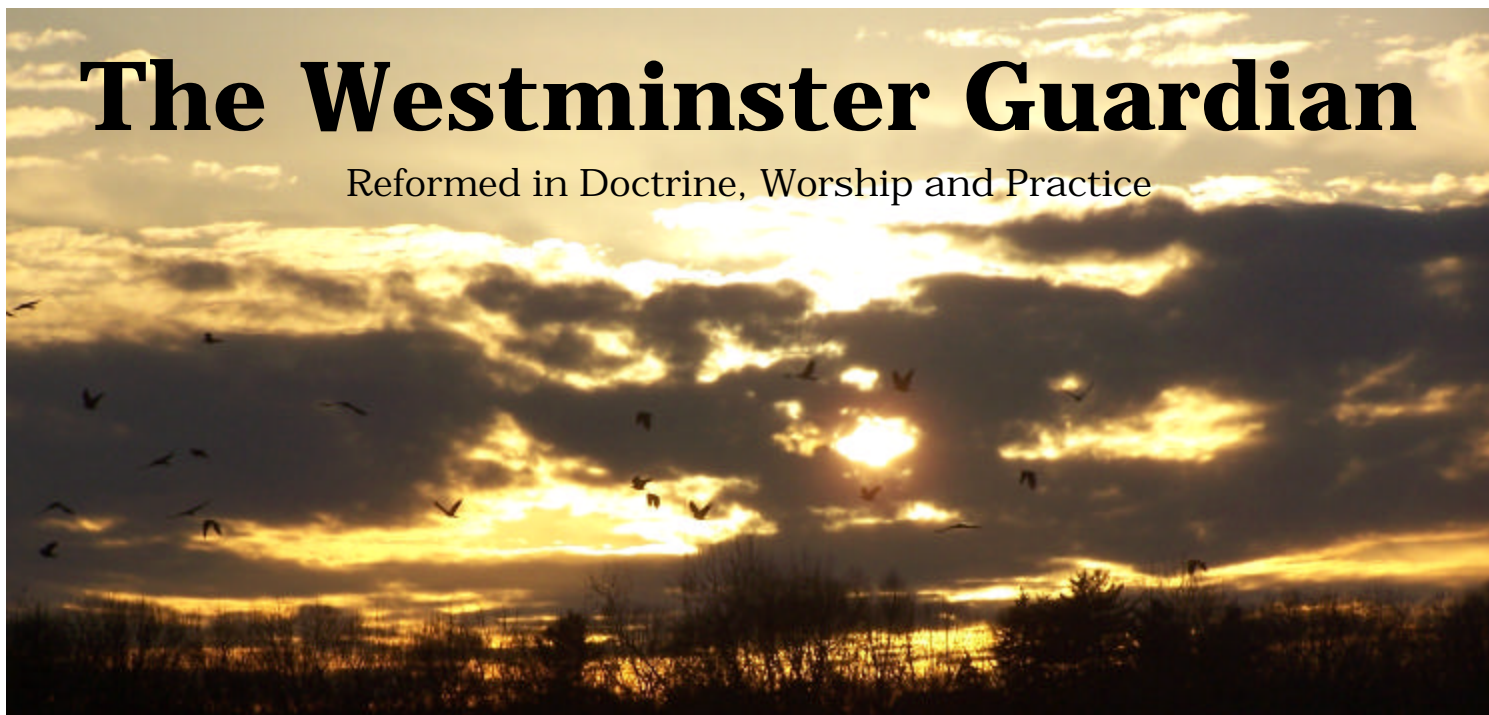


The Westminster Guardian

Reformed in Doctrine, Worship and Practice



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The late A.W. Tozer entitled one of his fine booklets, "Worship - The Missing Jewel of the Evangelical Church.". Written over thirty years ago, Dr. Tozer rightly diagnosed the trends of his own day as alarming at the least and ominous for the future of the church in North America. He could scarcely have envisioned, however, just how far the church of the late twentieth century would continue to depart from the "jewel" of true biblical worship as mandated in God's Holy Word. Today, therapeutic techniques, marketing strategies and the beat of the entertainment world often have far more to say about how the church worships, how it functions and what it wants and what it offers, than does the Word of God.

The Gospel is being mixed with entertainment

For instance, in recent years there has been a sudden and quite widespread introduction of dance, drama, mime and rock music into worship and evangelism by

charismatics and evangelicals. In many evangelical churches it is now quite common to find 'sketches' slotted into a service of worship, and in some churches stages are being erected alongside pulpits. The Gospel is being mixed with entertainment. And this is happening in "Reformed" Churches to an alarming degree.

A member of one Christian rock band when interviewed by the press said, "Our songs do have a message, but we don't want to ram it down people's throats. We just hope to give a good night's entertainment." An evangelical church arranged a rock opera. It was presented in church after evening service on Sunday and there was said to be standing room only.

One minister invited a troop of liturgical dancers to dance at his worship service on Sunday and said afterwards that the congregation had been challenged by this more than by most sermons. Literally and metaphorically the stage is replacing the pulpit in many of our evangelical churches. Some churches which had a reputation for good Gospel preaching and witness are now known better for their 'presentations,' humor and music.

Many Christians seem to be thrilled by all the changes and innovations and some are even leaving the sounder biblical churches for easier and more "contemporary" ministries.

We might consider these activities under the following headings:

Is There a Biblical Warrant for Such Activities?

Can one honestly find a real or concrete warrant in Scripture for dancing in worship or for drama in evangelism? Carefully look up all the references to dance in scripture and

you will find that many of them are associated with either sensuality, drunkenness, murder, idolatry or indulgence. There may be occasional and isolated dramatic events recorded in scripture but can they really be used to justify the setting up of Christian theater, drama or mime in worship? A careful reading of the Acts of the Apostles and of the Epistles will show that no dramatic arts were used by the Apostles. There we find preaching, teaching, disputation, and personal witness backed up by much prayer.

Can we not learn most about the methods of presenting the gospel by studying the lives of Jesus Christ and the apostles as recounted in the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles? There is no sign of plays, musicals, or dancing. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts," (Isa 55:8-9).

Has God appointed THE way for spreading the Gospel? Romans chapter ten will provide us with a clue. 'How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a PREACHER?' (Rom 10:14). 'How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things,' Rom 10:15).

Are They a Suitable Framework for the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ?

When considering these things seriously, is there really any room for much humor or entertainment, and is there likely to be any depth of conviction of sin or unbelief in an atmosphere of light-heartedness? Archbishop Temple said practically everything about the true nature and ends of biblical worship when he wrote, "To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God,

to open the heart to the love of God and to devote the will to the purpose of God." Conscience, mind, imagination, heart, will - what

But the gospel deals with very serious issues; those of death and judgment, Heaven and Hell.

could more clearly show the essential "heart-beat" of true worship in the presence of the living God?

The use of the folk arts in worship and evangelism often involves a good deal of laughter and fun and there is an atmosphere of entertainment. But the gospel deals with very serious issues; those of death and judgment, Heaven and Hell.

The Bible speaks of the foolishness of preaching (1

Cor 1:21) and of the offense of the cross (Gal 5:11) and one wonders whether these two aspects of the gospel can ever be present when dance or drama is in use. Preaching is offensive and foolish to the natural man, and he tends to despise it, but what is his attitude toward dance, drama and rock? Why, he tends to focus on the talents and appearance of the performers and to applaud them for their performance rather than focusing on any biblical theme which is portrayed. In the Reformed church especially it is of paramount importance that we should not merely verbally affirm that God alone should receive the glory - *Soli Deo Gloria* - but see that this great Reformation and biblical principal is exercised in practice as well.

It is often said that Jesus had a sense of humor; we do not need to deny this, but in reading scripture we find that he rarely used it and that He was a man of sorrows and grief (Isa 53:3), He wept over the sins and the apostasy of the people (Lk 19:41-42). This is not for a moment to deny that there is joy and even exuberance in biblical worship, but the means by which this is instilled in the hearts of true worshippers is not by pantomimes or plays, still less by troupes of liturgical dancers and other unwarranted intrusions into biblical worship. We express, indeed, our life together in the Spirit and experience that joy which is the foretaste and earnest of the final victory of the redeemed in heaven, but it is by the biblically appointed means of worship - not other man-made intrusions into worship - which produce such a heavenly frame. A.W. Tozer rightly said, again, "When the Holy Ghost shows us God as He is we admire Him to the point of wonder and delight."

Are They Supported by the History and Tradition of the Reformation Churches?

A newspaper columnist recently described dance as a time-honored way of worshipping God and said there was no reason why the devil should have all the dancers. But from the Reformation to the present day how many biblical churches or societies have ever used dance or drama as a means of communication? How many have ever used either in worship? The pre-Reformation miracle, morality and mystery plays followed on from liturgical drama and were presented before uneducated people. After the Reformation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it was the Jesuits in the southern half of Europe who made use of drama in their colleges (Encyclopedia Britannica 'Western Theatre').

Is it not true that the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is more associated with tears than with laughter? The center of the gospel is a stark cross on which the Lord Jesus died in agony for our sins. These things sober us and fill us with awe.

Are we wiser than our forefathers in the faith? The Reformed churches have always believed in education; teaching people to read the Bible for themselves. They have always believed in preaching. These methods surely must be priceless and approved of God in His word. ".... from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim 3:15). There is no substitute for reading and preaching! There

is no substitute. There never has been. There never will be. God's methods do not change because we live in the twentieth century.

But what glories and rewards there are for the serious Christian who follows Scriptural priorities and not the "gospel of entertainment". Solid Christian character and vital heart-warming Biblical religion will be the result of such conformity! "God send us ministers who, instead of merely avoiding denial of the Cross, shall be on fire with the Cross, whose whole life shall be one burning sacrifice of gratitude to the blessed Savior who loved them and gave Himself for them." (J. Gresham Machen).

"He led His people through the spacious country of the Bible, going down before them into its shadowy ravines and climbing its towering heights, shepherding the flock in the green pastures and by the waters of quietness." (Alexander Smellie, *Men of the Covenant*, describing the covenanting preachers in the 17th century).

Let us earnestly cry to God that He will restore "the missing jewel" to its rightful and long-neglected place again!

So, where has all the worship gone? We believe it has gone, as A.W. Tozer correctly predicted, into glib marketing techniques that tend only to water down the biblical gospel. Such false substitutions may fill pews quickly and give the appearance of ecclesiastical success but, in reality, are sowing weakness into the foundations for generations to come. Perceptively, Dr. Robert Godfrey noted at a recent conference of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals (ACE), "If we evaluate the pragmatism of the pragmatists on a pragmatic basis, we have to say that by their own standards they have failed. Why don't American medical statistics reflect the healings claimed by the charismatics? Why don't our crime statistics reflect the holy living of evangelicals? Why, after a generation of church grown methodology and user-friendly worship, is church attendance down significantly?"

We have every reason to fear that whole sections of the modern evangelical and reformed church have sown "the wind" and will inevitably reap "the whirlwind"! (Hosea 8:7).

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This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. (Gal. 5:16-18)

Introduction

After telling the Galatians not to use their liberty as a base of operations to indulge their sinful natures; but, rather, to love each other through serving one another and obeying the moral law, Paul goes on to explain how this is accomplished: "I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (v. 16). The phrase "I say then" (*lego de*) both ties this teaching to the preceding few verses (13-15) as well as emphasizes the importance of what immediately follows. In

The key to Christian sanctification is walking or living by the Holy Spirit.

verse 16 we have two crucial teachings that need a careful, detailed examination. First, there is the exhortation: "Walk by the Spirit." Second, there is a promise of victory that is connected to the imperative: "and you will not fulfill the desires of the flesh." The key to Christian sanctification is walking or living by the Holy Spirit. After the foundational teaching of verse 16, the apostle will elaborate on the importance of what he has said by noting the great conflict of the Christian life as it relates to personal holiness (v. 17) and the superiority of true Christian sanctification over legalism (v. 18). What Paul says in verse 16 is essentially Paul's central proposition and the thought that underlies everything he says all the way through 6:10.

The command "walk by the Spirit" is the most important, yet difficult phrase in this verse and thus will receive the most attention. To understand what Paul is saying, we need to define the terms as used in this context. This will enable us to make applications and critique some common abuses of this passage.

The exhortation "walk" (*peripateo*, "to go about" or "walk around") is a very common expression in Paul's epistles (cf. Rom. 6:4; 8:4; 13:13; 14:15; 1 Cor. 3:3; 7:17; 2 Cor. 4:2; 5:7; 10:2-3; 12:18; Eph. 2:2, 10; 4:17; 5:2, 15; Phil. 3:17, 18; Col. 2:6; 3:7; 4:5; 1 Thess. 2:12; 4:1, 12). In every use of this term he is referring to personal behavior, or a manner of living. Consequently, some versions of the Bible paraphrase this verse as: "live by the Spirit" (e.g., NIV). The figurative use of this word is rooted in the Old Testament Scriptures. The children of Israel were often exhorted to walk by or in accordance with God's law, word or truth (cf. Ex. 16:4; cf. 18:20; Lev. 18:4; Dt. 13:4-5; Ps. 86:11; Jer. 44:23; Ezek. 5:6-7). They were to "walk" or "live" righteously (cf. Isa. 33:15). Christianity is not simply a system of doctrine to be believed, but also is a "way" to be walked (cf. Ac. 9:2; 19:9; 22:4; 24:14, 22). Our Lord spoke of the narrow gate and "the difficult way which leads to life" (Mt. 7:14). Following the same Hebraistic terminology, the apostle John says that believers need "to walk just as He walked" (1 Jn. 2:6). This means we must strive to conduct our-

selves to live our lives like Jesus. Our Lord always obeyed God's will (Lk. 6:47; Jn. 8:46; Heb. 4:15; 7:26). We are to focus our attention on His walk and see how He lived His life in this world. John also exhorts us to "walk in the truth" (2 Jn. 4; 3 Jn. 3-4), and "walk according to His commandments" (2 Jn. 6). "As we walk about from place to place with confidence and assurance, so we ought to reflect steadfastness in obeying God's commands to love him and our neighbor."¹

We can also shed light on this word by the terms in this chapter that are essentially synonyms of "walk." Paul says that believers need: "to be led by the Spirit" (v. 18; *pneumati agesthe*); "live by the Spirit" (v. 25a; *zomen pneumati*) and "keep in step with the Spirit" (v. 25b; *pneumati stoichomen*). "Each of these verbs suggests a relationship of dynamic interaction, direction, and purpose."² The present tense of the command "to walk" indicates that Paul wants the Galatians to keep doing what they have been doing since they were saved and had received the Holy Spirit. Earlier, he had focused their attention on the experience of the Spirit in their lives and warned them not to go back to a reliance on the flesh (3:3-5). Therefore, this exhortation is a call to continued reliance on the Spirit for the empowerment to obey. (The Spirit is also the author of Scripture—the standard of sanctification.) This is indicated by the verbs, together with the repeated use of the dative (*pneumati*; "by the Spirit"), which suggests origin or source as well as instrumentality. Hodge writes, "To walk means to regulate the inward and outward life. It includes, therefore, the determination of the judgments, the feelings, the purposes, as well as the external conduct. The controlling principle in believers is not flesh, i.e. the corrupt nature, but the Holy Spirit who dwells in them, as the source of knowledge, of holiness, of strength, of peace and love."³ Christians are not only to look to the word of God which has been breathed out by the Spirit as their standard and follow all of its commands, examples and teachings; but, are also to rely on the Holy Spirit for strength, assistance and victory over sin.

The word "spirit" (*pneuma*) throughout this section

This means we must strive to conduct ourselves or live our lives like Jesus.

on sanctification clearly refers to the Holy Spirit. This interpretation is supported by verse 17 where the great opponent to the sinful nature is identified as "the Spirit" (note the article, "the Holy Spirit"). It is also proved by the fact that the human spirit, apart from a work of the Holy Spirit, is spiritually dead and can accomplish nothing that is spiritually good. The Holy Spirit renews our whole nature in the image of God, delivers us from the pollution of sin and enables us to perform good works. "The Holy Spirit is the source of all holiness.... The holiness of God's people that results from their sanctification by the Holy Spirit must be attributed entirely to Him as He works through His Word. The 'fruit' of the Spirit is just that: it is the *result* of His work."⁴

When the Bible speaks about "living by the Spirit"

or being “led by the Spirit,” it refers to the Holy Spirit’s immediate as well as mediate work in the believer. In regeneration, for example, the Spirit of God works immediately. That is, He works directly upon the human soul. He implants a new spiritual nature. The working of the Holy Spirit directly on the human heart is beyond our comprehension and is encompassed with mystery. The effects of this work, however, are not. The new birth is the first work of the Spirit in man that begins to reverse the effects of the fall. In this work the elect sinner is: made alive spiritually (Eph. 2:1, 5; Col. 2:13); “renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created Him” (Col. 3:10), given an understanding or spiritual enlightenment to the truth (Jn. 3:3; 1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 2:4-6; 1 Jn. 5:20; cf. 1:20); given saving faith (Eph. 2:8), repentance (Ac. 5:31; 11:18; Phil. 1:6; 2:13) and a love toward God (Rom. 5:5). With regeneration the dead sinner is quickened, enabled and disposed toward divine truth. The Spirit actively draws the sinner to Christ (Jn. 6:44). When speaking of the new birth in the broad sense (cf. 1 Pet. 1:23; Jas. 1:18), the implantation of the incorruptible seed or new spiritual nature, the drawing power of the Spirit and the external call of the gospel all come together and give birth to the converted soul. For this reason regeneration (or what the Puritans often called “initial sanctification”) is the starting point of a life of progressive sanctification. “At regeneration we receive Divine ‘grace’ as an indwelling principle, and the effect is to make us willing to deny ourselves, take up our cross daily and follow Christ.”⁵

The Holy Spirit also works mediately or through means. He works upon the conscious life of man through the word of God. “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth” (Jn. 17:17). “You have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit” (1 Pet. 1:22). “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby” (1 Pet. 2:2). The new Christian is to derive spiritual nourishment from a study of the unadulterated word. But, apart from an interior work of the Spirit, the written word has no effect. The Spirit works upon the conscious life of the believer through the Bible and all the means of grace as they are defined and connected to the teachings of Scripture: the Word of God read and preached (Jn. 17:17, 19; 1 Pet. 1:22; 2:2; 2 Tim. 4:2); partaking of the sacraments (Mt. 3:11; 1 Cor. 12:13; 1 Pet. 3:21); communing with God in prayer (Jn. 14:13-14) and practicing good works (Jn. 15:2; Rom. 5:3-4; Heb. 12:5-11). The Holy Spirit gives us a desire to study His word, illuminates our minds to understand it, convicts us of sin when we fail to live up to its standard and enables us to put off sinful behavior and replace it with a godly counterpart. This is how the Spirit subdues sin in the believer and causes him to grow in grace. As sinful lusts, activities and habits are exposed and progressively removed from the believer’s life, he becomes more and more righteous in his daily walk. Thus, we see that sanctification is both negative and positive in character and these two aspects related to growth in holiness occur simultaneously. “The old structure of sin is gradually torn down, and a new structure of God is reared in its stead.... Thank God, the gradual erection of the new building need not wait until the old one is completely demolished. If it had to wait for that, it could never begin in this life.”⁶

It is for this reason that Paul can command us to “walk,” “live” and be “led by the Spirit.” Our progressive sanctification is a grace and also a *duty*. We are to look to the efficacy of Jesus’ death and resurrection, depend on the power of the Holy Spirit in us and use the means that the Spirit has given us to strive for the mortification of sin, spiritual renovation and the development of a godly lifestyle. Daily, we must not only study the Scriptures, apply it to our lives and resist evil, but we must also seek to develop godly habits. If our behavior is to be good, we need our acts, thoughts and words to arise from a holy principle in the heart that we receive from the Spirit. Our behavior must conform to God’s revealed moral law, which was written by the Holy Spirit. Both of these things are necessary to be led by the Spirit.

Although the whole Bible is our standard for sanctification (precepts, history, prophecy, examples and so on), the moral law as revealed in both Testaments focuses our attention on the ethical conformity that God requires for holiness. Therefore, there is nothing wrong with concentrating on the moral law as a standard and a means used by the Holy Spirit for sanctification. In fact, it is the wise, necessary and proper thing to do. The book of Proverbs, for example, takes God’s moral law and applies it to daily life in practical ways with warnings, threats and promised blessings for obedience. The moral law defines what sin is, tells us what behaviors must be avoided and removed from our lives and defines what is “holy and just and good” (Rom. 7:12). The Holy Spirit uses His moral law as a mirror for believers to examine themselves in order to progressively die unto sin and live unto righteousness. A believer cannot mortify the sinful flesh and repent daily without first understanding what God requires of him. Thus David said, “How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word.... Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.... I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways. I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word.... Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes, and I shall keep it to the end. Give me understanding, and I will keep Your law; indeed I will observe it with my whole heart” (Ps. 119:9, 11, 15, 16, 33, 34). The New Testament applications of God’s moral law; the numerous imperatives given to deal with specific problems and the various lists of virtues and vices are also crucial in putting off sinful actions and replacing them with godly behaviors.

In our day, many evangelical scholars believe that Paul’s negative statements regarding the Judaizers’ interpretation and use of the law, completely precludes the idea that the Holy Spirit uses the Old Testament moral law as a standard for sanctification. This view has resulted in a number of erroneous views of what it means to be led by the Spirit. One view is that the Holy Spirit gives believers an intrinsic standard of values as a replacement for an abrogated law. The problem with this view is it contradicts Jeremiah 31:33, which speaks of God writing His law (i.e. the Old Testament moral law) on the heart of believers in the New Covenant era. The issue is not a new standard of values verses the old, but rather a new greater ability to conform to the law as a

result of the greater effusion of the Spirit from Pentecost onward. The moral standard for sanctification remains basically the same. But those brought into the church after the enthronement of Christ have greater gifts and abilities. The Old Testament prophets did not describe the New Covenant era as a release from the law, but as a time when the law was internalized by the gracious work of the Spirit.

Another view that is even worse, found in Charismatic or Pentecostal circles, is that Christians are led mystically by the Holy Spirit apart from the Word of God. As a result of this view, many people follow what they believe is the inner guidance of the Holy Spirit. This guidance is defined as inner promptings, "a still, small voice," direct communications from God, certain feelings or subjective impressions. In Charismatic circles one hears statements such as: "The Spirit led me to do this," "God told me to do that," "Jesus spoke to me and said I should do such and such." Such a view of sanctification and walking in the Spirit is dangerous, subjective and antinomian. Such thinking has not only resulted in heretical systems of theology, but has also cut people loose from the unchanging, absolute standard of Scripture. Ironically, in the practice of piety, Charismatics have much in common with modernists, who view ethics in terms of religious experience and subjective feelings. This unbiblical view raises a crucial question. How is a person able to judge their mystical impressions, inner promptings and supposed direct revelations apart from God's Word, which is infallible, objective and sufficient for faith and life? The problem with the view that we are led mystically is that it leads to subjectivism, arbitrary conclusions, relativism and legalism. "To the mystic, the final authority is a feeling or an emotion which no one but himself can experience. Its dictates are not open to verification by any other person. Truth, therefore, depends on one's emotions, and if two mystics contradict each other, there is no possible basis for reconciliation, for, however much each of them might deny it, their theory makes them inhabitants of different worlds...."⁷

Thus, what we often find in churches that hold to this view of walking in the Spirit is a system of rules made by a charismatic leader or group of churchmen. This church leader or group is against drinking coffee, tea and alcoholic beverages. Another leader is against dancing and playing cards; still another finds holiness in waging war against all jewelry and flashy clothing colors.⁸ The result is that men and women are preoccupied with man-made legalistic nonsense that does not sanctify at all. People are burdened with a mass of stupid, arbitrary rules that are of no value in subduing the sinful flesh (Col. 2:23). Thankfully, many professing Christians (especially in the more educated, developed part of this world) who adhere to such unbiblical nonsense have enough sense to not blatantly contradict God's word when they speak of their inner promptings and private revelations. However, what is truly needed and profitable would be a detailed study, analysis, meditation and conformity to the moral law of God, which is the Holy Spirit's primary standard in Scripture for sanctification. Everyone would be helped in this task by studying the section in the Westminster Larger Catechism (along with the proof texts) on the Ten Commandments.

Another view of sanctification and being led by the

Spirit that is unbiblical and dangerous is that of "the higher Christian life" doctrine (also called the "victorious Christian life" or "Keswick teaching"). This teaching, which became popular during the nineteenth century, substituted an act or acts of consecration (e.g., "Let go and let God") for the hard daily work of sanctification (e.g., the means of grace: Scripture reading, public worship, prayer, mortification, good works, etc). It is characterized by the following errors. First, its proponents teach that a person who has been justified can still suffer under sin's dominion if he has not yielded himself to a "second blessing." The great error here is ignoring the reality of a believer's union with Christ which results in regeneration or initial sanctification. In other words, the orthodox position is that the regenerated and justified sinner already has the power of sin broken at the inception of the Christian life. Second, because of this defective understanding of regeneration, the higher life advocate teaches that every Christian must exercise his own faith that he is indeed now or presently dead to sin, while at the same moment totally relying on Jesus' power to miraculously and completely defeat sin. With this process of consecration, the person has supposedly availed himself of the Savior's power to completely rise above all temptations. Third, the flip side of this is that one has to "let go" in order to "let God." This means that believers do not rely on self or their own efforts in any way to keep God's commandments or be holy because: (a) This would demonstrate a lack of faith in Jesus' all sufficient power; and, (b) It shows that we are still looking at our own self reliance. If one simply lets go and hands everything over to Christ, then He completely removes all of a person's urges to sin and thus temptation is completely obliterated. Fourth, as a consequence of this teaching people hold to the idea that Christians can and should attain sinless perfection in this life.⁹

There are a number of serious errors related to this teaching besides the defective understanding of regeneration noted above. First, it ignores the obvious biblical fact that the Christian life is a struggle against the flesh and that no Christian can attain sinless perfection in this life. Paul discusses the great opposition between the Spirit and the sinful nature in Galatians 5:17 and Romans 7:15-25. Second, it ignores the truth that sanctification is not like regeneration, which is an act of God alone; it is synergistic. That is, the justified individual is expected to cooperate with the direction and guidance of the Holy Spirit. The higher life advocates fail to understand that, in sanctification, the Holy Spirit works in our hearts; enables us to obey; and moves us to act. The Spirit works upon our minds, intellects, wills and affections through the means of grace. Our own minds, wills and desires are not annihilated or bypassed but rather illuminated, made holy and directed to follow the teachings of Scripture. The higher life view and the views that generally follow its reasoning are exceptionally detrimental to professing Christians in two ways. One devastating result is that it guides people away from the true means of grace that will actually help them, to a human fantasy that does not work. People who follow this system usually retreat into unbiblical, humanistic forms of quietism and pietism. Another harmful

result is that people who are honest with themselves (i.e. those who are not self-deceived and full of sinful pride) are led into a great personal crisis because they know they are still sinners who encounter real temptations everyday. This false teaching causes them to doubt the efficacy of Jesus' work and/or the reality of their own faith. They need to be told that belief in something that is unbiblical should not be expected to work because it cannot work.

The Result of Walking in the Spirit

The apostle's imperative is accompanied by a wonderful promise: "...and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh" (v. 16b). Here Paul uses the double negative (ou me; "no never") which is emphatic and has the sense of "assuredly not." The word translated "lust" (*epithumia*) in the Authorized Version refers to a desire of any kind whether good (e.g., Lk. 22:15; Phil. 1:23; 1 Thess. 2:17) or evil. Here it is used for illegitimate or sinful desire (i.e. a desire for things that are forbidden by the word of God). The verb "fulfill" (*teleo*) means "carry out," "perform" or "accomplish." If we "walk," "live" or are "led by the Holy Spirit," those sinful desires that are rooted in our sinful nature will not be allowed to come to fruition in sinful words, fantasies or acts. The only way to nip sin in the bud is to follow the Holy Spirit. We are totally dependent on the Spirit's power for victory over sin. This mighty presence, power, and intercession (Rom. 8:26) is a direct result of the efficacy of our Lord's death and resurrection (Rom. 6:1-18;

8:3-4; 1 Cor. 1:30; Gal. 2:17-20; 5:1, 13, 18). Also, we must study the Word of God and attend the means of grace so that we can live continuously in dependence on the Spirit's help and know precisely and immediately which thoughts, words and deeds are contrary to Scripture and thus contrary to the Christian life.

It is noteworthy that this verse presupposes the great conflict stated explicitly in the next verse (v. 17). Receiving the Holy Spirit and being justified by Christ do not eliminate our flesh and the sinful desires that flow from it. But, if we are careful to walk according to the Spirit, we will not give ourselves over entirely to the power and dictates of the sinful nature. This involves a dedication and striving to follow the Holy Spirit's conviction of our minds when these unlawful desires arise. Are we going to obey what the Scripture says even though we are tempted or are we going to grieve the Spirit and disappoint our precious Savior by giving in to unlawful desires? Certainly, as we learn to walk in the Spirit and develop godly habits, the flesh in many areas becomes progressively subdued. But, the sinful nature and the Spirit remain and the fierce warfare between them will not end until we die and go to be with Christ. "For the redeemed soul in glory the battle is over. He wears the victor's wreath."¹⁰ Lord, enable us by Your Spirit (based solely on the precious work of Christ) to practice holiness daily and grow in grace to glorify Your Son.

¹ Simon J. Kistemaker, James, Epistles of John, Peter and Jude (Grand Rapids: Baker [1986, 87] 1996), 378.

² Timothy George, Galatians (Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 386.

³ Charles Hodge, Romans (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, [1835, 64] 1992), 250.

⁴ Jay E. Adams, The Christian Counselor's Manual (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1973), 6.

⁵ Arthur W. Pink, Growth in Grace, or Christian Progress (Grand Rapids: Baker [1971] 1976), 43.

⁶ Louise Berkhof, Systematic Theology (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, [1938] 1958), 533.

⁷ Gordon H. Clark, New Heavens, New Earth: A Commentary on First and Second Peter (Jefferson, MD: Trinity Foundation, [1967, 72] 1993), 52-53.

⁸ 1 Peter 3:3 does not contradict the Old Testament and Revelation 21:18-21. It forbids the excessive or ostentatious use of jewelry and dress. This is proved by the following observations. a) Scripture cannot contradict Scripture. b) God's moral law does not change. Only the ceremonial laws were abrogated and laws peculiar to the Jewish nation. c) "If the verse were an absolute prohibition against plaiting the hair and wearing a piece of gold, it would also be an absolute prohibition against wearing clothes. The three items, hair, jewelry, and clothes are all equal parts of the same grammatical construction. What is said of any one is equally said of the other two" (Gordon Clark, New Heavens, New Earth: A Commentary on First and Second Peter, [Jefferson, MD: The Trinity Foundation, 1967, 1972], 112; See also Alexander Nisbet, Geneva Series of Commentaries: 1 & 2 Peter, 119-120). d) Simon Kistemaker writes, "Peter provides three examples of outward adornment: hair, jewelry, and clothes. He is not saying that women should neglect their outward appearance; he does not intend that they have unkempt hair, or wear no ornaments, or dress in shabby clothes. Like Isaiah in the Old Testament period (Isa. 3:18-24), Peter objects to the excesses of make-up and dress that were common among the wealthy ladies in the church and society of his day (see also I Tim. 2:9). J. N. D. Kelly comments, 'The elaboration in hair-styles, make-up, dress and personal jewelry in the [first] and [second] cent[urie]s is eloquently attested by the literature and art of the period [A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude, Thornapple Commentaries series (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1969, 1981), 129]'" (Exposition of James, Epistles of John, Peter, and Jude, [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995], 120). In our culture of widespread immorality and immodest dress, there is a certain attraction for many professing Christians toward legalism. But we must not forget that legalism of any kind is sinful and is essentially Romanist. It substitutes a man-made concept of ethics for the teaching of God's Word in a particular area of life.

⁹ For an excellent critique of the higher life movement, see Henry A. Boardman, The "Higher Life" Doctrine of Sanctification Tried by the Word of God (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle, [1877] 1996),

¹⁰ William Hendriksen, Galatians and Ephesians, 215.

(Part 1) The Evils Which Compelled Us to Seek Remedies

The first point, as I merely advert to it for the purpose of clearing my way to the other two, I will endeavor to dispose of in a few words; but in wiping off the heavy charge of sacrilegious audacity and sedition, founded on the allegation that we have improperly, and with intemperate haste, usurped an office which did not belong to us, I will dwell at greater length.

If it be inquired, then, by what things chiefly the Christian religion has a standing existence amongst us, and maintains its truth, it will be found

that the following two

not only occupy the principal place, but comprehend under them all the other parts, and consequently the whole substance of Christianity:

that is, a knowledge,

first, of the mode in

which God is duly worshipped; and, secondly, of the source from which salvation is to be obtained. When these are kept out of view, though we may glory in the name of Christians, our profession is empty and vain. After these come the sacraments and the government of the church, which, as they were instituted for the preservation of these branches of doctrine, ought not to be employed for any other purpose; and, indeed, the only means of ascertaining whether they are administered purely and in due form, or otherwise, is to bring them to this test. If any one is desirous of a clearer and more familiar illustration, I would say, that rule in the church, the pastoral office, and all other matters of order, resemble the body, whereas the doctrine which regulates the due worship of God, and points out the ground on which the consciences of men must rest their hope of salvation, is the soul which animates the body, renders it lively and active, and, in short, makes it not to be a dead and useless carcass.

As to what I have yet said, there is no controversy among the pious, or among men of right and sane mind.

Let us now see what is meant by the due worship of God. Its chief foundation is to acknowledge him to be, as he is, the only source of all virtue, justice, holiness, wisdom, truth, power, goodness, mercy, life, and salvation; in accordance with this, to ascribe and render to him the glory of all that is good, to seek all things in him alone, and in every want have recourse to him alone. Hence arises prayer, hence praise and thanksgiving - these being attestations to the glory which we attribute to him. This is that genuine sanctification of his name which he requires of us above all things. To this is united adoration, by which we manifest for him the reverence due to his greatness and excellency; and to this ceremonies are subservient, as helps or instruments, in order that, in the performance of divine worship, the body may be exercised at the same time with the soul.

A knowledge, first, of the mode in which God is duly worshipped; and, secondly, of the source from which salvation is to be obtained.

Next after these comes self-abasement, when, renouncing the world and the flesh, we are transformed in the renewing of our mind and living no longer to ourselves, submit to be ruled and actuated by him. By this self-abasement we are trained to obedience and devotedness to his will, so that his fear reigns in our hearts, and regulates all the actions of our lives.

That in these things consists the true and sincere worship which alone God approves, and in which alone he delights, is both taught by the Holy Spirit throughout the scriptures, and is also, antecedent to discussion, the obvious dictate of piety. Nor from the beginning was there any other method of worshipping God, the only difference being, that this spiritual truth, which with us is naked and simple, was under the former dispensation wrapped up in figures. And this is the meaning of our Saviour's words, "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23). For by these words he meant not to declare that God was not worshipped by the fathers in this spiritual manner, but only to point out a distinction in the external form: that is, that while they had the Spirit shadowed forth by many figures, we have it in simplicity. But it has always been an acknowledged point, that God, who is a Spirit, must be worshipped in spirit and in truth.

Moreover, the rule which distinguishes between pure and vitiated worship is of universal application, in order that we may not adopt any device which seems fit to ourselves, but look to the injunctions of him who alone is entitled to prescribe. Therefore, if we would have him to approve our worship, this rule, which he everywhere enforces with the utmost strictness, must be carefully observed. For there is a twofold reason why the Lord, in condemning and prohib-

In condemning and prohibiting all fictitious worship, requires us to give obedience only to his own voice

iting all fictitious worship, requires us to give obedience only to his own voice. First, it tends greatly to establish his authority that we do not follow our own pleasure, but depend entirely on his sovereignty; and, secondly, such is our folly, that when we are left at liberty, all we are able to do is to go astray. And then when once we have turned aside from the right path, there is no end to our wanderings, until we get buried under a multitude of superstitions. Justly, therefore, does the Lord, in order to assert his full right of dominion, strictly enjoin what he wishes us to do, and at once reject all human devices which are at variance with his command. Justly, too, does he, in express terms, define our limits, that we may not, by fabricating perverse modes of worship, provoke his anger against us.

I know how difficult it is to persuade the world that God

disapproves of all modes of worship not expressly sanctioned by his word. The opposite persuasion which cleaves to them, being seated, as it were, in their very bones and marrow, is, that whatever they do has in itself a sufficient sanction, provided it exhibits some kind of zeal for the honor of God. But since God not only regards as fruitless, but also plainly abominates, whatever we undertake from zeal to his worship, if at variance with his command, what do we gain by a contrary course? The words of God are clear and distinct, "Obedience is better than sacrifice." "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men," (1 Sam. 15:22; Matt. 15:9). Every addition to his word, especially in this matter, is a lie. Mere "will worship" (*ethelothreeskeia*) is vanity. This is the decision, and when once the judge has decided, it is no longer time to debate.

Will your imperial majesty now be pleased to recognize, and will you, most illustrious princes, lend me your attention, while I show how utterly at variance with this view are all the observances, in which, throughout the Christian world in the present day, divine worship is made to consist? In word, indeed, they concede to God the glory of all that is good; but, in reality, they rob him of the half, or more than the half, by partitioning his perfections among the saints. Let our adversaries use what evasions they may, and defame us for exaggerating what they pretend to be trivial errors, I will simply state the fact as every man perceives it. Divine offices are distributed among the saints as if they had been appointed colleagues to the supreme God, and, in a multitude of instances, they are made to do his work, while he is kept out of view. The thing I complain of is just what every body confesses by a vulgar proverb. For what is meant by saying, "the Lord cannot be known for apostles," unless it be that, by the height to which apostles are raised, the dignity of Christ is sunk, or at least obscured? The consequence of this perversity is, that mankind, forsaking the fountain of living waters, have learned, as Jeremiah tells us, to hew them out "cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer. 2:13). For where is it that they seek for salvation and every other good? Is it in God alone? The whole tenor of their lives openly proclaims the contrary. They say, indeed, that they seek salvation and every other good in him; but it is mere pretence, seeing they seek them elsewhere.

Of this fact, we have clear proof in the corruptions by which prayer was first vitiated, and afterwards in a great measure perverted and extinguished. We have observed, that prayer affords a test whether or not suppliants render due glory to God. In like manner, will it enable us to discover whether, after robbing him of his glory, they transfer it to the creatures. In genuine prayer, something more is required than mere entreaty. The suppliant must feel assured that God is the only being to whom he ought to flee, both because he only can succor him in necessity; and

also, because he has engaged to do it. But no man can have this conviction unless he pays regard both to the command by which God calls us to himself, and to the promise of listening to our prayers which is annexed to the command. The command was not thus regarded when the generality of mankind invoked angels and dead men promiscuously with God, and the wiser part, if they did not invoke them instead of God, at least regarded them as mediators, at whose intercession God granted their requests.

Where, then, was the promise which is founded entirely on the intercession of Christ? Passing by Christ, the only Mediator, each betook himself to the patron who had struck his fancy, or if at any time a place was given to Christ, it was one in which he remained unnoticed, like some ordinary individual in a crowd. Then, although nothing is more repugnant to the nature of genuine prayer than doubt and distrust, so much did these prevail, that they were almost regarded as necessary, in order to pray aright. And why was this? Just because the world understood not the force of the expressions in which God invites us to pray to him, engages to do whatsoever we ask in reliance on his command and promise, and sets forth Christ as the Advocate in whose name our prayers are heard. Besides, let the public prayers which are in common use in churches be examined. It will be found that they are stained with numberless impurities. From them, therefore, we have it in our power to judge how much this part of divine worship was vitiated. Nor was there less corruption in the expressions of thanksgiving. To this fact, testimony is borne by the public hymns, in which the saints are lauded for every blessing, just as if they were the colleagues of God.

Every addition to his word, especially in this matter, is a lie.

Then what shall I say of adoration? Do not men pay to images and statues the very same reverence which they pay to God? It is an error to suppose that there is any difference between this madness and that of the heathen. For God forbids us not only to worship images, but to regard them as the residence of his divinity, and worship it: as residing in them. The very same pretexts which the patrons of this abomination employ in the present day, were formerly employed by the heathen to cloak their impiety. Besides, it is undeniable that saints - nay, their very bones, garments, shoes, and images - are adored even in the place of God.

But some subtle disputant will object, that there are diverse species of adoration: that the honor of *dulia* [veneration], as they term it, is given to saints, their images, and their bones; and that *latria* [worship] is reserved for God as due to him only, unless we are to except *hyperdulia* [high veneration], a species which, as the infatuation increased, was invented to set the blessed virgin above the rest. As if these subtle distinctions were either known or present to the minds of those

who prostrate themselves before images. Meanwhile, the world is full of idolatry not less gross, and if I may so speak, not less capable of being felt, than was the ancient idolatry of the Egyptians, which all the prophets everywhere so strongly reprobate.

I am merely glancing at each of these corruptions, because I will afterwards more clearly expose their demerits.

I come now to ceremonies, which, while they ought to be grave attestations of divine worship, are rather a mere mockery of God. A new Judaism, as a substitute for that which God had distinctly abrogated, has again been reared up by means of numerous puerile extravagancies, collected from different quar-

ters; and with these have been mixed up certain impious rites, partly borrowed from the heathen, and more adapted to some theatrical show than to the dignity of our religion. The first evil here is, that an immense number of ceremonies, which God had by his authority abrogated, once for all, have been again revived. The next evil is that, while ceremonies ought to be living exercises of piety, men are vainly occupied with numbers of them that are both frivolous and useless. But by far the most deadly evil of all is, that after men have thus mocked God with ceremonies of one kind or other, they think they have fulfilled their duty as admirably as if these ceremonies included in them the whole essence of piety and divine worship.

Worship in the Presence of God.

Edited by Frank J. Smith and David C. Lachman. Greenville, SC:
Greenville Seminary Press, 1992. 411 pp. \$27.95.

Reviewed by Rev. Anthony R. Dallison, B. D.

As a student under Dr. J.I. Packer in England many years ago, this reviewer recalls Dr. Packer's occasional "asides" during his lectures, when he would strongly recommend a particular theological book by saying "Sell your shirt to buy this book!". Such a book is this fine collection of essays on the nature, elements and historic views and practice of worship, a symposium written by sixteen Reformed teaching and ruling elders who share the common conviction that worship is the highest activity that man can render to God and that all worship should be God-centered.

Today, therapeutic techniques, marketing strategies and the beat of the entertainment world often have far more to say about how the Church worships, how it functions and what it offers than does the Word of God. There has been a widespread introduction of dance, drama, mime and rock music into the worship of even "Reformed" churches to an alarming degree. In some churches it is now quite common to find "sketches" slotted into worship services, while in other churches stages are being erected alongside pulpits as the gospel is being increasingly mixed with entertainment. All of these disturbing factors make this timely book even more timely and a *sine qua non* for all who in any degree acknowledge not only the importance of worship but that worship takes place, as the title reminds us, "in the presence of God".

We can never overlook the centrality of worship and its overwhelming importance in the life of the Christian and in the corporate life of the Church. It is the purpose of man's very existence, that he might glorify God by worshipping and serving His Creator. The entire creation was called into existence with the sole purpose of magnifying and glorifying its Creator, and God made man as the apex of creation, in His own image,

to head up creation's worship of its Creator. Moreover, worship will be redeemed mankind's highest activity in heaven as well. That is surely the justification for the substantial and carefully reasoned volume we are reviewing, which deals with so many of the vital aspects of truly biblical worship that constitute an essential characteristic of the Church (WCF XXV,3-5).

The volume is divided into three sections: The Nature of Worship, The Elements of Worship and Historic Views and Practice of Worship. The two Appendices give brief biographical information on the contributors and the "Majority Report of The Committee on Song in the Public Worship of God" presented to the 14th General Assembly (1947) of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Helpful topical and scriptural indices conclude the four hundred page volume.

The first section on The Nature of Worship is built around the argument that the Church is not at liberty to determine apart from Scripture what constitutes the proper worship of God. Although the regulative principle (*viz.*, "with regard to worship, whatever is commanded in Scripture is required and whatever is not commanded is forbidden") may seem to restrict our freedom in Christ, this is really not at all the case. Indeed, to go beyond the requirements of Scripture in the matter of worship is really to bind men and their consciences with human traditions, rules and regulations. In this sense, historic Reformed worship, with its strict adherence to the regulative principle, is the most universal worship (in the sense of its being multi-cultural and cross-cultural) because of its adherence to only those elements found in Scripture.

There is an excellent chapter on the fear of God as an essential characteristic of the Church's worship, along with a timely

warning that "in some instances today, worship has become so informal that one would think we are at an informal social gathering in which people chat about the everyday affairs of life" (p.26). Furthermore, a thorough and helpful examination of the worship of God in the Old Testament from man's creation through to the Davidic Covenant, reveals that the worship of God was defined and set out in minute detail with nothing left to man's devising.

Similarly, Sherman Isbell's chapter on New Testament worship presents a convincing case that "In passing from Old Testament to New Testament, God has not surrendered His exclusive prerogative" (p.63). He demonstrates that with the coming of Christ as the great High Priest of His people, the "picture show" of Old Testament worship forms is abolished, so that the glory of our worship now is much less visible to the outward eye, nevertheless the power of the Spirit in the Church and the freedom of access to the Presence within the veil far surpasses in glory anything known in the Old Testament worship forms. Why, it should be asked, has the modern Church opted for worship practices not authorized in Scripture, when such glory attaches to the New Testament worship ordinances of prayer, preaching, congregational singing of Psalms and the ministration of the sacraments? The answer is surely correct: "Because men fear that the few and simple practices prescribed in Scripture will be insufficient to build the church" (P.63). We are reminded that our Christian liberty is given to us in order that we may worship, not as we please, but as He pleases, and that the non-Scriptural forms of worship so evident in many churches today are rooted in 19th Century revivalism in which "worship" became oriented towards the worshipper ("seeker-sensitive" worship) rather than towards the One worshipped.

The second section on The Elements of Worship, comprising eight chapters, finds its basis in the common conviction that only the specifically authorized biblical elements of worship are to be included in the worship of God (WCF XXI: 3-5). There is a fine treatment of the importance of the public reading of Scripture, highlighting a much neglected truth in the modern Church, which seems to prefer "snippets" of Scripture rather than the reading of lengthier sections: "It will have an effect on each soul that hears it, each time it is heard. Such is the power of the Word of God. It should be publicly read with the recognition that it has such power" (p. 155). Again, how many of us today really connect preaching with worship? Yet, through God-centered preaching, a full-orbed worship comes to fruition, as such preaching opens up vistas of the true 'worth' of the triune God, inviting worship in the deepest way (p. 157). The chapters on the place of prayer, the sacraments and 'occasional elements' (oaths, vows, solemn fasting & thanksgiving) are also stimulating and instructive.

The treatment of Song in Public Worship (and the accompanying chapter "The Singing of Praise") advocate the practice of

exclusive psalmody in the worship of God. The first is Prof. John Murray's Minority Report of the "The Committee on Song in the Public Worship of God" in connection with the 14th General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and it is surely the most succinct, if not the very best, short statement of the case for exclusive psalmody and it deserves to be widely read. The second chapter by Frank Smith advances the case for psalm-singing by many telling points and by answering many of the common objections to singing the Psalms in worship.

The third section on Historical Views and Practice of Worship comprises two chapters, dealing first with the Reformed Creeds and Confessions and then with John Knox's special contributions towards the recovery of biblical worship in Scotland. Gregg Singer effectively shows how all the Reformed churches at the Reformation "swept the house clean" of the Romanist accretions in worship and how the pure worship of God is reflected in their creeds and confessions, with the Westminster Standards being preeminent in the thoroughness with which they make the true worship of God a characteristic of the biblical Church. Dr. Singer also reminds us that in Calvin's commentaries and Institutes "we find the most biblical treatment of the role of worship in the life of mankind and those principles which must govern the worship of the church" (p.278). Kevin Reed's treatment of John Knox's work in Scotland reveals an often over-looked truth, that the reformation of the church's worship took top priority in his labors as a Reformer. So thorough was his work that he left no room for man-made innovations and intrusions in the Reformed worship of the Church of Scotland, as witnessed by his typically blunt (but true!) statement: "Man may neither make nor devise a religion that is acceptable to God" (p.296). He believed that it is not simply a Reformed doctrinal statement which identifies a Church as Reformed, but whether these Reformed principles are being consistently applied to achieve biblical purity in worship. In reading these things, one wonders with what unbelief and dismay these early Protestants would regard much of what passes as "worship" today - especially in churches that call themselves "Reformed"!

The concluding bibliography on Recent Writings On Worship is very comprehensive, interspersed occasionally with scintillating comments and punctuated with memorable one-sentence rejoinders to "offending" books and articles. And you can add a new word to your theological vocabulary, "pot-rocking" (looking under every pot and rock of Scripture to find what you have predetermined should be there). Yes, some books of worship have indeed been written based upon that unfortunate principle!

Worship in the Presence of God deserves the widest circulation. It courageously exposes and condemns the welter of human additions and accretions that have steadily crept into the pure worship of God in this age. It reveals the astonishing de-

preciation of true biblical worship today, where the simple God-ordained means of prayer, preaching the Word, biblical praise have been judged inadequate and insufficient by themselves to build the Church. It points to the glory of New Testament worship and calls for its restoration again, in the conviction that if the Reformed Faith is most strict and narrow, it is also the broadest and most universal, because of its unwilling-

ness to countenance or impose on people anything unless it is biblical. This book humbles the reader. But it also lifts him up with the glorious vision of what the Church once was, and so what it can be by God's grace again. It is a true antidote for the confusing and compromising times in which we live. Yes, "sell your shirt" to buy it!

At this time, Greenville Seminary is not stocking the book
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