stand-alone Biblical worship model for the church.
- ² One difference: the regulativists invent these missing texts only here and only to escape this one dilemma. Another difference: the Jews claim to be able to show us the "texts" as (now written) Oral Law. Regulativists make no such claim.
- ³ Let me quickly add two notes. a) The Pharisees were by no means all bad, and b) I am not merely hurling epithets here but rather seeking to make a valid comparison. I hope this will become evident.
- ⁴ In his *The Ten Commandments: A Manual for the Christian Life* (Translated by Dr. Nelson Kloosterman). A must-own volume, available from Westminster Discount Books, (914) 472-2237.
- ⁵ Since we have seen our views (no doubt inadvertently) misrepresented before, let us be careful to say here that we hold the Westminster Standards in very high esteem. We have taught the Shorter Catechism to our children and the Confession of Faith to adults in our various ministries. We do not, however, receive them as perfect. Nor do we judge

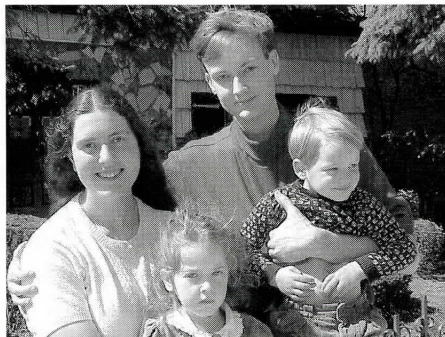
them to be as excellent as the Three Forms of Unity. The latter we regard to be superior in approach and style, if not in content (at certain points). We luxuriate, though, in being blessed to have access and recourse to *both* sets of documents. In a few instances, if truth be told, the Westminster Standards do seem to attempt to say more than they should. One place this overstepping is evident is in their pleading the RPW in the Confession. When they go on to employ the IPW in the Directory, their border violation becomes evident.

- ⁶ Remember that the IPW allows for certain human traditions if they are in agreement with the general rules of the Word.
- ⁷ For the record, the Informed Principle of Worship offers no objection to ministers performing baptisms in regular worship services.
- ⁸ Some will not. When I asked this question on a forum I received this reply: "Yes, I do believe that a strict regulativist believes that the same rules apply to corporate, family, and private worship. Therefore I do only sing Psalms in corporate and family and private worship without instruments." Those who hold this view must regard Hannah (Hannah's Song) and Mary (the Magnificat) as sinful will-worshippers. Interesting.
- ⁹ I ought to mention that I preferred calling it *The Reformed Principle of Worship*, but passed on it for two reasons. One, while the IPW certainly is indicative of the principle employed by many Reformed, as opposed to Presbyterian, churches, it would plainly be untrue to say that the IPW is *identical* to the Reformed philosophy of worship. There is more than one *Reformed* version of worship, in my judgment. I have no wish to even breathe the suggestion that my brothers who disagree with me are not Reformed. Second, the initials would be the same, making shorthand difficult.
- ¹⁰ Of course there are good theological/historical reasons to exclude tongues. But the use of such reasoning comports well with the Informed Principle, not the RPW. For RPW-ites reject good theological/historical reasons to sing non-Psalms, citing only the alleged absence of a command for justification. With each instance of arbitrariness, their principle can be seen to decrease in value.

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Schlissel Family Service joyfully announces the marriage of Sora Feldman of British Columbia and Matt Colvin of Maryland (May 27, 2000)

Sora: "When I first read about SFS, I had yet to meet any man my age who shared my beliefs, goals, and values, and I was not entirely convinced that such a man existed. I am still incredulous when I consider all the myriad evidences of God's workings in our courtship, and how abundantly we have been blessed. Matt is a more perfect husband — and father for Talia and Aedan — than I could have imagined or hoped for. I have never been so happy."



Matt: "Truly God works all things for the good of those who love him! Through His servants in Brooklyn, He has given me a beautiful and godly wife and two children who are the wonder of all who see them. I do not deserve such blessings; I can only give thanks. The Lord has taught me, at last, to look to his people for the desires of my heart — for it is among them, and not in the World, that a wife like Sora may be found. Praise the Lord!"

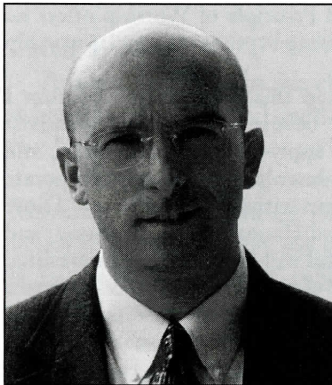
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Christian Reconstruction in the Post-Communist Czech Republic

By Pavel Bartos



If you, as an American reconstructionist, sometimes feel downcast at the prospect of reconstruction in America (and don't tell me that you are such a postmillennial optimist that you are thinking only in long-term Biblical visions at every moment of your life and never ever have to

wonder whether this is only your operating intellectual defense against the worldly pessimism of other eschatological and humanistic views), then let me tell you, first, as much as you may admit your occasional doubts (though, perhaps, not openly), you should never succumb to pessimistic temptations that seek to rob you of your precious faith by undermining your world-transforming and divinely realistic eschatological position. Who is going to change the world for better if not self-conscious or subconscious postmillennial reconstructionists? They always have. I know, I know, I have been told that these and similar terms like "theonomy" might sound like "buzz words" to many in the U. S. and that I had better not use them. Similarly, "conservatism" is probably the most profaned word in the Czech Republic thanks to secular libertarians and socialists. The same is true of "Christianity," "church," "God," etc. Would it be better if we did not use these words? I believe that, unless we want to end up using only hand gestures, we should start "de-profaning" these terms.

Second, what should I as one of the very few Czechs (perhaps the only Czech) who is self-consciously professing reconstruction, living in the most secular nation in the world (statistical survey of global religiosity of 1999) think and say in a country where 99.9% of citizens (*i.e.*, including the 0.75% of professing Christians) believe that the State is the source of legitimacy and law — having the right to "recognize" churches, thus giving them a right to legally exist; where, in short, statism is the most widespread religion. Yes, the Czech Republic is probably the most statist nation in the world. I doubt you could find such a strong religious unity anywhere in the world, except, perhaps, in Islamic countries (although many times I feel we would be better off with Allah than with the State as our god). On top of it, I am a founding member of the

only Calvinistic church in the Czech Republic. This is not a boast, but a sigh of sadness and frustration because of the present condition of Czech Protestantism. Even to an educated Christian ear in the Czech Republic, the word "Calvin" sounds like a call back to the "Dark Ages" and "witch-hunt and burning of heretics." To educated nonbelievers, Calvinism, at best, means "strict moralism" (*i.e.*, that of moralistic running dogs, henchmen) or the threat of an "ecclesiocracy." However the majority of citizens in the Czech Republic have never heard of Calvin, let alone covenants or theonomy, and they consider political conservatism an attempt to revive "medieval monarchy" and "inquisition." On the other hand, it is hard to explain to them the difference after three hundred years of Austro-Hungarian re-catholicization.

Conservatism is generally understood by both churchmen and the common non-Christian as an opposite extreme to communism. Why? In part because of political ignorance, but mostly because of an inability to cope with freedom. Those stricken with envy and slavish socialistic minds can hardly understand freedom and face it with courage, hard work, and faith. Who could charge me with skeptical unbelief if I questioned the prospect of reconstruction, Christian cultural transformation, or even Christian political conservatism in such a country as Czechland?

In spite of this, I believe in the success of Christian cultural transformation and Christian political conservatism so strongly that you may as well put me in the category of those diehard postmillennial optimists whom I tried to challenge above. Actually, I believe that our Czech Hellenistic pagans and statist, both in the government and on the broad plane of citizenry, will embrace Christ as Lord and then embrace Christian culture and Christian social order. They will probably not call it "reconstruction" or "reformation," but "transformation"— a term used now in the Czech Republic.

The present transformation, led by libertarians, humanists, and socialists will go bankrupt sooner or later. The transformation will then proceed with a Christian leadership. Easy, isn't it? Not exactly. It will take decades before the church is sufficiently awakened from its pietistic lethargy and liberalism, and citizens from ignorance and unbelief. But, in Czechland, we may have an advantage. The Roman Catholic social order failed in our country. Communism failed. Socialism failed. Secular libertarianism and socialistic democratism failed and are evidently failing more day by day. And the people seem to know it

(definitely as taxpayers — the total tax burden is 68% and sales tax 23%, etc.), at least subconsciously. You can hear historians, politicians, and even journalists openly saying that democracy is not the magic formula for freedom that we thought. So, what next? Back to totalitarianism? No? Then why not a Christian government, or at least a government that is somewhat Christian? Some government officials are not reluctant to consider these suggestions, provided they see that such proposals do not downplay personal and political freedom, free market economy, morality, etc.

Let me quote from a personal letter to me from the Vice-Chairman of Parliament (dated December 22, 1999): “Your *Civic Papers* are, without any doubt, a deep contribution to the general transformation of our society. . . . Hereby I would want to express my deep encouragement to you and kindly ask you to send me all other issues . . . With deep appreciation. Sincerely, Ivan Langer.” I have received similar responses from the Chairman of the Parliament, the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Parliamentary Club of CDP (libertarian Civic Democratic Party). Now, in these newsletters I openly defended a Christian social order, a Christian theonomic legal order, and a version of modern theocracy, in addition to a free market economy under the ethical Lordship of Christ. Nothing less. As almost total Biblical illiterates, these gentlemen could trash such ideas. They would surely not endanger their political positions doing this. Polls would be in their favor, wouldn’t they? Yet, something caught their attention. I thought for months considering what form this Biblical message needed to take to catch their attention without hiding anything or compromising. I believe the Lord has enabled me to do this in my newsletters. And He has allowed me to build significant intellectual inroads into our Parliament with my theonomic newsletters.

So, I believe that concepts of Christian cultural

reconstruction can be acceptable to an extent even to non-Christians, particularly in a post-Communist country like the Czech Republic, a statist nation — as strange and un presuppositional as this sounds. And this is certainly only a very little beginning, if one at all. Nevertheless, imagine what could happen if the church woke up, if we had trained Christian leaders, seminars held by mainly Christian reconstructionists in our country, or only if we had just a little more money to spread these Biblical ideas to more than a handful of people?

Doesn’t this image uplift your postmillennial beliefs? If so, keep on believing without fear and shame. The Lord will put His enemies under His footstool.

Note: The author would like to express his gratitude to Dr. R. J. Rushdoony for his profound contribution to the cause of Christ and intellectual propagation of the Word of God in His church and around the world as those who seek to apply the Word in all spheres of life study his works and the works of others in Chalcedon as well. I personally thank him and Chalcedon for helping me to be a more ethically self-conscious Christian.

Pavel Bartos is a PEF (Presbyterian Evangelical Fellowship) Czech national evangelist, a founding member of the first Reformed Church in Czech Republic, Zlin. He is presently raising funds in the U. S. He releases weekly Civic Papers on Christian transformation of culture and society, a quarterly theological journal, Diatheke, for pastors, holds public discussions and lectures on various ethical, political, and economic issues, translates reconstructionist and other Reformed works into Czech, and teaches in the church. Pavel and his wife Zdenka have three children and live presently in Peachtree City, GA. Pavel Bartos can be contacted at bartospavel@hotmail.com or phone (678) 364-1848. All financial contributions can be sent to PEF, 4211 Flat Shoals Parkway, Decatur, GA 30034 with a memo “For the Bartos Ministry” or Pavel Bartos, 138 Long Leaf, Peachtree City, GA 30269.

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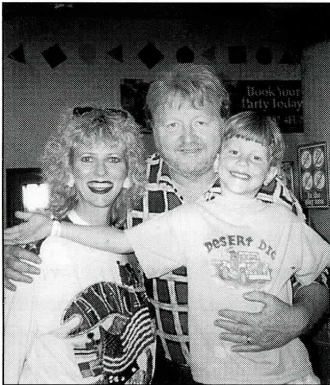
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Pass The Salt, Please!

“... Gossips and Busybodies...” 1 Tim. 5:13

By Mrs. Colonel (Miriam) Doner



Scripture says we are to be as “salt.” Salt is something that lends seasoning, tang, or piquancy (pleasantly sharp, stimulating, provocative or biting); salt is a preservative, and if salt has lost its savor, what good is it?

Let’s consider a few Scriptures and see if we might find some salt:

1 Timothy 5:13: “And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but *tattlers also and busybodies*, speaking things which they ought not.”

Exodus 20:16: “You shall not *bear false witness* against your neighbor.”

When I read Rushdoony’s *Institutes of Biblical Law* in 1978, I learned the far-reaching orthopraxic implications of God’s Ten Commandments. Since then, anytime I find an issue that is related to these few commands, it is a “Ten Commandment Issue” for me. In other words, it’s one of the most basic matters in life that God put within His ten laws. Any activity that does not promote and preserve the truth and the good name of our neighbor (WLC Q&A 144-145) violates the ninth commandment and is thus a “Ten Commandments Issue.”

One of the ways a person “bears false witness” against a neighbor is gossip, because gossip is most often “not a true witness.” Gossip comes from a subjective perspective, and often, a perspective that has been passed on by another distorted, opinionated person. Therefore, basic to our obedience of the Ten Commandments, we should not gossip.

Of course, this is easier said than done! So let me pass on a few practical guidelines:

1) Establish with your friends that this is something you will not do, you will not engage in “gossip” about others. Put it out as a “covenant” — the working laws or terms — of your relationship. You both agree as friends

that you will not gossip, gossip simply will not be tolerated in your friendship because you are committed to a strong, God-honoring friendship. Maintaining confidences strengthen friendships; gossip destroys relationships.

2) One thing I learned from observing one of my best friends, Darlene Rushdoony, is that if others in the room begin to gossip, she quietly and unobtrusively will simply slip out of the room. It is not enough to abstain from participation in a conversation containing gossip, take a pro-active stance and remove your ears from the room!

3) If somebody starts gossiping and you’re unable to move away, again, be proactive and change the subject!

4) Do not believe for a minute that somebody is only telling you this “secret information so that you can pray about it,” what an abomination, what a contradiction! If the situation doesn’t involve you personally, don’t be a talebearer or a gossip.

5) Go directly to the source. If you need to know something, ask the person directly. Or, wait to be told. Dorothy Rushdoony told me that she thinks some of the old “colloquialisms” were a form of keeping the culture godly. The phrase “I heard it from the horse’s mouth” would mean it is not heresay or gossip, it comes directly from the person involved. Busybodies make it their business to know other people’s business. 1 Timothy 5:13 directs us to be neither gossips nor busybodies.

The results? You will obey God in keeping His most basic laws for life in a matter which is grave enough to be of “Ten Commandment” importance. Your relationships with your friends will be stronger, because they honor Scripture. You will train your children to refrain from gossip. You’ll have much more time to direct your energies into what God wants you to be doing!

Every now and then I read the book of Proverbs from beginning to end, whereupon I find I am much more welcome to correction in my life and will hardly dare open my mouth. If you want to find a Biblical precedent for not gossiping, read Proverbs, here are just a few guidelines regarding gossip and communication in general: “These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven

are an abomination unto him: . . . a lying tongue, . . . A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren" (Pr. 6:16-17, 19). "A prating (foolish of lips) fool shall fall" (Pr. 10:8). "The mouth of the foolish is near destruction" (Pr. 10:14). "He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool. In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin; but he that refraineth his lips is wise" (Pr. 10:18-19). "The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom: but the froward (not easily controlled, stubbornly willful; contrary) tongue shall be cut out. The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable; but the mouth of the wicked speaketh frowardness" (Pr. 10:31-32). "An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbour" (Pr. 11:9). "A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter" (Pr. 11:13). "A froward man soweth strife, and a whisperer separateth chief friends" (Pr. 16:28). "He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends" (Pr. 17:9). "The words

of a talebearer are as wounds; and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly" (Pr. 18:8). "He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips" (Pr. 20:19). "Discover not a secret to another" (Pr. 25:9). "Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth. The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly" (Pr. 26:20, 22).

Enough about how a godly woman should *not* speak. Finally, how *should* a virtuous woman speak: "She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness" (Pr. 31:26). And, after reviewing these many verses in Proverbs, once again, I'm too scared to add another word.

Miriam Doner lives somewhat "quietly" with her only husband, Colonel, and their only son, C. J. in Grass Valley, California. You are welcome to reach her at her home office, samaritan-group@mindspring.com.

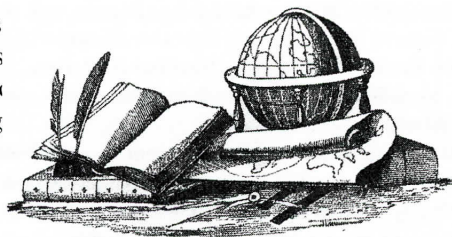
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KEN GENTRY pastors a church in Costa Mesa, CA. He has spoken at numerous conferences including the 1999 Ligonier Conference. He is an adjunct professor of New Testament & Theology at Christ College in Lynchburg, VA. He has authored many books including *The Wine and The Many* and *A Tale of Two Cities* (commentary on Revelation). He will speak on eschatology and its importance in shaping one's worldview.

ED WELCH serves as Director of Counseling, Academic Dean, and faculty member at the Christian Counseling & Educational Foundation, Glenside, PA. He is a faculty member at Westminster Theological Seminary and Biblical Theological Seminary. His books include *Blame It On the Brain* and *When People Are Big and God Is Small*. He will be speaking on the fear of God vs. the fear of man and issues relating to psychology from a Christian worldview.

DON MOELLER is facial surgeon and assistant professor of Biology at Beacon College



in Columbus, GA. A firm believer in six normative creation days, he will demonstrate how the creation model fits the scientific evidence more closely than the evolutionary model.

STEVE WILKINS is a pastor in Monroe, LA. He is author of the popular tape series, *America: The First 350 Years*, and a book, *Call of Duty: The Sterling Nobility of Robert E. Lee*. He will speak on "Worldview Bedrock: Getting and Obtaining Wisdom."

DOUG WILSON is a pastor in Moscow, ID. He is the author of numerous books including *Federal Husband* and *Joy at the End of the Tether*. He also edits *Credenda/Agenda*. He is recognized nationally as a leader in the classical approach to Christian education. He will be preaching each evening and speaking daily on the relationship of Christianity to culture.

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| Aug. 18-19 and Aug. 25-26 | Chalcedon's Joint Conferences with Southern California Center for Christian Studies. For more information, contact David Bahnsen at davidb@davdon-dlb.com or Susan Burns at sburns@goldrush.com. See ad in this issue of the <i>Chalcedon Report</i> . |
| Aug. 20 | Steve Schlissel at Church of the King, Santa Cruz, CA (morning worship). For more information, contact Bill Garaway at (831) 477-7805 or (408) 482-4314. |
| Aug. 20 | Steve Schlissel at Reformed Heritage Church of San Jose, CA (evening worship). For more information contact Gary Wagner at (408) 866-5607. |
| Sept. 28-Oct. 1 | P. Andrew Sandlin at Grand Ledge Christian Center, Grand Ledge, MI. For more information, contact Pastor Craig Dumont at (800) 290-5711 or lwcog@tcimet.net. |
| Oct. 2-5 | P. Andrew Sandlin at the Witherspoon School of Law, Luray, VA. For more information, contact The Vision Forum at (800) 440-0022. |

Chalcedon Vision Statement

Chalcedon labors to articulate in the clearest possible terms a distinctly Christian and explicitly Biblical solution to the prevalent evils of the modern world. Our objective is nothing short of setting forth the vision and program for rebuilding the theological fortifications of Christian civilization. These fortifications have been eroded by the forces of humanism and secularism over the past three centuries. We are not committed, though, merely to reproducing a glorious Christian past. We work to press the claims of historic Christianity as the Biblical pattern of life everywhere. We work for godly cultural change across the entire spectrum of life. We strive to accomplish this objective by two principal methods.

First, Chalcedon is committed to recovering the intellectual foundations of Christian civilization. We do this in two main ways, negatively, we expose the bankruptcy of all non-Christian (and alleged but compromising Christian) systems of thought and practices. Positively, we propose an explicitly Biblical system of thought and action as the exclusive basis for civilization. Only by restoring the Christian Faith and Biblical law as the standard of all of life can Christians hope to re-establish Christian civilizations.

Second, Chalcedon is dedicated to providing the tools for rebuilding Christian civilizations. We work to assist individuals, families, and institutions by offering explicitly Biblical alternatives to anti-Christian ideas and practices. In this way we guide Christians in the task of governing their own spheres of life in terms of the entire Bible: in family, church, school, vocation, arts, economics, business, media, the state, and all other areas of modern life.

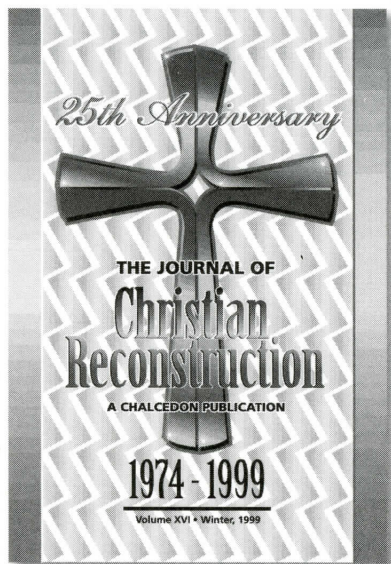
We believe that the source of godly change is regeneration by the Holy Spirit, not revolution by the violence of man. As God regenerates more and more individuals, and as they reorient their lives and areas of personal influence to the teachings of the Bible, He employs them to advance His kingdom and establish Christian civilizations. We believe that God's law is the divine pattern of sanctification in every area of life, but it is not the means of justification; man is saved by grace, not by law. The role of every earthly government — including family government, church government, school government, vocational government, and civil government — is to submit to Biblical law. No government in any form can make men Christians or truly obedient; this is the work of God's sovereign grace. Much less should civil government try to impose Biblical law on an unbelieving society. Biblical law cannot be imposed; it must be embraced.

A guiding principle of Chalcedon, in fact, is its devotion to maximum individual freedom under God's law. Chalcedon derives its name from the great ecclesiastical council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451), which produced the crucial Christological definition of Jesus Christ as God of very God and Man of very man, a formula directly challenging every false claim of divinity by any human institution: state, church, cult, schools, or human assembly. Christ alone is both God and man, the unique link between heaven and earth. All human power is therefore derivative; only Christ may announce that "All power [authority] is given unto me in heaven and earth" (Matthew 28:18). Historically, therefore, the Chalcedonian creed is the foundation of Western liberty, setting limits on all authoritarian human institutions by acknowledging the validity of the claims of the One who is the source of all human freedom (Galatians 5:1). Consequently, we oppose top-heavy, authoritarian systems of government which are, by definition, non-Christian. We advocate instead a series of independent but cooperative institutions and a highly decentralized social order.

Chalcedon is an educational institution. It supports the efforts of Christians and Christian organizations to implement the vision of Christian civilization. Though unapologetically Reformed, Chalcedon supports the kingdom work of all orthodox denominations and churches. Chalcedon is an independent Christian foundation governed by a board of trustees, Christian men in accord with Chalcedon's vision statement. The foundation is not subordinate to the authority of any particular denomination or ecclesiastical body.

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