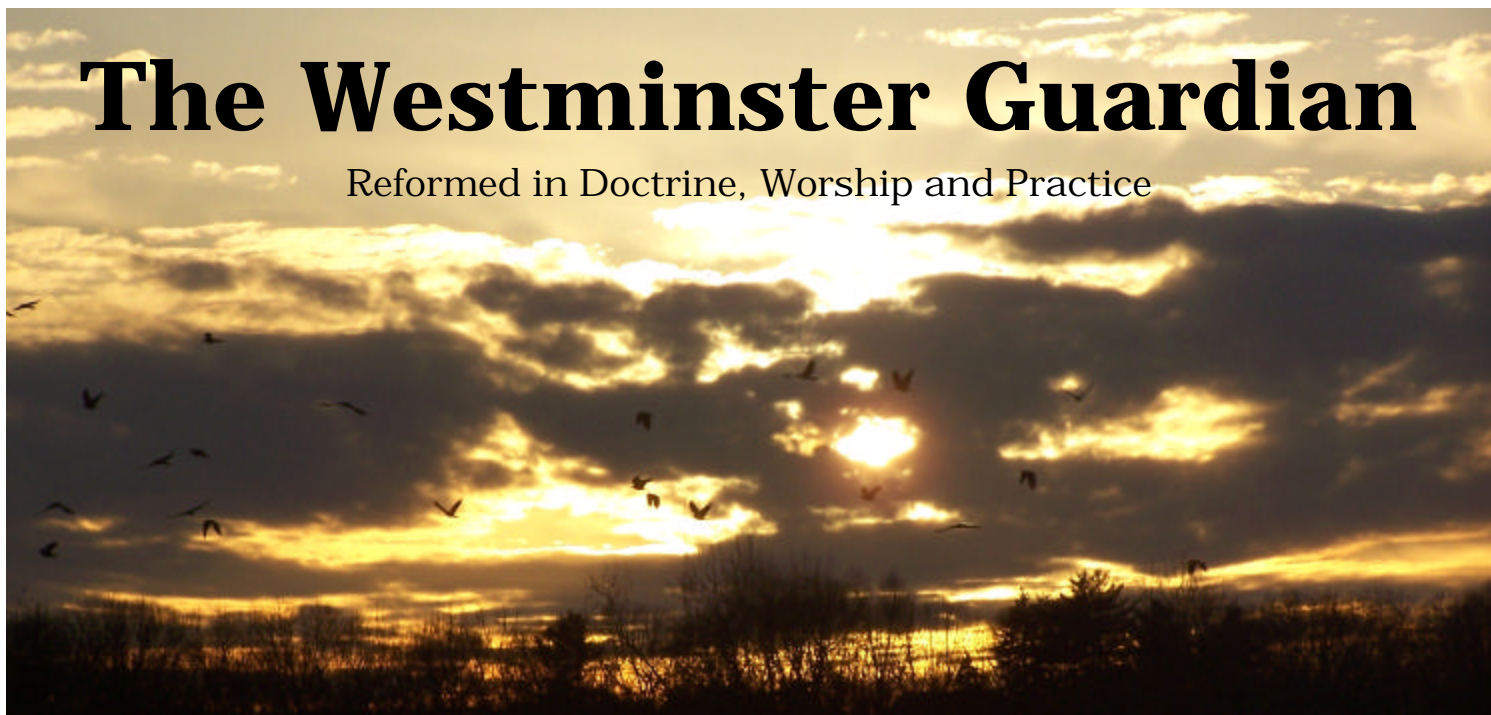


# The Westminster Guardian

Reformed in Doctrine, Worship and Practice



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## Table of Contents

- The Crisis in the OPC and PCA *Page 2*  
Rev. Brian Schwertley, B. A., M. Div.
  
- The Confession and Practice of the Regulative Principle of Worship *Page 9*  
Rev. George Bancroft, B. Sci., M. Div., Th. M
  
- What Is The National Morals Committee? *Page 14*  
Mr. Brian M. Hanley
  
- Children's Page / Life's Supreme Goal *Page 15*  
Rev. Anthony Dallison, B.D.

**Vol 1**

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In the conservative Presbyterian and reformed realm, there has been a controversy raging since 2002. In the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) and the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), the controversy has been especially painful, because the Federal Vision and/or Shepherdism teachings have been adopted by a number of pastors and elders, who by their teaching and example, have turned whole congregations away from the doctrines of Scripture and the Westminster Standards on crucial gospel issues.<sup>1</sup>

In the Orthodox Presbyterian Church the matter of the Federal Vision teaching is coming to a head this summer. The 73rd General Assembly will decide what to do when they discuss the committee report (i.e. “The Report of the Committee to

**The report’s recommendations fail to biblically shepherd the people of God**

Study the Doctrine of Justification”) that deals with the Federal Vision this June. We take the occasion of the release of the OPC

Report to make a few comments on the report, discuss what the OPC and PCA need to do on this matter if they are to avoid complete apostasy, and offer some analysis as to why so little has been done during the last four years to stop this dangerous teaching from spreading. It is our express hope and prayer that the OPC and PCA will finally deal with the Federal Vision-Shepherdism heresy decisively before more congregations and families are drawn into the heresy of an anti-Scriptural legalism.

The report on justification that deals with the New Perspective on Paul and the Federal Vision is from an academic viewpoint quite helpful.<sup>2</sup> It offers a scholarly, well-argued and organized critique of these two dangerous new systems of theology. It unequivocally condemns virtually every unbiblical aberration of the New Perspective and Federal Vision paradigms. Most importantly it explicitly states that the Federal Vision doctrine of justification is contrary to the Word of God and the Westminster Confession of Faith. The committee writes:

Thus our survey of FV teaching in all these areas of theology is always with a view to its impact on the doctrine of justification. The committee points out that in regard to the doctrine of justification more narrowly considered, FV problems include a failure to affirm the imputation of Christ’s active obedience along with a redefinition of faith that merges Christ’s trust in the Father with our faith in the work of Christ and that also includes good works in the very definition of faith itself (1689-1690).

The report has three recommendations. First, it recommends fourteen different topics that ought to be used “with a view to ensuring each candidate’s fidelity to biblical and confessional teaching on justification and his ability to articulate that teaching...” (1690). Second, “that presbyteries, sessions and pastors be proactive in addressing teaching of the New Perspective on

Paul [NPP] and of the Federal Vision [FV] that compromises the purity of the gospel” (1961). Third, that the report should receive a wide distribution in the denomination and other denominations with which it has fraternal relations (1691). In short, it is an exhortation to be more careful about examining candidates for the ministry, teaching about the errors of the New Perspective and the Federal Vision theology and here is the report to help in these recommendations.

Although as an academic theological refutation of NPP/FV we are generally pleased with the report and its conclusions, there are a number of serious problems relating to the report’s recommendations that need to be considered. (1) The report recommends reading the writings of these heretics. While pastors need to be aware of current dangerous theological opinions to an extent to guard the flock of God, it is unbiblical and irresponsible to recommend that believers read subtle, insidious, ambiguous and contradictory heretical doctrines that lead people away from the faith once delivered to the saints. We do not find Paul, John or Peter recommending the writings of Judaizers, Gnostics, or Antinomians. Various quotes by these heretics in refutations ought to be sufficient. (2) The report’s recommendations fail to biblically shepherd the people of God. This point is established by what the report does not recommend. (Keep in mind that the report stated that the Federal Vision’s doctrine of justification is contrary to Scripture and the Westminster Standards. We are not just dealing with a minor error or a non-scandalous mistake but with error that strikes at the very heart of Protestantism, evangelicalism, the reformed faith or Christianity itself.) There is nothing in the report that deals with sanctions against the wolves (heretics) among the flock.<sup>3</sup> -- What should the report have recommended?

First, the teachings of the Federal Vision on justification must be declared to be a damnable heresy. Regarding those who pervert the gospel of Christ, Paul says by the Holy Spirit: “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto

**...error that strikes at the very heart of Protestantism**

you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed”(Gal. 1:8-9). Martin Luther’s comments on this passage are worthy of note. He writes:

Therefore, he plainly excommunicateth and curseth all teachers in general, himself, his brethren, an angel, and moreover all others whatsoever, namely all those false teachers his adversaries. Here appeareth an exceeding great fervency of spirit in the Apostle, that he dare curse all teachers throughout the whole world and in heaven, which pervert his Gospel and teach any other: for all men must either believe that

Gospel that Paul preached, or else they must be accursed and condemned. Would to God this terrible sentence of the Apostle might strike a fear into their hearts that seek to pervert the Gospel of Paul; of which sort at this day (the more it is to be lamented) the world is full.<sup>4</sup>

Calvin's comments on this passage are every bit as strong as Luther's. He writes:

He...rebuketh them...specially for the overgreat lightness that was in them in giving ear to deceivers...but whensoever anybody goes about to mingle anything with the pure seed [of the gospel] which we have of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is nothing else but an overthrowing of God's building [i.e., the church]...And therefore if we have not the pure and single doctrine, wherein our Lord Jesus Christ was manifested unto us: surely we have nothing at all: and whensoever we have once been instructed in it, we must hold it to the last push. For if we swerve never so little from it, there will be nothing but unfaithfulness in us.... Now, were it not better that the whole world would sink and perish, than that all this [the glorious gospel] should be overthrown.<sup>5</sup>

Second, any church officer that adheres to the Federal Vision paradigm must be deposed from the ministry: "A man that is a heretick after the first and second admonition reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself"(Tit. 3:10-11). The church courts are to attempt to turn a person who adheres to scandalous false doctrine back to the truth on two separate occasions. "He does not mean any 'admonition' whatever, or that of a private individual, but an 'admonition' given by a minister, with the public authority of the Church; for the meaning of the Apostle's words is as if he had said, that heretics must be rebuked with solemn and severe censure."<sup>6</sup> If that person does not repent, he is to be cast out of the visible church by excommunication. The imperative *paraitou* "is used here in the sense of 'reject' or 'dismiss,' i.e. remove from the fellowship of the Christian community" (cf. 1 Cor. 5:11-13; 2 Thess. 3:14; Mt. 18:17-18).<sup>7</sup> When a Christian is guilty of scandalous false teaching, Paul, speaking by divine inspiration, tells us plainly that words, arguments, statements and positive teachings are not enough when heretics are obstinate. Church discipline must be lovingly and firmly applied otherwise the debates and theological battles will never come to an end (Gal. 5:15). After two solemn and sober warnings, heretics are to be cast out of the church. The shock of deposing from church office may be used of God to turn them from their foolishness back to the genuine gospel of Christ. Further, the welfare of the church is protected. Church discipline is an act of love toward the one excommunicated (As Paul says, "That the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" [1 Cor. 5:5]). We must obey Scripture which says in 1 Timothy 1:3, "As I besought thee..., that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine." If necessary whole presbyteries may be censured by the General Assembly or

Synod, vindicating those church officers who have dissented and complained in the Presbytery.

Paul also instructed Titus what must be done with false teachers. He writes: "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, especially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake" (Tit. 1:9-11; cf. 12-16; 3:10-11). When the apostle says that their mouths must be stopped he uses a verb (*epistomizein*) which has the primary meaning of to "stop the mouth either with bridle or muzzle or gag."<sup>8</sup> For Paul it is not enough for Titus to write a position paper on why the false teachers are wrong. They must be silenced. They are no longer to be permitted to teach and if they persist they are to be disciplined and even excommunicated if necessary. "When men are thus confuted by argument, overthrown with the sword of the Spirit, and confounded by the power of the truth and still proceed to trouble the peace of the church and the faith of the saints, then the church may and must proceed by censure and admonition to enjoin them to silence; which if they will not hear, they ought by the church to be driven from the society of the faithful. If they prove gangrenous, they must be cut off."<sup>9</sup> Calvin's comments on this passage apply beautifully to the situation many Presbyterians find themselves in today. He writes:

A good pastor ought therefore to be on the watch, so as not to give silent permission to wicked and dangerous doctrines to make gradual progress, or to allow wicked men an opportunity of spreading them. But it may be asked, "How is it possible for a bishop to constrain obstinate and self-willed men to be silent? For such persons, even though they are vanquished in argument, still do not hold their peace; and it frequently happens that, the more manifestly they are refuted and vanquished, they become the more insolent; for not only is their malice strengthened and inflamed, but they give themselves up to indolence." I reply, when they have been smitten down by the sword of God's word, and overwhelmed by the force of the truth, the Church may command them to be silent; and if they persevere, they may at least be banished from the society of believers, so that they shall have no opportunity of doing harm.<sup>10</sup>

Thus far the PCA have not obeyed the teaching of Paul and ordered Steve Wilkins, Richard Lusk, Mark Horne and others to stop spreading their heretical teaching on justification, the atonement, the sacraments and worship. The OPC has not dealt with James B. Jordan (a church member), Prof. Richard Gaffin, Thomas Tyson, Thomas Trouwburst, and the many others who are poisoning the sheep with their teaching.

In a similar vein, Paul writes: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For

they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (Rom. 16:17-18). Paul warns us to be on the look out for anyone who causes divisions in the church because their doctrine contradicts the teaching of the apostles. He orders us to keep away from men who depart from the faith. If we are to follow Paul and separate ourselves from heretics, then we must separate ourselves from false prophets and by way of application those who shelter them. John Murray’s comments are helpful. He writes:

We have here false teachers and propagandists.... [T]he stumbling is that caused by false doctrine and falls into the category of the error anathematized in Galatians. The injunctions comport with an error of such character; they are to ‘mark’ the proponents so as to avoid them and they are to ‘turn away from them’.... The teachers were skilled in the artful device of ‘smooth and fair speech,’ a common feature of those who corrupt the purity and simplicity of the gospel.”<sup>11</sup>

If a church by its irresponsible inaction in dealing with false teachers forces believers to separate in order to maintain fidelity to the gospel and the injunctions designed to protect the gospel, then believers must not regard their separation as a dividing of the body of Christ, but rather as the most effectual way to promote its union. For union must always be rooted in truth. We are commanded to have the mind of Christ. This separation is not based on pride or selfishness, but rather on obedience to the will of God and the greater interest of the church of Christ.

When dealing with false teaching—especially damnable heresy—it is not enough to make positive statements in favor of true doctrine and then set out general warnings against the false teaching. There must be sanctions that back up such statements. The unwillingness thus far, over a period of almost four years, to discipline teachers in their own ranks who publicly advocate gross heresy is unconscionable. At the very beginning of the controversy, when people were struggling to figure out what exactly these men were saying, one could make an argument that some time, a month or two, is needed to properly assess the situation. But, this heresy has been analyzed and exposed for over three and a half years. What are the OPC and PCA waiting for? When will they repent of their sinful, blatant negligence?

The apostle John also teaches that denominations and even individual believers have a moral obligation to reject pastors, teachers and elders who have apostatized and teach damnable heresy. “Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds” (2 Jn. 9-11). The apostle John is warning us about teachers who intentionally or unintentionally intend to destroy the church of Jesus Christ. “[T]he Christian who welcomes the instructor into his house actually promotes the purpose of his visitor. In effect, the Christian gives his

blessing to the work the false teacher performs. Note that John does not consider this an innocent and insignificant act. He calls it sharing in wicked work that originates with Satan...”<sup>12</sup> Regarding false teachers Matthew Henry writes:

They are not to be entertained as ministers of Christ.... 1. ‘Support them not’ ....2. ‘Bless not their enterprises.... Attend not their service with your prayers and good wishes’ .... God will be no patron of falsehood, seduction and sin”<sup>13</sup>

A person that supports a man or an organization with his presence and money is morally responsible for the heresy that is spread by that false prophet or denomination. Members of OPC and the PCA congregations should speak to their Sessions about separation and in unity depart from the OPC and PCA; but individual members and covenant heads of families must immediately take themselves and their children out of these corrupt denominations, if the respective Sessions are unwilling to separate.

When the OPC or PCA fails to depose ministers who are publicly spreading this heresy, they are implicitly giving these false teachers much greater opportunities of doing harm to Reformed congregations and believers elsewhere. Further, they are acting in a manner which makes it much more difficult for these false teachers to see the errors of their ways. These denominations may argue that they have at various times condemned these teachings (e.g., the recent [April] OPC report on justification) and thus their hands are now clean. But, if a denomination condemns a teacher’s doctrine on so crucial matter as justification as unscriptural and unconfessional and yet does not back that statement up with the biblically required discipline, then what good is it? What the OPC and PCA have essentially been doing the last four years is akin to saying: “Adultery is contrary to the Scriptures and our Standards. We are strongly opposed to adultery. In fact we need to be more careful in excluding adulterers from church membership. However, we do not discipline or excommunicate adulterers, that would be too harsh and unloving.”<sup>14</sup> Church history teaches us that church reports and denominational statements without corresponding appropriate acts of discipline accomplish little to nothing. Heretics, generally, do not leave on their own accord; they must be forced out.

Men who teach and rule in the church of Christ are to use their gifts “to edification, and not to destruction” (2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10). The doctrines set forth must be biblical and clear, if they are to lead to the salvation and spiritual edification of the church. Those ministers who are advocating this new teaching are not promoting the spiritual good of others but rather are leading them into multiple heresies. Therefore, the church must exercise its God-given authority to remove this deadly error; otherwise, she is responsible for the abuse, apostasy and destruction of the sheep under her care. Men who by their teaching deprive their congregants of the perfect righteousness of Christ and instead lead them to their own filthy, stinking rags of “covenant faithfulness” for final justification are wolves and not shepherds. If the OPC and

the PCA refuse to depose and excommunicate the proponents of the Federal Vision theology who do not repent, then constitutionally in principle, they are no longer a true church. They are fundamentally in practice apostate. All the blood of those souls slain by her damnable teaching on justification which she purposely refused to expunge in the name of forbearance, love and compassion (falsely so called) will be required at her hand. “And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel...? Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord” (2 Cor. 6:15-17).

Third, after due process in the courts those persons who adhere to and/or support the teachings of the Federal Vision theology must be excommunicated from the communion of the visible church of Jesus Christ unless they repent of these heretical doctrines and recant any sermons, writings, books, lectures, tapes, websites, newsletters, etc., that advocate these teachings. “If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself” (1 Tim. 6:3-5). “Paul forbids the servants of Christ to have any intercourse with such persons. He not only warns Timothy not to resemble them, but exhorts him to avoid them as dangerous plagues.”<sup>15</sup> “Good ministers and Christians will withdraw themselves from such.”<sup>16</sup> “[W]ith such men have nothing to do, avoid them in thy private converse, and cast them out of the church if their faults be public scandals, and they be contumacious”<sup>17</sup> “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness” (2 Tim. 2:15-16; see 3:5, 13; 4:2-4). “Now we command you, brethren in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received from us... And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother” (2 Th. 3:6, 14-15; the passages discussed in the previous section apply to this point as well).

In these passages Paul teaches: (1) Individual believers have a moral obligation to withdraw themselves socially and ecclesiastically from persons who teach or live in heresy. (2) The church has a biblical responsibility to order men to stop teaching false doctrine. They are to be silenced, because their teaching is devastating to whole families (Tit. 1:11). (3) False teachers are to be censured and separated from the communion and fellowship of the church. “Paul declares that such persons must be put away from the society of believers, that they may not bring dishonor upon the Church.”<sup>18</sup>

The primary mark of a true church is the pure preaching and profession of the Word (Jn. 8:31, 32, 47; 14:16; 6:34; 2 Tim. 1:13; 2:2; 3:10, 14; 4:3; Tit. 1:9; 2:1; 3:10-11, etc). The true church can only stand upon true apostolic doctrine. Calvin writes:

But as soon as falsehood breaks into the citadel of religion and the sum of necessary doctrine is overturned and the use of the sacraments is destroyed, surely the death of the church follows—just as a man’s life is ended when his throat is pierced or his heart mortally wounded. And this is clearly evident from Paul’s words when he teaches that the church is founded upon the teaching of the prophets and apostles, with Christ himself the chief cornerstone [Eph. 2:20]. If the foundation of the church is the teaching of the prophets and apostles, which bids believers entrust their salvation to Christ alone—then take away that teaching, and how will the building continue to stand? Therefore, the church must tumble down when that sum of religion dies which alone can sustain it. Again, if the true church is pillar and foundation of truth [1 Tim. 3:15], it is certain that no church can exist where lying and falsehood have gained sway.<sup>19</sup>

For this reason, ministers and elders, as guardians of the flock, have a responsibility (after following the necessary levels of admonition) to “reject” (Tit. 3:10), “put away from” the church (1 Cor. 5:13) and regard as “heathen” (Mt. 18:17) those who do not repent of this heresy.

The Westminster Confession gives a number of reasons why church censures are essential:

Church censures are necessary, for the reclaiming and gaining of offending brethren, for deterring of others from the like offenses, for purging out of that leaven which might infect the whole lump, for vindicating the honour of Christ, and the holy profession of the gospel, and for preventing the wrath of God, which might justly fall upon the Church, if they should suffer His covenant and the seals thereof to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders” (30:3; see 1 Cor. 5; 1 Tim. 5:20; Mt. 7:6; 1 Tim 1:20; 1 Cor. 11:27-34; with Jude 23).

Regarding ministers who advocate the Auburn Avenue or Federal Vision doctrine we ask the following questions. (1) Does their teaching rise to the level of the highest censure called greater excommunication (Mt. 18:17)? Yes, all good Protestants agree that denying the doctrine of justification by faith alone is gross, damnable heresy. (2) Are the advocates of this doctrine teachable and humble or obstinate and rebellious? Sadly, the latter is obviously the case. As they have been confronted by the truth, they have dug in their heels and become more blind and stubborn. Thus far, not one has repented.<sup>20</sup> (3) Have these men received proper biblical admonitions and have they been given a reasonable amount of time to repent? These men (i.e. at least the prominent leaders) have been confronted privately, publicly and have been thoroughly refuted in print.<sup>21</sup> This controversy is almost four years old. These answers raise another question: Why has the OPC and PCA refused to discipline virtually anyone related

to this heresy? This a perplexing question. One reason men shrink from such a duty is that “it is painful work to every benevolent mind. It is a work in which no man is willing to engage, unless constrained by sense of duty.”<sup>22</sup>

Another possible reason is that some people interpret excommunication as a statement that a person is unregenerate and definitely belongs to hell. Excommunication consists in casting the offender “out of the Church into the world which is described in Scripture as Satan’s kingdom.”<sup>23</sup> Such persons, however, may repent and be readmitted to the visible church. Another likely reason is that many churchmen are placing institutional peace (i.e. they are afraid of a church split) before the disciplinary requirements of Scripture. If this is the case, then such men have not learned the lessons of the modernist takeover in the PCUSA. Men who seek peace when there is no peace lack wisdom. The splits will come as some already have, but they will be the faithful seceding from corruption, apostasy and cowardice, instead of heretics fleeing justice. Churchmen who refuse to discipline are acting like false prophets who say, “Peace, peace when there is no peace” (Jer. 6:14; 8:11). The OPC and PCA at present allow men to serve in the ministry who are false teachers on the broad path that leads to destruction. Given the biblical injunctions on false teachers, it is abundantly clear that the Scriptural answer to the Federal Vision’s penetration into the OPC and PCA must have both a positive and negative response.

Further, many people have an unbiblical view of discipline as harsh, unnecessary and unkind. People who have opposed the Auburn Avenue doctrines have even been viewed as unloving. This view, however, assumes contrary to Scripture that discipline is bad. Discipline is indeed painful; it causes grief and heartache. But, it is certainly not bad. We could even say that the refusal to discipline those who definitely deserve it is the opposite of love for it makes people comfortable in their sins. It gives people who are in rebellion against God a false sense of security.

The reason the OPC and PCA are plagued by false and deficient ministers is their very lax concept of subscription to the Westminster Standards. When traveling or moving to a new area the family that visits an OPC or PCA church does not know what they are going to encounter until they attend a church service. Will it be a “new life” celebrative (i.e. Arminian Charismatic style worship), a James Jordanite Anglo-Catholic service, a “traditional” old-fashioned service or a Westminster Confessional service (a cappella exclusive psalmody)? Will there be the many false teachings and practices that are allowed by way of exceptions to the Standards: paedocommunion, high church prelatical liturgies, priestly robes and vestments, deviant views on the early chapters of Genesis, mono-covenantalism, baptismal regeneration, higher life antinomian concepts of love, justification through faithful obedience, etc? A Presbyterian denomination that has a lax concept of subscription is “like a box of chocolates...you never know what you’re going to get.” If the OPC and PCA want to stop the declension, they need to stop treating the Standards as a rubber yardstick or a set of broad recommendations. They must return to the full subscriptionism of their forefathers.

If the OPC and PCA do not condemn and censure the here-

tics, which is unlikely given their rather advanced states of doctrinal decay on creation, the gospel, morality, the sacraments, etc., then they should be open and honest and rewrite the Westminster Standards to reflect what they really believe, allow and practice. The purpose of full subscription is to lock in a particular theological system and protect it from decay. Another purpose is to tell everyone what is confessed and represented. The lax system in place in the OPC and the PCA really does neither. The Westminster Standards are sort of what we believe, sometimes, depending on who the local pastor and session is.

In the OPC and PCA today, there are two rival religious systems. On the one side, generally speaking, we have the conservative remnant of New School Presbyterianism. On the other side we have the sacramentalists who are essentially Anglo-Catholic in worship and modern Judaizers on justification. They do not really look to Calvin, Knox and Melville but medieval Christianity, Norman Shepherd and Neo-legalism. Both sides cannot exist together in harmony, for fundamentally they are two separate, different religious systems: one of grace alone, the other of works righteousness.

The crucial issue for both these denominations is sanctions. Rules, confessions and laws without sanctions are in the long run worthless. A denomination without full subscriptionism and church discipline to back it up will be slowly devoured by a thousand qualifications. With full subscriptionism and biblical discipline people have the biblical freedom of God’s law Word. There is predictability in doctrine and ethics. With a very loose form of subscriptionism and the pragmatism and human flexibility that attends it, the flock in essence is left to the whim of liberal church bureaucrats. There is a slow evolution of doctrine and practice away from the Reformed faith. That is why in many areas, in doctrine, worship, and practice, the OPC and PCA are so much worse now than they were only 30 to 40 years ago.

## Conclusion

Having briefly considered the OPC Report on Justification, we are compelled to conclude the following. The committee report of the OPC does not recommend that unrepentant Federal Vision teachers and advocates be deposed and censured, which is precisely what the OPC needs. Unless a church officer from the floor alters the recommendation and a motion passes to begin the admonition and censure process, then the report is little more than words that can and will likely be ignored. On the one hand, the Federal Vision doctrine of justification is said to contradict Scripture; but on the other hand, the proponents of this doctrine are tolerated as though it was a non-vital error. This is a scandalous sin, a sin so great that it justifies secession on the part of those who want to be faithful to Scripture.<sup>24</sup> How long are the Truly Reformed (TRs) or “conservatives” in the OPC and PCA going to keep on tolerating blatant, serious and even deadly contradictions to Scripture and the Westminster Standards in their communions?<sup>25</sup> If one does not separate from the toleration of this damnable heresy, then one is guilty of participating in these scandalous sins. Once we strip away all the ex-

cuses, pragmatism, worldly concepts of love, fund raising needs, and bureaucratic maneuvering, we are left with a toleration of a complete repudiation of the all-sufficiency of Christ's redemption. This toleration of a false gospel is totally unacceptable. How many congregations and families need to be destroyed by heresy before a decision to depart is made? "Know ye not that a little leaven leavens the whole lump" (1 Cor. 5:6)? There comes a time when the best method of reformation is to protest and secede, with denouncing of jurisdiction. Faithfulness at this hour requires it.

#### Footnotes

1 There are a number of OPC and PCA ministers and elders who have written papers, spoken at conferences in favor of this theology, and defended church officers holding the same in the church courts: e.g., Prof. Richard Gaffin, Thomas Tyson, Thomas Trouwburst, Peter Lillback, Richard Lusk, and Steven Wilkins. There is substantially no difference between Shepherdism and the Federal Vision, as the advocates of both share in the same conferences and together promote the doctrine of justification by faith plus faithful obedience or good works. Norman Shepherd's heretical book, *The Call of Grace: How the Covenant Illuminates Salvation and Evangelism*, published by Presbyterian and Reformed, was endorsed by Prof. Richard Gaffin,

2 The General Assembly committee had been formed to deal with the Federal Vision and New Perspective on Paul in 2004, because of an overture from the Mid-West Presbytery.

3 The report's omissions are particularly troubling given the OPC's past failures to protect the sheep under their care when they had the opportunity. The OPC Presbytery of Philadelphia failed to convict Norman Shepherd of heresy in the late 1970s, when he was dismissed from Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia. Also, Elder John O. Kinnard was acquitted by the OPC General Assembly, after being convicted of teaching a doctrine of justification by faith plus works. Although Kinnard displayed some remorse for a lack of clarity in his teaching, he never repented of teaching the Shepherdite/FV doctrine of justification by faith plus faithful obedience (or works).

4 Martin Luther, *A Commentary of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1953), 69. William Hendriksen writes: "The truth expressed in the first conditional sentence (verse 8) greatly strengthens that expressed in the second (verse 9). We have here the reasoning: if even, then all the more. In effect, Paul is saying, 'If even we (I, or a fellow-worker) or a holy angel must be the object of God's righteous curse, were any of us ever to preach a gospel contrary to the one we humans previously preached to you, then all the more the divine wrath must be poured out upon those self-appointed nobodies who are now making themselves guilty of this crime.' Here the storm is unleashed in all its fury. Paul's 'Let him be anathema' is not a mere wish, but an effective invocation. The apostle, as Christ's fully authorized representative, is pronouncing the curse upon the Judaizers, who are committing the

terrible crime of calling the true gospel false, and of substituting the false and ruinously dangerous gospel for the true and saving one." (*Galatians and Ephesians* [Grand Rapids: Baker (1967, 68) 1979], 41).

5 John Calvin, *Sermons on Galatians* by John Calvin (Audubon, NJ: Old Paths, [1574] 1995), 50 51, 55, 63, 64, 65).

6 John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus and Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 342.

7 George Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 355. "And this the word (paraitou) notes, for it properly signifies to be drawn out of a city as an outcast, or (applied to the church) to cast a man out by excommunication, or to cut him off from the society of the church" (Thomas Taylor, *Exposition of Titus* [Minneapolis, MN: Klock & Klock (1619) 1980], 531).

8 Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker [1931] n.d.), 4:600.

9 Thomas Taylor, *Exposition of Titus* (Minneapolis, MN: Klock and Klock [1619] 1980), 174-175.

10 John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus and Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 298.

11 John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, [1959, 65] 1968), 2:236.

12 Simon J. Kistemaker, *James and I-III John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 384.

13 Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* [McLean, VA: MacDonald, no date], 5:1102.

14 While God often defines love in terms of His willingness to chastise His own people when they go astray, modern, corrupt Presbyterians seem to define love as being willing to chastise those who believe that sin and heresy ought to receive admonition, rebuke and censure. When the RPCUS defended the gospel of Jesus Christ in 2002 by condemning the Federal Vision teaching on justification as heresy, the widespread reaction among many Presbyterians and so-called theonomists was shock and anger, not at the damnable heretics who were denying the true gospel, but at the RPCUS for defending it. We live in a time of widespread ignorance and declension.

15 John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, 156.

16 Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 6:828.

17 Matthew Poole, *Commentary on the Holy Bible*

(Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, [1685] 1963), 3:788.

18 John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians, Colossians and Thessalonians*, 352.

19 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 4:2:1, 2:1041-1042. Regarding church discipline William Cunningham writes: "Censures are just the application of the statements of scripture to the external conduct of men individually, and they are ratified or confirmed by God in their bearing upon man's eternal welfare, only in so far as they correspond with the statements of His word, and with the actual circumstance of the case.... Exclusion by a judicial sentence from the visible church, is just in substance a solemn declaration by the ecclesiastical office-bearers, that they regard the party whom they exclude as maintaining opinions or pursuing a course of conduct opposed to the word of God" (*Discussions on Church Principles: Popish, Erastian, and Presbyterian* [Edinburgh: T and T. Clark, 1868], 244-245).

20 Doug Wilson has attempted to appear more orthodox and moderate than his comrades by asserting his belief in the imputation of Christ's righteousness. While Wilson by his subtle equivocations and statements that are orthodox may appear to be better than some of his theological partners in heresy (e.g., Rich Lusk), he in reality must be rejected as a heretic because: (1) Despite his moderate tone, he comes to virtually all the same conclusions as Lusk and Wilkins. (2) He is in full support of the movement which is at its core heretical and deadly. Canon Press publishes the most radical of opinions and New St. Andrew's College employs Peter Leithart whose writings on the church, worship and the sacraments are radically unorthodox. If a man supports a heretical movement with his money, writing, publishing, lectures, etc then that man is a dangerous heretic.

21 See Brian M Schwertley, *Auburn Avenue Theology: A Biblical Analysis* (Iola, WI: Covenanted Reformation Press, 2005); John M. Otis, *Danger in the Camp: An Analysis and*

*Refutation of the Heresies of the Federal Vision* (Corpus Christi, TX: Triumphant Publications, 2005).

22 Samuel Miller, *The Ruling Elder* (Dallas, TX: Presbyterian Heritage Publications, [1831, 32, 43, 44] 1999, 189.

23 Robert Shaw, *An Exposition of the Westminster Confession of Faith* (Geanies House, Feann: Christian Focus Publications, [1845] 1973), 364.

24 Instead of quiet withdrawal and transfer to another denomination, the historic reformational method of protest and secession is the answer to warn other church officers and communicant members of the seriousness of the gospel corruption. These are damnable heresies akin to those of the Judaizers and the Roman Catholic church, requiring a disruption.

25 The practice of very loose subscriptionism, today where "conservative" Presbyterian denominations have many different and contrary theological views and worship practices has led to a type of functional independency for the TR congregations. These congregations know that from a human standpoint there is nothing that they really can do about it. Therefore, they unconsciously, and sometimes even consciously, adopt a "let us be strict on doctrine and worship—please just leave us alone" attitude. They perhaps even think of themselves as a reformed oasis in a desert of declension and apathy. They justify their membership in a corrupt, deforming denomination by telling themselves, "We are here to be used of God to reform this denomination;" or "If we leave who will be left to work for reformation?" Since there is no empirical evidence that the TRs have brought about even one iota of reformation in the OPC or PCA in the last thirty years, we must ask our conservative brothers a final question. Now that one of the central pillars of the faith, justification by faith alone apart from the works of the law, is openly denied without sanctions in the OPC and PCA, what excuse remains?



Introduction

At present, in the United States, it is well known that per capita there are small numbers of exclusive psalmist congregations without the use of musical instruments in public worship. In contrast, Scotland has more than five denominations holding to exclusive psalmody without musical instruments in public worship: Associate Presbyterian Churches, Free Church of Scotland, Free Church of Scotland (continuing), Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland. In Scotland, there are more than 100 congregations singing the Psalms exclusively on the Lord's Day, unaccompanied. On the Lords Day, the average family can drive twenty to forty minutes to a church committed to exclusive Psalmody, no musical instruments, and even no holy days, but the Christian Sabbath.

Church officers are required to maintain, defend, and assert ... purity of worship

It is believed by some that perhaps the culture of the United States cannot sustain advancement of exclusive Psalmody

and no musical instruments in public worship; and that in Scotland, there are vast numbers of believers, who simply prefer exclusive Psalmody and a cappella singing. For contrast and comparison, it is perceived that the believers in the state of North Carolina or the state of New Jersey have a preference for singing uninspired hymns and musical instruments in public worship. Those who put forth the cultural argument are essentially arguing that there is no such thing as the regulative principle of worship or prescribed worship in Scripture. Under pragmatic thinking, the 'tastes' of men in worship replace Scripture prescribed worship.

In truth, it is not 'tastes' or preference in Scotland that has advanced Scripture prescribed worship or the regulative principle of worship. Since prescribed worship is required in the congregations at present in five Presbyterian denominations mentioned above, it is by conviction and forthright constitutional decree, which advances the regulative principle of worship. Church officers are required to maintain, defend, and assert what is often called 'purity of worship'. This conviction establishes the unity and assists in the advancement. In this sense, the cultural environment in Scotland is conducive to promoting the regulative principle of worship; but the maintenance and advancement of the regulative principle of worship stems from ministers and elders in commitment to Scripture and the constitutional establishment of purity of worship.

In the culture of the United States, far too many Presbyterian ministers and elders are simply uninterested in Scripture prescribed worship, as set forth in the Westminster Standards. The popular new life worship promotes a 20th century 'pop culture' ever progressive worship. Under new life worship, worship is democratically decided by adherents of the faith and the Session. Under Anglo-Catholic worship, with much ceremonial law introductions, the sacerdotal clergy determine the worship. Both positions, new life worship and Anglo-Catholic worship, come from a faulty view of the moral law. Both views fail to include the proper extensive view of the moral law in Scripture.

The Anglo-Catholic view rejects the clear teaching of Scripture that the ceremonial law has been abolished in the New Testament. The new life view rejects the Second Commandment altogether as pertaining to public worship.

The work of reformation in the United States in doctrine, worship, and practice rests on the shoulders of those Presbyterian church officers, who are serious about subscription to the Westminster Standards, believing them to be eminently biblical. For these church officers, the system of theology in the Westminster Church Standards is not some vague undefined set of doctrines; but the whole doctrine of the Westminster Standards is the full system of theology. Subscription to the full system of theology in the Westminster Standards will bring that necessary unity for reformation in doctrine, worship, and practice (see Acts 16:3-4). Church growth without unity in sound doctrine, worship, and practice is simply temporary fellowship and not biblical church growth.

Sadly, too many strict subscriptionist church officers have been divided over a concept that should be unifying. Many church officers, claiming to hold to the regulative principle of worship, stop short of the singing of the 150 psalms exclusively and unaccompanied in public worship. They stop short of exclusive Psalmody and practice predominance of Psalmody accompanied by an organ or piano. The Westminster Standards consistently apply prescribed worship or the regulative principle of worship, endorsing only the singing of the 150 Psalms of the Bible (Westminster Confession, ch. XXI, sec. 5). This is displayed in every document including the Westminster Directory for the Public Worship of God and the Westminster Form of Presbyterian Church Government. As a result, church officers who practice predominance of Psalmody are either taking an exception to the Westminster Standards, or they are simple delaying far too long to take the congregation they serve to exclusive Psalmody and no musical instruments.

The church officers, practicing something called predominance of Psalmody, have placed themselves in a vulnerable, indefensible position, at least when the pastor retires or translates to another congregation, if not before. Such pastors are

too many strict subscriptionist church officers have been divided over a concept that should be unifying

vulnerable to strife and upheaval in the congregations and even in the Session. When strife sets in a declining

denomination, the church officers holding to the true regulative principle of worship or Scripture prescribed worship can answer the critics and defend the position of the Westminster Standards. These church officers are not defending their mere personal opinion, but the position of the time-honoured Westminster Standards in accordance with Scripture.

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church of America are degenerating rapidly under the pressures of New Covenantal-Antinomianism, Baptismal Regeneration, Sacerdotalism, and justification by faith plus works. Some strict subscriptionists, practicing predominance of Psalmody, are concerned about an alternative future Presby-

terian denominational home. They should be searching to be in a total subscriptionist Presbyterian denomination, so to avoid the same problems again; and they should not be asking the total subscriptionist Presbyterian denomination to allow for the exception of departure on the regulative principle of worship.

### **Confessing the Regulative Principle of Worship**

There are three very important principles in subscribing to church standards in accordance with Scripture. First, the church standards are to be understood in their plain and obvious meaning (Matt. 5:37; Acts 16:3-4). Secondly, the church standards are subordinate to the Scriptures in collective constitutional debate at the General Assembly or General Synod level and not in individual Presbyteries, Sessions, or personal studies (Acts 15:1-6; 16:3-4). Thirdly, in the context of subscription to the Westminster Church Standards, the burden of proof in debate is upon the new position, differing with the Church Standards. The third point must follow or severe doctrinal instability will be the result in any denomination. These three principles are vital for a church officer seriously attempting to subscribe to the Westminster Church Standards, advancing the Gospel of Sovereign grace, and Presbyterian uniformity in doctrine, worship, and practice. One might try and argue that the burden of proof is upon those encouraging the change from singing uninspired hymns and use of musical instruments unto exclusive psalmody unaccompanied. Whilst at first thought, this argument seems noteworthy; but in practical outworking, it is an argument for loose subscriptionism and doctrinal instability in the pastorate and the eldership. This is a very unstable way of subscribing to church decreed dogma; and the geometric progression that develops with various exceptions in different church officers encourages a multitude of exceptions throughout the church. Those who argue this way to retain the singing of uninspired hymns have placed the burden of proof upon the exclusive psalmist opposed to musical instruments in public worship. This makes it is easy for the uninspired hymn singing advocates with musical accompaniment. With this notion, the uninspired hymn singers need not conclusively prove their position. It also makes it easy for the moderate and liberal church officers to promote doctrinal disunity and strife throughout the denomination. In fact, no doctrine is safe and time-honoured, not even Protestant Fundamentals of the Faith at the heart of the Gospel of free grace.

Instead, in all seriousness to subscribing in faithfulness and promoting doctrinal unity, the burden of proof must be upon the new position, that is, new to the Westminster Church Standards. The loose subscriptionists might object attempting to argue that the Scriptures are the final authority without Presbyterian discussion and debate. What these church officers mean is that one's personal study in one's own personal library takes precedent to submission to brethren in collective debate in the General Synod or General Assembly. These church officers are not Presbyterian, but Independents; and these church officers ought to be honest with themselves, with the congregations which they serve, and with the respective Presbyteries.

In accordance with Scripture, the Westminster Standards teach that whatever is not prescribed for public worship is automatically forbidden (Deut. 4:2; John 4:24). The singing of un-

inspired hymns is not prescribed in Scripture. The church was given a definite full Psalter in Scripture. The 150 Psalms are prescribed for public worship. Since the uninspired hymn singers cannot conclusively prove their position, the singing of the 150 Psalms, without any uninspired hymns, should be confessed and implemented in public worship.

When strict subscriptionist church officers attempt to advocate or practice predominance of psalmody in public worship, the implication and definite public appearance is that the pastor and some of the elders are taking an exception to the Westminster Standards. When one uninspired hymn is sung in public worship, that minister or session is adding to public worship what is forbidden. This is the definite teaching and implication of the Westminster Standards. In truth, such church officers do not subscribe to the 2nd Commandment public worship principle in Larger Catechism QA 109: "The sins forbidden in the second commandment are.... corrupting the worship of God, adding to it, or taking from it, whether invented and taken up of ourselves, or received by tradition from others, though under the title of antiquity, custom, devotion, good intent, or any other pretense whatsoever". This continued practice serves only to promote disunity and continued association with Presbyterian church officers who promote exceptions, even a multitude of exceptions, to the Westminster Standards.

It might be claimed that a cappella singing for public worship is not necessarily to be deduced from the Westminster Standards. Such an argument ignores the true implication of the regulative principle of worship as defined in Larger Catechism QA 108; and it clearly overlooks the practical document implementing the Larger Catechism, namely, the Westminster Directory for the Public Worship of God. It also disregards the fact that the Church of Scotland was opposed to musical accompaniment in public worship in 1647; and five Presbyterian denominations remain in Scotland who are opposed to musical instruments in public worship. Of course, those who might argue that musical instruments are not expressly forbidden in the Westminster Standards simply misunderstand the mindset of prescribed worship as delineated in the Westminster Standards. The Westminster Directory for the Public Worship of God does not need explicitly to forbid candles, incense, and musical instruments. Unless one is trying to force musical instruments into public worship, there is enough said that the voice is not to be tuned by musical accompaniment. Also, except for professional singers, the average family cannot fulfil the duty of singing psalms in family worship with musical accompaniment. Musical accompaniment tends to make the average congregational singer tone deaf in public worship and unable altogether to sing psalms in family worship.<sup>1</sup> Notice how it reads in the Westminster Directory for the Public Worship of God (Of Singing of Psalms):

It is the duty of Christians to praise God publicly, by singing of psalms together in the congregation, and also privately in the family.

In the singing of Psalms, the voice is to be gravely ordered; but the chief care must be to sing

with understanding, and with grace in the heart, making melody unto the Lord.

The use of musical instruments is not helpful to congregational singing. It is simply enjoyable to hear the playing of musical instruments; but this can be enjoyed at a classical music concert. Once the musical instruments are removed altogether in public worship, gradual recovery is made, wherein the human ear can be tuned to sing a joyful noise to the Lord in public and family worship; but the recovery cannot begin until the pastor and Session make the correction and remove musical instruments from public worship.

Some church officers may consider that advocating the use of musical instruments in public worship is a more consistent position with the regulative principle of worship than a cappella singing. It has been argued that once implemented in the Old Testament such a prescribed part of worship must continue, unless expressly abrogated. This notion comes from a relatively recent faulty interpretation of Matthew 5:17-20. Greg Bahnsen promoted this whole law thesis in his book, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*.<sup>2</sup> Concerning the ceremonial law, the language of the New Testament is not 'keep through Christ', but changed and abolished by Christ (Eph. 2:13-15; Hebrews 7:12). Christ Jesus kept the ceremonial law simply out of obedience to the mosaic law, until the ceremonial law was abolished. He did not keep the ceremonial law to fulfil the Covenant of Works or because it is the perpetual rule of right living.<sup>3</sup> This faulty interpretation of Matthew 5:17-20 led to the followers, called theonomic reconstructionists, eventually reintroducing aspects of the ceremonial law, even Anglo-Catholic worship, denying the regulative principle of worship.<sup>4</sup>

Matthew 5:17-20 teaches that Christ came not to destroy or abolish the moral law summarized in the Ten Commandments. This is the view of this passage presented in "The Sum of Saving Knowledge", attached to many editions of the Westminster Standards.<sup>5</sup> This was also the view of John Calvin.<sup>6</sup> Matthew Pooles' Commentaries precisely speak of the moral law: "Saith he, I am not come to destroy or put an end to the moral law."<sup>7</sup> The moral law summarized in the Ten Commandments is the law that was in the beginning on the hearts of men and is perpetual. The moral law remains unalterable and is the rule of right living expounded in Matthew chapters 5 through 7. The day changed but the Sabbath day remains, with six days of labour and one day of rest. Another law, never meant to be perpetual, even known in the Psalms to be eventually altered in the New Testament is the ceremonial law (Psa. 40:6; 51:16-17); that law was destined to be changed and abolished. The moral law is part of the covenant of works and perpetual for personal endeavouring after right living and holiness (Exo. 20:3-17; 34:1-9; Matt. 5:17-20; Gal. 3:10). The Larger Catechism answers question 92, in this manner; the rule of obedience given to Adam was the moral law. The moral law is the declaration of the will of God to all men (Lar. Cate. QA 93). Readers should not confuse the Presbyterian puritan commitment to the Ten Commandments in the civil sphere and the enforcement of the moral law by the civil magistrate (WCF 23:3) by civil punishments, with the theonomic reconstructionist whole law thesis. The judicial laws were not meant to be perpetual as the moral

law, even though they remain Divine honoured penal sanctions (Gen. 49:10; I Pet. 2:13). As the gospel advances to the nations, the people of God are to submit to various civil ordinances and not revolt to spread the gospel. The theonomic reconstructionist whole law thesis is promotive of Anglo-Catholic theology, even Roman Catholic historic canon law, and not puritan Presbyterianism taught in the Westminster Standards.

The ceremonial law was brought in by God through Moses at Mt. Sinai; and the ceremonial law was abolished by Christ Jesus, the King and Head of the Church (Eph. 2:14-15; Heb. 7:14). The use of the trumpet was specifically prescribed in the ceremonial law in the tabernacle worship (Num. 10:10). Later, under the Prophet David other musical instruments, together with the Levitical choir and instrument players, were specifically added to the Tabernacle and Temple worship (I Chron. 28:13, 19; II Chron. 29:25). The trumpet and then the other instruments, along with the assigned players, were specifically prescribed for use in public worship during the animal sacrifices (Num. 10:10; II Chron. 29:25-28). Since the tabernacle-temple ceremonial law worship was abolished in the New Testament period, that worship was abrogated. The convocation congregational-synagogue worship continued into the New Testament period, with prayers, the singing of the Psalms, the reading of the Word, and the Preaching of the Word. Prior to the 19th century, except among Anglo-Catholics, numerous Protestant reformers are on record in the United Kingdom opposing musical instruments for public worship. When there was the beginning of widespread use of musical instruments in public worship in the Protestant realm in the 19th century, many Presbyterian, Independent-Congregationalist, Baptists, and Methodists opposed the introduction.<sup>8</sup>

Once the position of musical instruments being restrictive to prescribed worship in the tabernacle-temple worship, and assigned to Levites, is understood and accepted, then the true important and meaning of the regulative principle of worship can be confessed by a pastor and the elders of a given session. Once confessed it can be implemented according to reformation principles in the Word of God.

### **The Nature of Sin in Public Worship**

The Westminster Shorter Catechism teaches that sin is "any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God" (SCQA 14). The Larger Catechism extensively breaks down the Ten Commandments and divides the Commandments into duties to perform and sins forbidden, and includes the duties in the context of conformity or want of conformity. Some sins are scandalous, such as abortion, fornication, and adultery; and there are weightier matters of the moral law (Matt. 23:23). Church ordinances are Apostolic Commandments or duties, under the Second Commandment (Acts 2:38-39, 42; I Thess. 4:1-2; I Timothy 4:13). Neglect of church ordinances and all doctrinal errors are sinful (James 3:1); but not all errors are fundamental or scandalous sins (comp. Acts 18:24-28; Gal.1:6-9; 5:1, 4, 7-8; James 3:1; II Pet. 3:16).

The Roman Catholic administration of the Lord's Supper

is a scandalous sin, promoting the re-offering of the sacrifice of Christ through transubstantiation. The Papacy teaches that the bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Christ. The error is a scandalous sin as taught and practiced each Lord's Day and often every day.

Some sins would be presumptuous and others would be done, or duties neglected, in ignorance. Baptism is not to be neglected. Just as infant circumcision was required, so baptism of infants is required (Gen. 17:7; Exo. 12:24-26; Acts 2:39; 16:14-15). Calvinistic Baptists neglect the Baptism of infants out of ignorance, so such a sin is often not presumptuous. Being a Sacrament, a church ordinance, it is a serious sin which should cause believers in such baptistic churches to study the issue and seriously consider the case for infant Baptism. This is the teaching of the Westminster Standards. It is a serious sin to neglect the Sacrament of Baptism (WCF XXVIII:5).

The biblical tithe is a church ordinance under the Second and Eighth Commandments. The Larger Catechism mentions it in the Second Commandment. It is a sin under the description of sacrilege, citing Malachi 3:8. Whilst it is a lesser sin, not considered as weighty a sin as, for example, perverting justice, it is a sin to neglect the biblical tithe (Matt. 23:23).

Those churches having the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper's with grape juice are administering the Lord's Supper in error and need to correct the error. It is a sin not to administer the Lord's Supper as prescribed with bread and wine. Prescribed worship requires that the Lord's Supper be with wine (see Matt. 26:26-29; I Cor. 11:21, 24-25). Inventing another symbol, which depicts something different is to invent, out of pretense or 'good intention', a different symbol.

An important question is how does such correction occur whilst still functioning with church ordinances? The answer is in Scripture. There was imperfection in the administering of the Sacrament of the Passover during the reformation led by King Hezekiah and the Levites in the Church of Judah (see II Chron. 29:1-11, 12-19, 31-36; 30:14-27). The congregations administering the Lord's Supper by grape juice should continue with the administration of the Sacrament, as the pastor preaches the Word unto reformation in public worship. He should converse with the Session and preach the Word, until a definite change unto wine. The reformation preaching and teaching should continue until the full change to wine is implemented, and not even a dual symbol of wine and grape juice allowing for personal "taste".

Likewise, the pastor and the elders should gradually take an uninspired hymn singing congregation to exclusive psalmody, always praying with acknowledgment of imperfection in worship and the need for reformation. The pastor and the elders should gradually phase out the organ, the piano, and/or guitar, corresponding with the preaching of the Word on the regulative principle of worship and with prayer for reformation. Such worship is covered under the blood of Christ during the work of reformation, if the prayer and the intention is the same as with King Hezekiah and the Levites. Those who advocate perfectionism in public worship, refusing to humble themselves and reform, cannot pray the prayer of Hezekiah. They had eaten the Passover otherwise than it was written; "But Hezekiah prayed for them, The good Lord pardon every one" (II

Chron. 30:18).

### **Implementing the True Regulative Principle of Worship**

Once a minister and elders decide that they are going to truly implement the regulative principle of worship, then that minister must implement exclusive Psalmody, unaccompanied into public worship. If the congregation which he is shepherding is truly already practicing predominance of Psalmody with a Psalter, then he should be able to take the congregation to exclusive Psalmody in a year, or two years if a Psalter needs to be introduced. Another year may be needed to remove musical instruments. The sooner the pastor takes the congregation, through preaching and practice to exclusive Psalmody, the better. There are too many divisive forces which can bring division into a congregation, practicing predominance of Psalmody with an organ or piano.

The position of predominance of Psalmody based on so-called "traditional" worship cannot answer the critics who want Anglo-Catholic worship; and those who want the congregation to grow at a rapid rate want to make the worship into an ever-progressive worship. If the push is for Anglo-Catholic worship, apart from repentance, division is inevitable; and if the push is for ever-progressive worship, apart from repentance, the division is evitable. The biblical answer is for the pastor to lead the session and then the congregation to a consistent practice according to the regulative principle of worship in the Westminster Standards, i.e., exclusive Psalmody unaccompanied.

When one views the debate from the matter of unity in the congregation, the most unifying practice is exclusive Psalmody unaccompanied in public worship. Those who would argue that singing one or two uninspired hymns is unifying are thinking of the weak Christian adherents that might demand singing an uninspired hymn or threaten to leave the congregation. In contrast, the communicant exclusive Psalmists, who have been patiently waiting for this element of worship to become entirely, "the singing of psalms with grace in the heart," want to sing only the Psalms out of biblical conviction and for edification. Since exclusive Psalmody is the time-honoured confessional position and since exclusive Psalmody can only be beneficial for the congregation, why would a Session want to indulge the obstinate Christian adherent? If a given congregation does not have any exclusive Psalmists in their midst, has the Session considered all the exclusive Psalmists that are driving a great distance to an exclusive Psalmist congregation, desiring a new mission work, or contemplating moving to be part of an exclusive Psalmist congregation?

It is important in advancing Psalm singing in congregations to seriously consider the Psalter which is chosen. The time-honoured Church of Scotland 1650 Psalter, being quite accurate, is the easiest Psalter to learn even for family worship. With one to five common metre tunes, one can sing through the entire Psalter. Initially, precentors and the father leading in family worship should use very few tunes, and every three to six months, there may be the addition of a new tune. Some common metre tunes are well known. e.g., St. Anne, Martyrdom, St. Ethelreda, Irish, Crimond, and can be

readily used when the musical instruments are removed from public worship..

The first five years of a congregation singing the 150 Psalms unaccompanied will be noble efforts learning to sing the 150 Psalms. Such efforts in the Lord should not be called, 'bad' singing. In comparison, drowning out 'bad' singing by an organ is not 'good' singing. It is improper for any one to bring up the popular Antinomian contrived argument that God requires our best in congregational music, and therefore, we must retain musical instruments. With the removal of the musical instruments, every five years a noticeable improvement should be apparent in a congregation singing the Psalms unaccompanied. Male precentors will emerge, who are gifted in singing; and a new generation of singers will become precentors and part singers, having been raised with a cappella psalm singing from their very youth and having memorized portions of the Psalms.

### Conclusion

Once all uninspired hymns and musical accompaniment are removed in favour of exclusive Psalmody unaccompanied, the result is liberty in Christ's royal law and peace in the congregation. When visitors come, those truly interested in the congregation will experience the unity in fellowship, besides the singing of the biblical Psalter with growing devotion and love for the Psalms. Moreover, the concern over leaving a very weak subscriptionist denomination, becoming Independent, or joining another similar denomination can be replaced by searching for a unified denomination committed to the full system of theology in the Westminster Church Standards. Once the regulative principle of worship is truly adopted and implemented, these congregations can then join a total subscriptionist denomination to the Westminster Standards. Together, the church officers and the congregations can build a national Presbyterian and reformed denomination across this nation, unified in doctrine, worship, and practice.

### Footnotes

1 Professional singers are trained with much practice to sing with musical instruments; but auditions are often performed a cappella.

2 Greg L. Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1984), pp. 48-49.

3 Even with his earlier whole law thesis, Bahnsen did teach that the ceremonial law was no longer to be kept in the New Testament period. He later returned to a historic Protestant reformed threefold distinction of the law of God. See Greg L. Bahnsen, *No Other Standard: Theonomy and its Critics* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1991), pp. 95-102.

4 This point is well attested to in the writings of Steven Schlissel (of Messiah Covenant Community Church) and Steven Wilkins (of Auburn Avenue Presbyterian Church). Their writings are promoted on theonomic reconstructionist websites and even church websites. They are also advocates of Federal Vision and Shepherdism, departing from the Protestant reformed justification by grace through faith alone.

5 *Westminster Confession of Faith*....(Glasgow, Scotland: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1997), pp. 339-340.

6 John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, Vol. I* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House Company, 1989), pp. 275-280.

7 Matthew Poole, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible, Vol. III* (Edinburgh, Scotland: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1975), p. 22.

8 See Brian Schwertley, *Musical Instruments in the Public Worship of God* (Haslett, Michigan: Covenanted Reformed Press, 1999), pp. 110-144.

I have often heard Protestants say; “Why can’t we get our message on everyday issues out?” Too often it appears that the church is just fiddling, like the fictitious story of Nero, while Rome burns - because to a high degree Protestants have left the public arena of ideas.

This was not always true of American Presbyterianism of the past. There was a concern and defense of Jesus Christ and His kingship over the nations. Our Scottish counterparts, holding to the original Westminster Confession, each have an advisory committee, assisting the Presbytery; and this committee deals with issues in the public sector. The Free Church of Scotland (residual) calls this committee, The Public Questions Committee. The Free Church of Scotland (continuing) has The Public Questions Religion & Morals Committee; and the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland has The Religion and Morals Committee. Having such a committee is the natural outworking of a denomination, which believes in the establishment principle as taught in the Westminster Standards (1647).

The establishment principle holds that the civil magistrate is obligated to apply the moral law summarized in the two tables of the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are binding on all nations, whether Christian or pagan. The establishment principle does recognize that the judicial laws of the Old Testament have ceased, but the moral law is perpetual. George Gillespie wrote, that the civil magistrate is to “keep his subjects within the bounds of external obedience to that law, and subjection to the corrective power of the magistrate”.

Since our denomination, the WPCUS, believes in the establishment principle, and has a genuine concern for the nation, it has a committee and it is called the National Morals Committee. An overview of the committee’s work is to deal with any matter that is in the public arena which contradicts or ignores reformed doctrine as found in the Westminster Standards, since we believe these standards are eminently Biblical. It is their duty to encourage the Presbytery and congregations to seek the defense of the true religion and stand against the practices of the enemies of GOD opposing the true religion. The committee as it represents the denomination is ultimately in the pursuit of establishing the one true and reformed religion in the United States.

In order to do this, the committee will make recommendations to the Presbytery in dealing with these moral issues. They may recommend a correspondence to be sent to a Civil Magistrate, or they may be called on by the Presbytery to meet with government ministers. Some of the issues of concern will include the evils of abortion, sodomy, fornication, Sabbath desecration, disrespect to authority, and the suppression of sects and heretics. However, the National Morals Committee’s concern does not stop at legislation, but also includes justice in our nation’s courts and help for the truly needy. On behalf of the Presbytery, the committee can have their own budget to take care of such diaconal needs.

The Committee asks for your prayers as they go about their work.



A Monument of the 10 Commandments  
Outside a Courthouse in Kansas

LIFE'S SUPREME GOAL

"What is the chief end of man?"...."Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever" (Shorter Catechism, Question #1)

Boys and girls, we are living in exciting times in the 21st century when many wonderful discoveries have been made in science and technology, the world has become a "global village" and men have even landed on the moon. But there is great confusion about the real meaning and purpose of human life. Why are we here in this world? Many people think the real meaning of life is found in "money", or in "education" or even in "revolution" (by trying to change everything that's wrong in the world), and there are many other solutions proposed. But it is only the Bible which gives us the true answer for what is "Life's Supreme Goal", as it directs our attention to three all-important aims which we should set before us.

I. To Know God Some of you boys and girls will have heard of one of the most famous books ever written, John Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion. The first chapter begins as follows: "True and sound wisdom principally consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves", and John Calvin goes on to say the remarkable words "it is certain that man never achieves a clear knowledge of himself unless he has first looked on God's face". This is what we all need so much. It was when Isaiah "saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up"(Isaiah 6:1) and heard heavenly beings ascribing infinite perfection to Him that he saw himself in all his sin and need. And his life of prophetic service began as he received forgiveness and yielded himself to the Lord's gracious service. To Jeremiah also the Lord revealed that the knowledge of Himself was man's highest need. "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glories glory in this...that he knows me" (Jer. 9:23-24). Our Lord Jesus Christ said in His great high-priestly prayer, "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent". And as the old Puritan writer, John Trapp, once said: "To know God in the face of Christ is heaven aforehand". Truly, in the words of the Genevan Catechism, "without this knowledge our condition is more miserable than that of brute beasts".

II. To Glorify God This is the second supreme goal of our lives, but this is not recognized any more by the great majority in the world today. We are reminded of Daniel's words to King Belshazzar on the night of his profane feasting: "The God in whose hand thy breath is and whose are all thy ways, thou hast not glorified" (Dan 5:23). No wonder God pronounced him "weighed in the balances and

found wanting" and that very night he passed from his feasting to his doom. The great aim of the Lord Jesus Christ in His mission to the world was that His Father's name might be glorified, "Father, I have glorified Thy name....I have glorified thee on the earth" (John 17). And this too has always been the great aim of God's people, as when the Psalmist declared "I have no good beyond Thee" and when the apostle Peter gives us the great aim - "That in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ". Indeed, the great theme of the song of the vast heavenly throng will one day strike the note of "all glory to God - let us give the glory to Him" (Rev. 19:7). Just as the note of the Protestant Reformation was "soli Deo gloria" - to God be all the glory - this, too, will be the note of the redeemed people of God for evermore.

III. To Enjoy Him In a Catechism which was once much used in Scotland, John Willison asks, "What is it to enjoy God?" and he answers: "It is to possess God's love and favour, or to be blessed with His gracious presence". And he adds: "Our enjoyment of God here is very short and imperfect, but in heaven it will be everlasting, full and immediate".

The Psalmist, even when confronted with a flood of evils, could speak of God as his "exceeding joy". The prophet Habakkuk in the face of the invasion of his land by a cruel foe could say: "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation". And the apostle Peter says to believers faced with manifold trials, as "rejoicing greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory".

In conclusion, what wonderful privileges belong to boys and girls who are believers in the Lord - to know God, to glorify Him and to enjoy Him for ever! Remember this when you are tempted not to do your Bible reading and praying or when you begin to resent your parents' taking you to Church. As John Willison tells us in his Catechism, most of those around us have as their chief goal and design "to gratify their sensual appetites and to enjoy the best things this world affords", with no thought of God at all, so their end will be destruction. Let us not be like them.



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