

THE BLUE BANNER

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For Christ's Crown & Covenant

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In this Issue.

Critique of Schlissel's Articles Against the Regulative Principle; Frequency of Communion; Baptism; Ordinances of Public Worship.

by Richard Bacon



for one was pleased to read Pastor Steve Schlissel's comments in a series of articles he wrote within the last year or so, titled "Everything I Really Need to Know I Learned in the Old Testament," "Everything I Really Need to Know I Learned in the New Testament," and "Everything I Really Need to Know I Learned in the Bible." Sad to say, Pastor Schlissel abandoned that principle (known to the Reformers as "sola Scriptura") in a follow up series that was seemingly intended to undermine the principle of *sola Scriptura* as it applies to our worship, commonly called in our day, the *Regulative Principle of Worship*.

Pastor Schlissel has a very engaging style. He often uses humor and illustrations to make his points. It is refreshing to read articles from Rev. Schlissel on topics that are often handled in a humorless or pedantic style. Agree with Steve or disagree, one must give him a 9.8 or better on style! It is that much more sad, then, when such a winsome writing and speaking style is used in an attempt to overthrow a significant aspect of our Calvinistic understanding of worship. As Steve remarked in one of his essays, "Calvin was wrong! There, I said it."

With Rev. Schlissel's essays out in print and circulating, *The Blue Banner* has been requested from several quarters to respond to him in print. The following article by Rev. G. I. Williamson is an edited transcript of a lecture he gave in the latter part of 1999 (see editor's footnote). It will serve, we believe, as an irenic reply from this publication as well as from Rev. Williamson. Interestingly, I do not know of a single "regulativist" whose opinion was changed as a result of reading Pastor Schlissel's essays. Perhaps it is also the case that no "anti-regulativists" will be converted by reading this response. Nevertheless we present it to the church in the hope that rather than engendering strife it may bring about better understanding. (Continued on Page 2).



The remainder of the articles presented here cover issues that arise, at least in part, from the Regulative Principle of Worship. All of them deal with the ordinances of God's worship, though somewhat with circumstantial aspects of it. There is something of a tendency for some who make use of the Lord's Table weekly to have a sacramentalistic or even sacerdotal attitude toward it. Our Westminster Standards rightly teach a *personal preparation* before coming to the table. *The Westminster Standards and the Frequency of the Lord's Supper* is intended to reconcile weekly communion with a proper understanding of preparation for the supper. It, too, is an edited transcript of a recorded lecture. The article, *Some Common Objections to*

Paedobaptism Answered in Outline, is a helpful corrective for those who maintain that the infants of one or both believing parents (1 Cor. 7:14) ought not be baptized. Finally the article by Nicholas Bownd excerpted from his influential 1606 work *The Doctrine of the Sabbath, Plainly Laid Forth and Soundly Proved*, deals with the parts or ordinances of the public worship service. In relation to the previously mentioned article, Bownd called upon the church to receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper frequently.

The regular reader of this newsletter will note that with this issue, in addition to a layout change, *The Blue Banner* returns to a quarterly publication schedule. It continues to be our desire (DV) to publish 144 pages annually. 

See Order Form on Back Page. Individual Tape Pricing on Page 35.

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Those of us who are privileged to sit under Pastor Bacon's teaching are agreed that this series is one of the best he has ever taught. Filled with practical teaching, and deep doctrinal insight, this series is for the Christian sitting in the pew listening to the Word of God being preached to him from his local church pulpit. How does one properly prepare to hear the gospel preached? What should our response be? How do we "feed on Christ?" What is required for proper hearing? What was the rebuke that the writer of Hebrews wrote to his readers? Does it apply to us today?

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1 John 5:16

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- A00116A Divine Directions For The Faithful



A Critique Of Steve Schlissel's

"All I Really Need To Know About Worship – I Don't Learn From The Regulative Principle"

by Rev. G. I. Williamson

In this Lecture¹ I want to deal with one of the latest attacks on the Regulative Principle of Worship from within the reformed community of North America. It comes from a well-known pastor in Brooklyn, New York, the Rev. Steve Schlissel. He was, at one time, a minister of the Christian Reformed Church and — at that time — was an outspoken opponent of liberal trends of the majority in that denomination. I well remember one of his eloquent speeches at the 1992 Synod meeting at Dordt College, in Sioux Center, Iowa. And it seemed to me that he was protesting — in effect, and more than anything else — against the rapid decline of integrity in the matter of confessional subscription.

As you are probably aware, all office-bearers of the Christian Reformed Church had solemnly affirmed these words:

We heartily believe and are persuaded that all the articles and points of doctrine contained in the Confession and Catechism of the Reformed Churches — together with the explanation of some points of the aforesaid doctrine made by the National Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-19 — do fully agree with the Word of God.

We promise therefore diligently to teach and faithfully to defend the aforesaid doctrine, without either directly or indirectly contradicting the same by our public preaching or writing.

We declare, moreover, that we not only reject all errors that militate against this doctrine and particularly those which were condemned by the above mentioned Synod, but that we are disposed to refute and contradict these and to exert ourselves in keeping the Church free from such errors. And if hereafter any difficulties or different sentiments respecting the aforesaid doctrines should arise in our minds, we promise that we will neither publicly nor privately propose, teach, or defend the same, either by preaching or writing, until we have first revealed such sentiments to the Consistory, Classis, or Synod, that the same may there be examined, being ready always cheerfully to submit to the judgment of the Consistory, Classis, or Synod, under the penalty, in case of refusal, of being by that very fact suspended from our office.

Psalm 15 asks this question: "Lord who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?" And the answer, in part, is this: "He who swears to his own hurt and changes not." I take this to mean that solemn vows are binding. We should never make a solemn vow in the first place unless, and until, we are firmly persuaded that what we are affirming is Scriptural. But if we have once taken a vow that is in accord with the Bible, we are not at liberty to lay that vow aside later on if we find that it is costly to keep it. Yet it seems to me that this is exactly what Rev. Schlissel has done.

When I first read the series of articles in his publication called *Messiah's Mandate* — in which he repudiates the historic Reformed doctrine of the regulative principle — I wrote to him to plead with him to cease this public attack on the regulative principle, and instead to bring his concerns forward in a proper ecclesiastical manner. As you may know, he regularly appeals for support from the members of various

¹ Editor's note. This lecture was originally presented as the third in a series on Biblical Principles In Worship, at the 1999 Worship Conference held by the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Edmonton AB. Text Copyright © 1999 by G. I. Williamson. Used by Permission. A few comments from the lecture, which were not in the prepared text, have been added by way of footnote. Rev. Williamson has been a Presbyterian pastor for 50 years and a staunch defender of what is called the Regulative Principle of Worship. He is the author of expositions of both the Westminster Confession and Shorter Catechism.



Presbyterian and Reformed Churches all over North America. But here he is, now, going over the heads of all the pastors and elders of these churches to tell their people that their Reformed Confessions are wrong in what they teach. And that, I said, is an unethical thing to do, and that he ought to stop it. His reply was that since he had submitted his teaching to the elders of his church — and since they agreed with him — he was not obligated to submit the matter to a wider ecclesiastical assembly for evaluation. I'll leave it to you to judge whether or not that is being faithful to the form of subscription.

And here let me say that it is not my intention at all to treat the Reformed Confessions as if they are infallible statements. Our reforming fathers never wanted us to treat the documents they formulated as in any way equal to Scripture. That is why — right from the start — they provided a proper way to bring about changes in these Confessions. And that 'proper way' is by bringing the matter, in an orderly way, before the local, regional and national assemblies for proper examination. I would have no problem at all if Rev. Schlissel did this in the way he agreed to when he signed that form of subscription. This was actually done, some years ago, in the Reformed Churches of New Zealand during my time of service there. And it was productive of good precisely because it was done in the manner required by the form of subscription. But to go over the heads of all the office bearers in the churches that Rev. Schlissel circularizes for contributions to undermine the confidence of the people in those churches in what he himself admits is the historic Reformed doctrine, is — to put it mildly — inexcusable. And it is a great pity that even some of the better Reformed Churches are letting him get away with it.

But now let us turn to a summary of Steve Schlissel's articles entitled "All I Really Need to Know About Worship — I Don't Learn from the Regulative Principle".²

² [Editor's Note. Rev. Schlissel's articles have been running both in special editions of his church's newsletter, *Messiah's Mandate*, and in more numerous parts in the *Chalcedon Report*. When citing Rev. Schlissel, Rev. Williamson is referring to the first two letters as

1. To begin with, then, he rightly finds the origin of the Regulative Principle of Worship (hereafter RPW) — as we have come to know it — at the time of the Reformation.³

At the time of the Reformation, the nausea induced in the godly upon their awakening to the sinful Romish excesses and superstitions in worship gave rise to a radical, but not fully thought out, solution, the Regulative Principle of Worship: If it is not commanded in Scripture to be performed in worship, it is forbidden in worship. It is sometimes said in other words: Only that which God has commanded is permitted.

In response to these words of Rev. Schlissel, I want to say that I've been reading the writings of John Calvin diligently for nearly half a century. And I can assure you that Calvin 'fully thought out' the RPW. I would even go so far as to say that I know of nothing else in all of Calvin's voluminous writings as thoroughly thought out as this was.

2. Rev. Schlissel is also right in what he writes about the profound benefits that came from this RPW. Listen:

This pendulum swing by the Reformers was certainly a breath of fresh air! Virtually overnight it cleansed the toxins out of Reformed worship like two months of cold turkey cleanses the "horse" out of a junkie's veins. Way to go! Out went the relics, the Mariology, the adoration of saints, the indulgences, the novenas and the like; in came clear, accessible, God-glorifying, soul-saving, sheep-edifying, Word-centered worship.

Nowhere, in Rev. Schlissel's writings, have I found any denial that the RPW was indeed taught

published in *Messiah's Mandate*, which are the first four parts in the Chalcedon series. "All I Really Need to Know About Worship — I Don't Learn from the Regulative Principle" *Chalcedon Report*, Part 1 (March 1999), 2 (May 1999), 3 (June 1999), 4 (July 1999). The series is ongoing at this writing, there having been at least 5 or 6 *Messiah's Mandate* letters, appearing in the August, September, December 1999, January, February 2000, issues of the *Chalcedon Report*.

³ 'All I Need to Know about Worship ... I don't Learn from the Regulative Principle (Part 1).' Another Special Edition of *Messiah's Mandate*. First Letter, 1999. (Brooklyn, NY: Messiah's Congregation, 1999). 5.



by such men as John Calvin and John Knox, or that it is clearly taught in the great Reformed Confessions.

3. Yet in spite of this admission he does not hesitate to say that this principle (the RPW) — that whatever is not commanded by God is therefore forbidden in worship — is not taught in the Bible. Here, again, I quote Rev. Schlissel:

I will offer several reasons for Reformed people to reject the proposition that the Scripture teaches the Regulative Principle of Worship. But please carefully note these qualifications:

1) I'm not arguing against the sort of worship found in RPW churches. For my money, it is vastly superior to most other extant worship models (of which I'm aware). The RPW is a mistake, but if you have to make a mistake this is a very fine one.

2) By arguing against the regulative principle of worship per se, I'm sorry to say that I demur from the position of many of my colleagues. Most of my compatriots tend to embrace the principle, choosing only to argue whether it is too rigorously or loosely applied in this or that circumstance. No, my argument is not with the application of the principle: it is that the RPW itself is not Biblical. (Pt. 1, p. 3)

Consequently, we find our irony: The regulative principle of worship, said to guard the people of God from the inventions of men, is itself an invention of men and therefore an imposition upon the consciences of those forced to accept it. (p. 7)

Here, again, I am constrained to point out that this is a serious misrepresentation! I do not know, and I have not even heard, of anyone who has ever been 'forced' to accept the RPW. Rev. Schlissel himself once subscribed to at least two Reformed Confessions, which clearly teach the RPW, but no one forced him to do it.

In the Orthodox Presbyterian Church we do not require communicant members to subscribe to the Confessional Standards as ministers, elders and deacons do. They are required to signify their unqualified submission to the Bible, and to the teaching authority of the Church in

subordination to the Bible. All office bearers, on the other hand, are required to subscribe to the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Catechisms, Larger and Shorter, before they are allowed to hold office in the church. And that is not all: office bearers are also required to refrain from doing what Rev. Schlissel has been doing. They are not permitted to publicly preach or teach, whether orally or in writing, that which is contrary to the Confessions they have sworn to uphold. If they become convinced, later on, that there is error in these documents, there is a proper and orderly way to bring about changes. This has already been done, in a few instances, and our Confessions have been amended accordingly. But the point I make is that no one is ever forced to subscribe these confessional statements.

4. Rev. Schlissel then goes on, in his series of articles, to try to disprove the regulative principle.

In a rather extended section entitled 'Regulativists⁴ Find It Where It Isn't' he does, in my opinion, point out some weaknesses in the way that some have handled certain traditional texts that support this doctrine. At the same time it is certainly not true that all defenders of the historic doctrine are vulnerable to his criticism. And it is particularly noteworthy that even after attempting to present arguments against the regulative principle, Rev. Schlissel is constrained to admit that the Bible does teach it after all! In the section which follows which is entitled 'Regulativists Miss It Where It Is,' Rev. Schlissel has this to say:

The locus classicus, the most frequent and important textual citation for the RPW is Deuteronomy 12:32. 'What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.' But here again, the regulativists either ignore or overlook the setting. By isolating this particular verse from its context, its beauty is marred, its force is neutralized, and its power compromised.

⁴ [Ed. This is Schlissel's term for those who hold to the Regulative Principle of Worship.]



Deuteronomy 12:32 appears in an epoch-marking context: we have here a major step in the progress of the religion of the covenant. Before this, covenant keepers could offer sacrifice wherever they felt like it. Henceforth sacrifice would be severely restricted. It would be restricted, as we said up front, in regard to place, in regard to people, and in regard to particulars.

It is here, then, in Deuteronomy 12 that we do indeed find introduced what might properly be called the Regulative Principle of Worship: If it's commanded, you'd better do it; if it's not commanded, it is forbidden (see v. 32). Don't look to the pagans, either. They do thoroughly whacked-out things that I abominate (vv. 28-31). You just do what I say and only what I say.

The point, however, is that what is strictly regulated is the sacrificial system of worship, not worship per se. In fact 'mere' sacred assemblies are not covered by this rule.

By now you will see that — according to Rev. Schlissel — there were two kinds of worship in Old Testament times. (a) There was sacrificial worship, which was found only in the Tabernacle or Temple. And then (b) there was non-sacrificial worship, which was found in the Synagogue. He refers to these as “mere” sacred assemblies. “The Temple worship was strictly regulated” he says, “because the Temple worship was the Gospel of the Messiah.” But Synagogue worship, on the other hand, was not strictly regulated because it was not the gospel of the Messiah.

5. His argument is then carried one step further when he says that there is a parallel to this under the New Testament: (1) there is worship in the heavenly realm which is the continuation of Tabernacle/Temple worship. (2) The worship of the church, on the other hand, is just a continuation of Synagogue worship. And so, being 'mere' worship (to use his term), it is not subject to the RPW. The strict RPW that applied to the Tabernacle and Temple pertains to only one thing now, says Schlissel, and that is the gospel message. In other words, God is no more jealous today for the way in which worship is conducted in his church than he was for the way in which it was conducted in the synagogue.

What he is jealous for is what most of us would call 'purity of doctrine.'

Rev. Schlissel likens his novel theory to a famous New York bridge — The Verrazano Bridge (which he calls 'the most beautiful in the world') — which has an upper and lower level. The upper level, according to Schlissel's novel scheme, represents the worship of the heavenly sanctuary — or Temple — where the Lord Jesus is. The lower level, on the other hand, represents the worship of the earthly Christian synagogue where we find ourselves. And because Synagogue worship is not Temple worship, according to Rev. Schlissel, the RPW doesn't apply. And, again, we quote him:

The New Testament is beyond clear in teaching that the organizational model for the worshipping communities called 'churches' was the synagogue, not the Temple. (Pt. 1, p. 7)

And “for us the synagogue presents no problem at all. We find that it is sacrificial worship only, from Deuteronomy 12 on, that is absolutely restricted in regard to place, performers and particulars.” “Such restrictions” says Rev. Schlissel, “never governed common sacred assemblies.”

6. Now in spite of the fact that I profoundly disagree with both the doctrinal theory and the ethical behavior of Rev. Schlissel, I want to give him his due, because he does have a measure of respect for those who not only profess adherence to the RPW but also try to respect it in practice! And, again, I quote:

The RPW has a historic, discernible, commonly received meaning. It is passing strange that some who (quite properly) are at odds with deconstructionist methodology would then attempt to pass themselves off as regulativists when they have first divested the word of its historical meaning and injected it with an entirely opposite meaning. We would not take kindly to a man who tries to convince us that a cow is an animal with two legs, feathers and gills. He's describing something other than what we call a cow, no doubt about it. So also, true regulativists are those who at least attempt to



apply a discreet [sic discrete?]⁵ principle — if it is not commanded, it is forbidden — even if their attempts include improvements. The key is that they own it in a way which leaves the principle recognizable as the one historically received. (Part 2, p. 5)

“It is not my intention, I remind you” he says, “to overthrow or even to challenge the legitimacy of worship as it is found in churches which adhere to the RPW. After all, that is the very sort of worship one finds in our church, Messiah’s Congregation. It is precisely because I believe that regulativist-style worship is the most God-glorifying and sheep-edifying worship that I want to see it more widely accepted, adopted and perhaps improved. But if it is to be argued for, it must be argued for on the grounds that it is demonstrably the best sort of worship, not on the grounds that all other worship is, by definition, an abomination.” (Part 2, p. 6)

It is better to confess up-front that the regulative principle, being unscriptural, ought to be rejected. We respect the earnest adherents of the RPW, and we treasure the sort of worship God has providentially allowed to flourish in their courts. We would adopt and maintain that worship — indeed, we’d even propagate it — we’d just do so on other premises. (Part 2, p. 5).⁶

7. There is certainly an element in all this with which I can agree. It is better to have honest denial than to have counterfeit adherence. My problem with Steve Schlissel is not that he lacks “GOOD INTENTIONS.” (This, by the way, is the title of the closing section of Part 2 of his attack on the Regulative Principle of Worship). No, my problem is not with his intentions, but it is rather with his method. The historic form of subscription was purposely designed to guard the people of God from the kind of sudden assault on the doctrines of the Reformed Churches that has now been launched by Rev. Schlissel.

⁵ [Ed. The original *Messiah’s Mandate* uses ‘discreet’ – i.e. cautious, careful, prudent (‘All I Really Need to Know About Worship,’ Special Edition of *Messiah’s Mandate*, Second Letter, 1999, p. 5). The version in the *Chalcedon Report* uses ‘discrete’ – i.e. distinct.

⁶ [Would you like a real nice house without a foundation? That’s what he’s really taking about. He wants to keep the house without the foundation.]

8. But, now, let me respond to the entire line of argument presented in these papers.

A. And the first thing I want to say is that Rev. Schlissel’s whole split-level concept of worship is without merit.

1. It is without merit because the New Testament says the Christian Church is the Temple — God’s final temple. It is the Temple prophesied in such great detail in the last section of the book of Ezekiel.

It is true, of course, that there is an aspect of this Temple which is heavenly. That is true because part of the church is in heaven, where Jesus sits at the right hand of God. Yet Paul does not hesitate to say — to New Testament believers such as ourselves, while we’re right here on earth — “You [YE in the KJV] are the Temple of God” (1 Cor. 3:16,17; 2 Cor. 6:16; cf. Eph. 2:21).⁷

It is also a fact that we ourselves, as Christian believers, are described in the New Testament as those who participate right now in that heavenly temple worship. The Apostle boldly states that our Lord has already “seated us with Him in the heavenly places” (Eph. 2:6) and the author of the book of Hebrews says that we “have come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant” (Heb. 12:22-24). Therefore I am unable to understand how Rev. Schlissel can describe the worship of a true church as mere ‘lower level’ worship. It would certainly be proper to describe some of the man-made worship in false churches as lower level worship. It is certainly not on the upper level spoken of in Hebrews. But that is just the problem: for any worship to be acceptable to God it must be ‘upper level’ worship.

⁷ [I assert that Paul is claiming the very same thing that Moses claimed when he was the organ of the revelation of the plan of the Tabernacle, the very thing that David claimed when he said he had the whole plan from God for the Temple — I assert that Paul the apostle is the third temple architect in the history of God’s kingdom. He was the wise architect, the very Greek word there, who has laid out the blueprint for the final temple of God.]



2. I believe it was for this reason that the Apostle said: “the woman ought to have authority on her head, because of the angels” (1 Cor. 11:10). Whatever else that statement may mean, it surely means this: when we gather to worship, here on earth, we’re in the presence of the angels. And, we are in the presence of angels because we are part of the final temple.

It is because the church is the final temple that the Apostle Paul speaks of himself (no doubt in unity with the other Apostles) as the wise architect who laid the foundation (1 Cor. 3:10). And then immediately goes on to speak of the building of the church with terms borrowed from the Old Testament temple: “Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones — wood, hay, straw — each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed by fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work” (1 Cor. 3:12,13).

So the Apostle saw himself in much the same light as Moses and David. As they were the human instruments through whom God revealed the blueprint, so to speak, of the Tabernacle and Temple of the Old Testament era, so Paul was the human instrument through whom God revealed the blueprint of the final temple. I ask you, then: was Paul only concerned about doctrine? Was he not also concerned about practice? Was he not concerned that everything in the worship of this final temple was according to God’s commandment?

As John Calvin rightly observed in commenting on the Great Commission as recorded in Matthew 28:20:

Christ in sending the apostles, does not entirely resign his office, as if he ceased to be the Teacher of his Church; for he sends away the apostles with this reservation, that they shall not bring forward their own inventions, but shall purely and faithfully deliver from hand to hand (as we say) what he has entrusted to them.

And that it was not only doctrine that our Lord entrusted to them but also practice is plainly seen throughout the writings of the Apostles. [1] “For I received of the Lord that which I also

delivered to you...” says Paul, to the Corinthians, or, in other words, it was of the utmost importance to him that they should observe nothing more and nothing less than that which was instituted by Jesus.

[2] In 1 Timothy 2:12 he makes it clear that God does not suffer a woman to teach, or to exercise authority over a man.

[3] In 1 Timothy 3 he gives careful instruction concerning the qualifications for office. So it is not only doctrine that concerned the Apostle. No, it was also practice.

[4] In further commenting on the proper decorum of women in the church he tells the Corinthians that “we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God” (1 Cor. 11:16).

[5] And then, after giving a long list of directions as to what is, and what is not proper to be done in the church of God, he says “If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the Lord’s commandment. But if anyone does not recognize this,” he adds, “he is not recognized” (1 Cor. 14:37, 38). Paul was not giving pious advice about what he thought might be good things to do in some lower level, Christian synagogue, worship. (Or, ‘mere’ worship’ as Schlissel would put it). No, he was giving God’s commandments because the worship in the authentic New Testament Church is Temple worship.

I cannot go into this at length here, but let me also add that I am not at all persuaded that the ancient synagogue worship was as loose and unregulated as Rev. Schlissel seems to think. After all, what was synagogue worship? It is my conviction that it was what I would call mental participation in Temple worship made necessary because of the distances. Josephus, the Jewish historian, says Moses ordained “that every week men should desert their other occupations and assemble to listen to the Law and to obtain a thorough and accurate knowledge of it” (Ag. Ap. 2:175). And Luke confirms this in his quotation of James, at the Jerusalem Synod. “For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath” (Acts 15:21). It was



not possible, in Old Testament times, for all believers to always go to Jerusalem. So they gathered, locally, and they read the scriptures and expounded them. But they all knew that without the shedding of blood, in temple worship, there could be no remission. So, even then, their worship was really centered on the temple.

(3) So it is not true that in the Christian church — the final temple — it was only doctrine that was regulated strictly. (And by the way, even if it is put this way, one of those ‘doctrines’ is the doctrine of worship!) No, but as the Apostle constantly insisted, worship practice was also regulated strictly. And right there you have the historic regulative principle by good and necessary inference. No wonder our Reforming Fathers said: what is not commanded is therefore forbidden.

9. What then is our final conclusion?

Our conclusion is that — however well intended it may have been — Rev. Schlissel’s newly invented solution is really just another attempt to find a convenient and easy way to justify the present-day departure from adherence to the RPW.

He claims, of course, that he wants something very much like the worship found in churches that still adhere to the RPW. Listen to what he says:

It is not my intention, I remind you, to overthrow or even to challenge the legitimacy of worship as it is found in churches which adhere to the Regulative Principle of Worship. After all, that is the very sort of worship one finds in our church, Messiah’s Congregation. (Part 2, p. 6)

It is precisely because I believe that regulativist-style worship is the most God-glorifying and sheep-edifying worship that I want to see it more widely accepted, adopted and perhaps improved. (Ibid.)

That constant refrain in Rev. Schlissel’s writing is, of course, meant to be very reassuring. But one wonders, at first sight, how he could possibly regard Regulative Principle of Worship as legitimate if the Regulative Principle itself is a mere human invention! But, on second thought,

it does make sense: for if there is no God-given RPW then it is simply a matter of preference. And if some happen to prefer this kind of worship then that too is legitimate. (It is still amazing, to me at least, that this ‘bad tree’ identified as such by Schlissel could, by his own admission, bear such wonderful fruit. How could something invented by men do so much good in edifying God’s people?)

Rev. Schlissel even says:

I sympathize with the apprehension which grips some regulativists. They fear that if their principle is overturned, chaos will reign in worship, that ‘anything will go.’ (Ibid. p. 7).

Well, that statement is truly ‘mind boggling.’ And you have to wonder where Rev. Schlissel has been in the second half of this 20th century. What we have right now in the North American Protestant Church is, in my judgment, chaos.⁸ And what does he offer as a replacement? Well, he offers something that he seems to consider as new and original that no one has ever thought of before. He calls it “The Informed Principle of Worship,” which, being interpreted, means: “If it’s not forbidden it might be permitted” (those are Rev. Schlissel’s own words).⁹

Now I ask you: what is the ‘cash value’, so to speak, of that remarkable statement? Well, I think it is just this: what Rev. Schlissel says, in effect, is simply: ‘Trust me. Trust me to work it out and then inform you as to what might be allowed in worship (even though God has not commanded it). Maybe we will need a new

⁸ [I wonder what it’s like in Brooklyn? If Steve Schlissel would visit some of the ‘reformed’ so called churches in northwest Iowa, he would find that there is already chaos. That’s what there is – chaos! Have any of you ever read the periodical called *Reformed Worship* published by the Christian Reformed Church? That’s chaos, folks! Read it! How would you like a big circular thing lowered down from the ceiling with all kinds of symbols on it? How would you like to come to church to find a pile of dirt with a wooden cross there and you don’t have a sermon, you’re supposed to look at that and meditate on it? That’s happening, today, in some Reformed Churches. What are we doing? It’s chaos already!]

⁹ [I regard Steve Schlissel as a brother in Christ, he’s a friend – I hope he is. He said he was the last time we corresponded by email over this very thing. I love the man; I’m so thankful for the wonderful things he’s done. But I don’t think any individual is free to do what he is doing in this series of articles.]



ceremony or two. Maybe we will need to invent a few more special sacred days, etc. But not to worry, I will inform you as soon as I've figured out what might be permitted.'

Well, my answer is: 'no thanks Steve.' And I say this for the following reasons.

1. The Bible alone is my authority. It is not the Bible and something else — not even Steve Schlissel. As a matter of fact one of my Reformed doctrines, the doctrine of the fall and the consequent sinfulness of human nature, warns me against putting my trust in any man.

2. The Bible is sufficient. It teaches everything that I am to believe concerning God, and the whole duty that God requires of me, especially in the sphere of worship.

3. The real need, therefore, is not for further attempts to justify the status quo, or that part of the status quo that appeals to someone like Rev. Schlissel!

4. No, the great need at the present time is for a new Reformation. And the bed-rock foundation of true reformation is a return to 'sola scriptura.' As the great Belgic Confession of Faith puts it: the true Church of God is the Church in which "all things are managed according to the pure Word of God, (and) all things contrary thereto rejected."

5. And so it is my conviction there will be no new Reformation unless and until —

a. There is a return to integrity in taking our vows. The Westminster Confession of Faith says:

22:4. An oath is to be taken in the plain and common sense of the words, without equivocation, or mental reservation. It cannot oblige to sin; but in anything not sinful, being taken, it binds to performance, although to a man's own hurt.

b. And a return to basic honesty concerning the teaching of our Confessions

President Clinton showed his lack of basic honesty when he raised the question of what the meaning of the word is, is! What is needed today, in Reformed Churches, is honesty about the meaning of such little words as "all", "only", and "any". Maybe then we can also be honest about

the meaning of such big words as "instituted", "prescribed" and "commanded!"

c. Finally: as bad as Steve Schlissel's ethics are with respect to the vow he once took respecting the proper method of dealing with differences from the Confessions, I do appreciate his honesty. He is right when he says there are many today who say they agree with the regulative principle, but then they really demolish it by way of redefinition.¹⁰ The result is that they allow the very things our Fathers intended to exclude by this principle.

Again, let me say, I agree with Schlissel when he says:

It is passing strange that some who (quite properly) are at odds with deconstructionist methodology would then attempt to pass themselves off as regulativists when they have first divested the word of its historical meaning and injected it with an entirely opposite meaning.

I prefer Schlissel's open rejection to that.

d. But that doesn't take anything away from the serious damage that he has done by his irresponsible, and unaccountable, attack on the Reformed Confessions. 

Gospel of Grace:

**In the Face of Jesus Christ. By Richard Bacon.
One of the most requested tapes from our web
site. One Audio Cassette, \$2.50, postage extra.
See Order Form on the back page of this issue
of *The Blue Banner*.**

¹⁰ [I am sorry to say I think some of the Westminster theologians are doing exactly that — engaging in demolition by way of redefinition. Professor John Frame at Westminster West says he can't find any proof in the Bible that you have to have preaching in the worship service. He says he cannot find anything in the Bible that prevents dancing in worship. I think the man just simply demolishes the regulative principle by redefinition. I prefer Schlissel to that.]



The Westminster Standards and the Frequency of the Lord's Supper

Showing that observance of the Communion Sacrament on a weekly basis is in accord with the doctrine of the Westminster Confession and Larger Catechism, and the practice of the Westminster Directory for the Public Worship of God.

By *Richard Bacon*

s we begin, let us remember that the question of the frequency of the Lord's Supper is not one at the same level as an element of worship; i.e. it is not commanded. Rather, it is a circumstance of worship. This is a question much like the question, 'Why do we have worship at 10:30 on Sunday morning instead of at 9:30?'

The practice of this particular church is to have the sacrament of the Lord's Supper weekly. However, this is not done out of a biblical necessity. It is necessary that the church meet on the Lord's day; it is necessary that we sing psalms to the exclusion of all other hymnody in worship. It is necessary the psalms be sung *a cappella* and that the elements of the Lord's Supper must be bread and wine. It is necessary that our prayers be in the name of Jesus Christ. Those things are all necessary circumstances or elements required by biblical command or by good and necessary consequences. We believe the frequency of the Lord's Supper is a circumstance that is to be determined by the session of the particular, local church.¹

¹ Such circumstances are defined in Westminster Confession of Faith, 1:6, where it states: ". . . there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the word, which are always to be observed." *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Church Publications, 1990).

THE LORD'S DAY AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

Most of the festivals of the Old Testament were observed annually. However, all of the festival days of the Old Testament have been subsumed in the New Testament in the weekly Sabbath day, the holy convocation of Leviticus 23:3. The Old Testament feasts, ceremonies, and sacrifices have been replaced with one weekly holy day. It is a day that God has set apart to himself for the public practice of his worship, including the observance of the Lord's Supper on that Lord's Day.

The Confessional documents, which express the doctrine and practice of this church, are the Westminster Standards. Let us examine what these documents say about this question of the frequency of the Lord's Supper.

THE WESTMINSTER DIRECTORY FOR WORSHIP

In the Directory for the Public Worship of God, the Westminster Divines write:

The Communion, or Supper of the Lord, is frequently to be celebrated; but how often, may be considered and determined by the ministers, and other church-governors of each congregation, as they shall find most convenient for the comfort and edification of the people committed to their charge. And, when it shall be administered, we judge it convenient to be done after the morning sermon.



Where this sacrament cannot with convenience be frequently administered, it is requisite that publick warning be given the sabbath-day before the administration thereof: and that either then, or on some day of that week, something concerning that ordinance, and the due preparation thereunto, and participation thereof, be taught; that, by the diligent use of all means sanctified of God to that end, both in publick and private, all may come better prepared to that heavenly feast.

The ideal according to the Directory is to have Communion frequently. Whatever “frequent” means, it does not mean “infrequent.” If it is infrequent, there is to be a sermon within the previous week before in order to prepare the people for the Lord’s Supper. Note that the Directory indicates that this preparation sermon is not necessary with the frequent observation of the Communion sacrament. Note also that the only frequency of observance, which removes any possibility of an intervening Sabbath for which to have such a warning, is the practice of weekly observance of the Lord’s Supper.

The Westminster Directory for Public Worship also teaches that the frequency of the Lord’s Supper is to be determined by the session of the church -- not the presbytery, not the synod, not the general assembly, and not the church across the sea. The local church session is to set the time, as it is “most convenient for the comfort and edification of the people committed to their charge.”

WESTMINSTER LARGER CATECHISM

The Westminster Larger Catechism also has much to say about the observation of the Lord’s Supper. Question 177 contrasts the two sacraments of the New Testament.

Westminster Larger Catechism 177:

Wherein do the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper differ? Answer. The sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper differ, in that Baptism is to be administered but once, with water, to be a sign and seal of our regeneration and ingrafting into Christ, and that even to infants; whereas the Lord’s Supper is to be administered often, in the elements of bread and

The Compromise Language of the Westminster Directory for Public Worship allowing Weekly Communion.

“The Communion, or Supper of the Lord, is frequently to be celebrated.” The words of the Westminster Directory for Public Worship regarding frequency of communion do not prohibit weekly observance, but allow for it. This is supported by the notes of one of the Scottish Commissioners to the Assembly, which suggests that the phrase was added to allow for the practice of those who celebrated the sacrament weekly. George Gillespie’s records the deliberation on the text of the Directory regarding frequency of the Lord’s Supper in the debate of June 5, 1645 in the sub-committee respecting the Directory :

“...But the Committee went through in order; and first, objection was made against that first section, which leaves to the discretion of the pastor and elders of each congregation how oft the communion is to be celebrated. It was desired that they might be tied, at least, to four times a-year, since the Apostle and Christ speak of often celebration.

I said, There is no ground from Scripture or otherwise to determine four times a-year, for this should resolve in the arbitrement of men. If congregations abuse this liberty, the presbytery at visitation of churches can help it.

Mr. Newcomen declared that all the new gathered churches have the sacrament every Lord’s day in the afternoon.

To avoid this debate of the time, it was added in the beginning, The Lord’s supper is to be administered frequently.”

George Gillespie, “Notes of Proceedings of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster” *Works: The Presbyterian’s Armoury* (Edinburgh: Robert Ogle and Oliver and Boyd, 1844-46) 102.



wine, to represent and exhibit Christ as spiritual nourishment to the soul, and to confirm our continuance and growth in him, and that only to such as are of years and ability to examine themselves.

According to the answer to WLC 177, a key difference in the sacraments, for the purposes of this study, is that baptism is to be administered once, and the Lord's Supper is to be administered often, or frequently, the virtual synonym used by the Divines in the Directory as noted above.

There are three other questions in the Larger Catechism which, taken in conjunction with one another, shed additional light on this question of the frequency of Communion.

Westminster Larger Catechism 171. How are they that receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to prepare themselves before they come unto it?

This question presupposes that people are supposed to be preparing themselves for the sacrament. And the way they do this is:

They that receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper are, before they come, to prepare themselves thereunto, by examining themselves of their being in Christ, of their sins and wants; of the truth and measure of their knowledge, faith, repentance; love to God and the brethren, charity to all men, forgiving those that have done them wrong; of their desires after Christ, and of their new obedience; and by renewing the exercise of these graces, by serious meditation, and fervent prayer.

Let us briefly examine this answer by asking some hopefully thought-provoking questions. When are Christians to refrain from these activities? When are believers not supposed to be preparing in that regard? When is one not supposed to be in that state? When are Christians not supposed to be examining themselves? Is there any time believers are not supposed to do these things? Is there ever a time when these activities are unlawful?

Do any of the activities in this list require six months to do them? Is there anything in the answer to LC 171 that takes a month to do? Is

there anything in this answer that takes a week to do? In fact, this should always be the state of the soul of any Christian.

Westminster Larger Catechism 174. What is required of them that receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in the time of the administration of it? Answer. It is required of them that receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, that, during the time of the administration of it, with all holy reverence and attention they wait upon God in that ordinance, diligently observe the sacramental elements and actions, heedfully discern the Lord's body, and affectionately meditate on his death and sufferings, and thereby stir up themselves to a vigorous exercise of their graces; in judging themselves, and sorrowing for sin; in earnest hungering and thirsting after Christ, feeding on him by faith, receiving of his fulness, trusting in his merits, rejoicing in his love, giving thanks for his grace; in renewing of their covenant with God, and love to all the saints.

Which Lord's Day is it that Christians are supposed to neglect the things enumerated in this answer? Is there anything in this answer that precludes doing these things every Lord's Day? In fact is there anything here that would not be *desirous* to do every Lord's Day? It is important to understand that there is not a bit of difference between the way believers ought to prepare for the Lord's Supper, and the way they ought to prepare to receive God's Word. There is not a bit of difference between the way the Lord's Word in preaching is received and that of receiving the elements of the Lord's Supper in the Communion sacrament. If Christians should be preparing themselves week by week to receive the Word, then they will know how to prepare themselves to receive Communion. If they know how to receive the Lord's Word with an open heart, confession of sins, new obedience, and love for the saints, then they ought also to be able to do the same with Communion.

WLC 175. What is the duty of Christians, after they have received the sacrament of the Lord's Supper? Answer. The duty of Christians, after they have received the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, is seriously to consider how they have behaved themselves therein, and with what



success; if they find quickening and comfort, to bless God for it, beg the continuance of it, watch against relapses, fulfil their vows, and encourage themselves to a frequent attendance on that ordinance:

If the partakers of the Lord's Supper get some benefit out of the sacrament, they should thank God for what they received, pray that they continue in it, and then attend frequently upon the ordinance so they continue to receive it. On the other hand, if they find no present benefit – the wine was okay and the bread was fine, but there was not any spiritual benefit from it at all, they are ...

...more exactly to review their preparation to, and carriage at, the sacrament; in both which, if they can approve themselves to God and their own consciences, they are to wait for the fruit of it in due time: but, if they see they have failed in either, they are to be humbled, and to attend upon it afterwards with more care and diligence.

This answer does not say if the sacrament was not "special enough," that it should on that account be done less frequently. What it does say is, to paraphrase the answer, if Christians got something out of the Supper, they should keep on attending upon it, and if they did not get something out of it, they should figure out why they did not, then keep on attending upon it.

So then, if a believer takes these questions as seriously as he ought, then he will always be in one of these three states. 1. In the state of preparing for the sacrament. 2. In receiving the sacrament. Or 3. In contemplating whether benefit was received from the sacrament. It ought not to be something out of his mind eleven months or six months out of the year.

Now, as was already said, there is no difference in preparation for the Word and for the sacrament, because the same grace is in both. There is not a grace of the Word and a different grace of the sacrament. These are simply two different means to the same grace of God. As a result, Christians prepare themselves the same way; comport themselves the same way, and examine themselves afterward in the same way for both the Word of God and the sacrament.

OBJECTION TO WEEKLY COMMUNION

One objection to frequent or weekly observance of the Lord's Supper is that this makes the Communion become less special, or more common.

There are two things wrong with the objection. 1. Having something infrequently does not make it more special. If it were suggested that there were certain intimate relations of marriage which should be had less often in order to make them more special, that would not be a very convincing argument. The way to make something special is by cherishing it, not by reducing the frequency. Reducing the frequency does not make something special; it just makes it infrequent. 2. However, the Lord's Supper is not a special ordinance of worship. This is clear from WCF 21.5.

WESTMINSTER CONFSSION 21:5.

The reading of the Scriptures with godly fear; the sound preaching, and conscionable hearing of the word, in obedience unto God, with understanding, faith, and reverence; singing of psalms with grace in the heart; as also the due administration and worthy receiving of the sacraments instituted by Christ; are all parts of the ordinary religious worship of God: besides religious oaths and vows, solemn fastings, and thanksgiving upon special occasions, which are, in their several times and seasons, to be used in a holy and religious manner.

Now according to the Confession of Faith the sacraments belong to the ordinary worship of God, not to the special occasional worship of God. Here "special" is a synonym of "unusual" or "unordinary." So to the very extent that worship is characterized as special, the sacraments do not belong there. And to the very extent that worship is characterized as non-special, or ordinary, the sacraments do belong there. Observe what the sacraments are teamed with. 'The reading of the Scriptures with godly fear.' Would it make the reading of Scripture more special if it was not done so often? No. 'Sound preaching and conscionable hearing of the Word.' Would anyone suggest that preaching should be done only once every six months or so? Of course not. 'The



singing of psalms with grace in the heart.’ Does the church just sing too many psalms, and they become no longer special? If the reading of the word, or preaching, or singing of the psalms have ceased to be special, this does not speak to frequency but to the *state of the heart*. Again, using the term “special” in the sense of dear or precious, the way to *make* these things special, is by loving the same things God loves, *not by observing them less frequently*.

According to the Westminster Confession of Faith, the due administration and worthy receiving of the sacraments instituted by Christ are a part of the ordinary religious worship of God. Everything else that the Divines have listed as an ordinary part of the worship of God is done every Lord’s Day. So it is not incongruous with the Confession for those churches whose sessions have judged it expedient for the edification of their people to have the observance of the Lord’s Supper every Lord’s Day. Every Lord’s Day we read the Scriptures. Every Lord’s Day we have the preaching of the Word. Every

Lord’s Day we have the singing of psalms. And every Lord’s day we have the observance of the Lord’s Supper.

In this brief review of the subject of frequency of Communion it has been observed that in this New Testament age, all the festival days of the Old Testament have been subsumed in the weekly Lord’s Day, and the Supper of the Lord, the only other thing so designated the Lord’s, is to be observed on that day. It has been noted from the Directory for Public Worship that the frequency of the Supper is to be determined by the session, and it is to be done frequently. And infrequently means that there is at least one Sabbath in between. And it was noted from the Larger Catechism (172, 175 and 176), what partakers are to do before, during and after the Lord’s Supper, and discovered this is a state in which they ought always to be. It is not something done three months, six months or once a year in between Communion seasons. 

Some Common Objections to PaedoBaptism Answered in Outline

These points are expanded in two lectures by the author, *God’s Covenant with Man #39* and *#40* on the subject of **Baptism**.

By Richard Bacon

1. NO SPECIFIC COMMAND GIVEN¹



f there were, then the controversy would either be at an end or it would be a quite different controversy.

Neither is there an undisputed verse in Scripture that directly teaches the Trinity. We allow good and necessary consequence.

While there is no command, there are implied instances. Three instances of baptism specifically refer to "households," with a significance carried over from the OT. In no instance in the NT is baptism withheld due to age. Further, there is not a single instance of someone "coming to age" and being baptized on that account.

¹ For the two audio tapes referenced in the subtitle above, write: Blue Banner Audio Tapes, P O Box 141084, Dallas TX, 75214, and order tapes God's Covenant with Man, #39 & #40, and enclose a check for \$5.00.



2. BAPTISM PRESUPPOSES A RATIONAL PROFESSION OF WHICH INFANTS ARE INCAPABLE

There is no solid ground for this assumption. And based upon the existence of household baptisms (households of faith, of course), the assumption is unneeded. The NT appeals that call for faith & repentance are made to adults. Thus we would reference 2 Thess. 3:10. It no more follows that infants are excluded from baptism than that they are excluded from teaching.

3. WE SIMPLY DO NOT KNOW WHETHER INFANTS ARE REGENERATE

Baptism is not administered on the basis of our knowledge that regeneration has certainly taken place in an individual. The same objection would militate against circumcising infants, yet God commanded it.

4. INFANTS DO NOT UNDERSTAND

We simply don't know how much they understand. From an early age they can be reminded of God's grace (Ephesians 6:1-4).

5. MANY BAPTIZED IN INFANCY LATER FALL AWAY

We deplore the fact that this is a true statement.

But abuse of an institution is not an argument against the institution, but simply against its abuse.

The argument can be levied as truthfully against many adults who are baptized and subsequently fall away.

The institution carries with it the necessity that we improve it.

6. THERE ARE SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CIRCUMCISION AND BAPTISM

There is a greater, not a lesser, inclusion in baptism than in circumcision (females, Gentiles).

The commandments of God to children continue the same as under the OT; the significance according to Romans 4:11 remains the same; and the promises of the covenant for their essence remain the same.

7. THERE IS AN INCONSISTENCY IN DENYING THE LORD'S SUPPER TO INFANTS

The two sacraments do not have the same import or the same purpose, therefore it must be proven and not simply assumed that they have the same subjects.

Infants were circumcised in the OT and yet were not given the Passover (for proof, see Bacon's *What Mean Ye By This Service?*)

CIRCUMCISION WAS A NATIONAL SIGN FOR ISRAEL

Circumcision was commanded and thus available to those not born Jews (Genesis 17:7, 10ff; Exodus 12:48ff.)

The NT interprets circumcision not in national terms, but in spiritual terms (Romans 4:11; Galatians 3:6, 14, 17-18, 27-29).

Circumcision finds its meaning in the history of redemption, not in the national history of Abraham's physical descendents (Genesis 25:5-7).

Circumcision finds its fulfillment in Christ and its antitype in baptism. Colossians 2:11-12 – "ye are circumcised" aorist passive of verse 11 is parallel with "buried in baptism" aorist passive of verse 12.

CIRCUMCISION WAS A SPIRITUAL SACRAMENT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT WITH A CORRESPONDING SPIRITUAL SACRAMENT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT (VIZ. BAPTISM).

Circumcision does not belong specifically to the Mosaic institutions, but is the token of the Abrahamic covenant of promise.

The promise of circumcision is to circumcise the heart of the people and their children. (Deuteronomy 30:6)



The New Testament consistently interprets the promises made to Abraham in a spiritual manner (Romans 4:16-18; 2 Corinthians 6:16-18; Galatians 3:8, 14, 16; Hebrews 8:10; 11:9; 11:13).

Christ was a minister of the circumcision. But Christ was not a minister of a carnal institution. True circumcision of which Christ is minister must therefore be spiritual and not carnal.

SIGNIFICANCE OF CIRCUMCISION AND BAPTISM

Both Circumcision in the OT and Baptism in the NT signify and seal death to sin.

Baptism – Romans 6:3, "baptized into Christ's death" makes us "dead to sin" (verse 2).

Circumcision – Colossians 2:11-12, "put off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ," is semantically equivalent to "buried with him in baptism."

Both circumcision in the OT and Baptism in the NT signify our relationship to Christ.

Baptism – Galatians 3:27 "those who are baptized into Christ have 'put on Christ.'"

Circumcision – Philippians 3:3, "we are of the circumcision who 'rejoice in Christ.'"

Both circumcision in the OT and Baptism in the NT signify and seal the destruction of the flesh.

Baptism – Romans 6:3, "our old man is crucified with him."

Circumcision – Philippians 3:3, "we of the circumcision 'have no confidence in the flesh.'"

Both circumcision in the OT and Baptism in the NT identify the recipients as Abraham's seed.

Baptism – Galatians 3:29, "for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ...are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise."

Circumcision – Romans 2:28-29 cf. Genesis 17:9-10, "And God said unto Abraham...every man child among you shall be circumcised."

Both Circumcision in the OT and Baptism in the NT signify the faith of Christ in the believer.

Baptism – Colossians 2:12, "risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God."

Circumcision – Romans 4:11, "the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith."

Both Circumcision in the OT and Baptism in the NT signify and seal a new relationship to God.

Baptism – Romans 6:4, "even so we should walk in newness of life."

Circumcision – Romans 2:28-29, "circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit; and not in the letter."

Thus both Circumcision in the OT and Baptism in the NT point primarily to an internal change of heart, whether prospective or retrospective.

Baptism – 1 Peter 3:21, "The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:"

Circumcision – Romans 2:28-29, "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God." 

FPCR Sermon Subscription Service

FPCR is offering subscriptions to receive tapes of Pastor Bacon's sermons as they are preached. For \$10 per month one receives all of the sermons in either the morning or afternoon services. For \$20 per month a subscriber receives tapes of both services. The tapes will be sent automatically the week following the Lord's day on which they were preached.

Pastor Bacon follows a Puritan model of preaching. He has been preaching through Isaiah in the afternoon and through Hebrews in the morning. Bacon began preaching through Isaiah in November 1993, and is presently in the 61st chapter.



The Public Ordinances of Worship and the Lord's Day

An extract from the famous 'grandfather' of all Puritan works on the Christian Sabbath, Nicholas Bownd's *Sabbatum Veteris et Novi Testamenti: Or the True Doctrine of the Sabbath ... plainly laid forth* (London, 1606).

By Nicholas Bownd¹

But if we further demand what are the parts of God's service that we should be occupied in, surely to speak of the true manner of worshipping God does not properly belong to this place; it was sufficiently opened unto us in the second commandment. But generally whatsoever is the true worship of God, in that are we bound to serve him publicly and privately, as at all other convenient times, so wholly and altogether upon this day; and to do nothing but that, that so it might be *an holy day* indeed, *consecrated unto the Lord, and the Lord's Day alone*, as we have seen it to be called in the scriptures (Isa. 58:13; Rev. 1:10). Therefore whereas the Lord is served in the ministry of his Word, sacraments, prayer, and all other parts of his holy discipline and government, which he has appointed for his Church; these are the very

things in which the day is to be consumed and spent, and without the which we cannot sanctify it in the least tolerable measure. In so much that as we have seen the sanctifying of this day so highly commended unto us in the Word, so we shall see the practice of all these set down in particulars, in sundry places of the same Word, as the only means whereby it is sanctified of us.

Therefore we have seen already, *that many sacrifices were then to be offered* (Num. 28:9), which were never truly performed without the Word, which gave life unto them, and without prayer, that they might be accepted, and confession of their sins, that thereby they might be assured of the forgiveness of them. So that in commanding the one by name, he includes the other, which were never severed from it; especially seeing that in so many places of the

¹ This version of the text comes from a new edition of Bownd's work, which Chris Coldwell is preparing for publication. Text Copyright © 2000 by Chris Coldwell. Bownd was not the first Puritan or Proto-Puritan to advance the "Puritan" Sabbath, but his work was the most thorough and widely heralded of his day and sparked the first Sabbath controversy in English literature. It remained the standard work for a generation until the Puritans were again allowed the freedom to publish at the beginning of the 1640s, when a flood of Puritan works on the topic came forth.

James Gilfillan writes, "We have now come to the commencement of the earliest sabbatic contest, entitled to the name, in the Christian Church. The occasion of this intestine war was the publication, in 1595, of *The Doctrine of the Sabbath, plainly layde forth and soundly proved, etc.*, by Nicholas Bownd, D.D., a treatise in which the institution, for the first time probably, received a full and satisfactory consideration. Of the author little has been recorded. Educated at Cambridge, where he took his degrees, he became minister of Norton in Suffolk, and was one of sixty, who, in 1583, were suspended from the exercise of sacred functions for refusing to subscribe Whitgift's three Articles, which declared: 1. That the Queen was supreme head of the Church; 2. That the Ordinal and the Book of Common Prayer contained nothing contrary to the Word of God; and, 3. That the Thirty-nine articles of the Church of England were to be admitted as agreeable to the Holy Scriptures. Besides *The Doctrine of the Sabbath*, which, after being "perused" and enlarged, was reprinted in 1606, he published three works, according to Wood, who adds, "with other things which I have not seen." [The three works are *The Holy Exercise of Fasting, etc., in certain Homilies or Sermons* (1604). *A Storehouse of Comfort for the afflicted in Spirit, set open in Twenty-one Sermons* (1604); and, *The unbelief of Thomas the Apostle, laid open for Believers, etc.* (1608).] His literary labors appear to have been all carried on at Norton, and to warrant the presumption that he had been permitted to resume the exercise of his ministry there.

Dr. Bownd's treatise of the Sabbath was regarded with so much favor and dislike by different classes, and produced so great a change in the sabbatic practice of Englishmen in his time, as to entitle its doctrines and history to more notice than they have of late received." Rev. James Gilfillan, "Sketches of Sabbatic Controversies and Literature," *Anthology of Presbyterian & Reformed Literature Volume 5* (Dallas: Naphtali Press, 1992) 242.



scripture they are joined together. And this is that which the prophet Ezekiel speaks of, showing both the prince and the people, what they should do upon the Sabbath; namely, *that the gates of the Temple being set open, they should repair thither, and there the priests should offer their burnt offerings, and they should worship the Lord* (Ezek. 46:1-3).

THERE OUGHT TO BE THE PREACHING OF THE WORD UPON THIS DAY IN ALL PLACES.

But it is more plainly set down in the New Testament, that it was the ordinary custom of the ministers and people to meet together, and join in the Word, sacrament and prayer. For in Acts 20:7, it is reported by St. Luke, that *the church of God at Troas, upon the first day of the week* (which is the Lord's Day), *came together to break bread* (that is, to receive the sacrament, he noting for brevity sake, under one kind, the whole action). And he takes that rather than any other, to show us that this was one of the usual parts of God's service in the primitive Church, *to receive the sacrament every Lord's Day*, as well as to serve him in anything else; *and Paul*, being there, then *preached*; where he alleging no other cause of both these than that it was *the first day of the week* (which was then appointed to be sanctified), teaches us, that these are the means to sanctify it by, and that they are proper unto the day.

Now though prayer is not here named, yet we are to presume that neither the Word nor sacraments were ministered without it; seeing the fruit of both depends upon the blessing of God, which is obtained by prayer, and seeing that in other places they are joined together. And that the ministry of the Word is so inseparably joined to the Sabbath, and has always been, further appears by that which is most plainly and in many words set down in the thirteenth chapter of the same story (Acts 13:14-16); where it is thus written:

When Paul and Barnabas departed from Perga, they came to Antiochia, a city of Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down. And after the lecture of the law and prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent

unto them, saying: 'Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.' Then Paul stood up, and beckoned with the hand, and said, 'Men of Israel...'

As follows in that chapter to verse 42, where again it is written, that:

When they were come out of the synagogue of the Jews, the Gentiles besought that they would preach these words to them the next sabbath day. And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city, to hear the word of God.

[These] words do sufficiently show that it has always been diligently observed of the Church to sanctify the Sabbath day in the public reading and preaching of the Word, as in the most singular part of God's service. For Paul came and *found the church already met together upon the sabbath, and reading the law and the prophets, and then was desired to preach*; and afterwards being desired to preach again, they *came and heard him upon the sabbath*. And Master Beza says:¹

In synagogis: In the synagogues of the Jews (after the pattern of which it is evident that the meetings of the Christian churches have been appointed), there was the reading of the scripture, and after that the rulers of the synagoge gave leave to them to speak unto the people, which seemed to have any skill and learning in that way.

So that where there were men of ability, the rulers and governors of the church did take order that in all places every Sabbath day Moses was preached unto the people; and as the Word was taught, so the people did hear it attentively. As appears by their practice after their return from the captivity, at what time (Neh. 8:1-8):

[A]ll the people assembled themselves together, and they spake unto Ezra the scribe, that he would bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation of men and women, and of all that could hear and understand it, in the first day of the seventh

¹ Beza, *in hunc locum*.



month:² And he read there (from the morning till the midday) before men and women, and them that understood it, and the ears of all the people hearkened unto the book of the law. And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which he had made for the preaching ... and he opened the book before all the people, for he was above all the people; and when he opened, all the people stood up. ... And he read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.

And thus we see that the Word of God was preached upon the Sabbath, and that the people were present at it, and did attentively mark it. For there were men and women, and they stood up, and their ears hearkened, and they understood the sense of it.

Hereunto it seems Solomon had respect in that exhortation of his, [which] he made unto the people in the book of the preacher (Eccl. 4:17), where he exhorts them to come to the hearing of the Word with a good affection. *Take heed to thy foot, when thou enterest into the house of God, and be more near to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they know not that they do evil.* And that this diligence in preaching and hearing of the Word of God upon the Sabbath days was not proper unto some one time, but usual and ordinary, especially when men were faithful and conscionable, it appears [from] the fifteenth chapter of Acts, which we have heard already, *That Moses hath of old time, in every city them that preach him, seeing he is read every sabbath day in the synagogues* (Acts 15:22). Besides that which is written of Paul in Acts 17:1-3, that *he coming to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days disputed with them by the scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must have suffered, and risen again from the dead, and that this is Jesus Christ, whom I preach unto you.*

But it were an endless labor (though profitable) in order to reckon up all the several places which show that these are the holy works of the Sabbath, which the Lord requires all men to be

occupied in, if they will sanctify the day according to his commandment, and as the practice of the Church gives us example. And upon these considerations it seems it was enacted in a council held in Germany, under Charles the Great, for the maintaining of the public preaching every Lord's Day,³ that *Si fortè Episcopus, If the bishop be not at home, or be sick, or upon any other urgent cause be not able himself: Nunquam tamen desit diebus Dominicis, qui verbum Dei prædicet: Yet let it be so provided that there never want one to preach the word of God unto the people on the Lord's Days.*

Master Melancthon, reckoning up many parts of sanctifying the Sabbath, says,⁴ *Piè fungi ministerio*, where he makes this not only one, but the principal thing, for a man to well discharge his ministry. In which answer he includes the preaching of the Word, because a little before he says, *that the prophets when they lament the desolation of the Sabbath, they complain, Abolitum esse ministerium docendi, That the ministry of teaching was abolished*, and that the priests' lips did not keep knowledge; but (as themselves say) they were dumb dogs, and delighted in sleeping (Isa. 56:10).

Master Zanchius, entreating particularly of the works commanded in the Sabbath, says:⁵

Quorum primum ac principale est: Of all of them this is the chief end principal, the public ministry of the word; that one appointed thereunto should read the holy scriptures, and interpret and apply them to the people that are present; by instructing them, rebuking them, exhorting and comforting them. And that the rest, holding their peace and being silent, should diligently hear, and suffer themselves to be taught, admonished, and rebuked, and by faith embrace the comforts of the gospel. And for this cause among the Jews by the law of God there were erected synagogues in every city, that there upon every sabbath day the scriptures might be read, and expounded, and the people might be taught the word of God: of both which

² Which was a Sabbath day.

³ Concil. Mogut. cap. 25.

⁴ Philip Melancthon, *in præcept* 3.

⁵ Zanchius upon the fourth commandment.



we have a most pregnant testimony from the mouth of the apostle St. James, Acts 15:21.

So that in the observation of the Sabbath this has always been a principal thing, for the minister diligently to preach and the people carefully to hear. And Master Bucer in this argument, writing of the practice of that church wherein [he] lived, says,⁶ *Dominicis diebus in singulis Parochijs, ad minimum disæ, si non tres habentur conciones. Upon the Lord's Days in every parish, there are two sermons at the least, if not three.* And so says Dr. Chemnitz of the churches under the Duke of Brunswick, and, namely, of that wherein [he] himself lived.⁷

Which also as it may be truly said of a great number of churches in England, for the space of these many years, under the most happy reign of her Majesty, our late Sovereign of most blessed memory, to the great glory of God, her singular renown, and the salvation of many souls. So in that respect we are to bow our knees unto God day and night for the preservation of the life and honor of our liege Lord and dread Sovereign King James, whom God in much mercy has set over us, that it may be so by his means for ever; as also that in those places, where it is yet wanting, it might be brought in, in God's most blessed time (as we have great cause to hope that it shall be), if our unthankfulness does not hinder us, even as that zealous and good King Jehoshaphat could not do all things in his time, that he would for the reformation of the Church, *because the people then had not prepared their hearts to serve the God of their fathers* (2 Chron 20:33). Especially seeing that there are so many good constitutions and ecclesiastical canons made in the synod by the reverend fathers the bishops and clergy of the province of Canterbury, even in the first year of his Majesty's reign for the establishing of the preaching of the Word in all places — the due execution whereof we pray [to] God may not be wanting. As that:

... the licenses for plurality of benefices are limited, and residence enjoined; and that they

have under them in the benefice, where they do not reside, a preacher lawfully allowed, and that is able sufficiently to teach and instruct the people [Canon 41]. ... And that the deans and governors of the cathedral or collegiate churches, when they are there resident, that they continue in preaching the word of God; and that the Petty Canons be urged to the study of the holy scriptures [Canon 42]. ... And that the said deans shall preach not only in their cathedral churches, but in others of the same diocese, where they are resident, especially from whence they have their yearly rents; and if they be sick, or any ways hindered, they must substitute preachers to supply their turns: wherein if they offend, they shall be punished by the bishop according to the quality of the offense [Canon 43]. ... And that prebendaries must not be absent ordinarily from their benefices with cure, above one month in the year [Canon 44]. ... And that all beneficed preachers, residing on their benefices, and having no lawful impediment, must in their own cure, or in some other church near adjoining, preach one sermon at least every Sunday in the year [Canon 45]. ... And that beneficed men not allowed to be preachers, shall procure sermons to be preached in their cures once in every month at the least [Canon 46]. ... And that every beneficed man licensed to be absent, shall cause his cure to be supplied by a sufficient licensed preacher; and he that has two benefices shall maintain a preacher licensed, in the benefice, where he does not reside, except he preach at both of them usually [Canon 47].

All which canons do at the first view make an open show, that it was the purpose and intent of these reverend fathers greatly to advance the preaching of the gospel. And I am sure that all of them, if they are diligently put in practice, will cause more preaching through this land than has been; that so the Sabbath may be a great deal better sanctified, than it has been in many places and in many years. And as we by the law of charity are to presume of them that they mean as they say, so we are to pray unto God for them, that he would so assist them with his Holy Spirit, that they may do so indeed. That by their means it may come to pass, that the Word of God may be purely and sincerely preached in all places at the last; and that every congregation may have a

⁶ Bucer upon Matt. 12:11.

⁷ Chemnitz, *Exam., cap. de dieb. fest.*



faithful pastor set over them, who may wisely go in and out before them (Num. 27:17).

**ALL MEN OUGHT TO RESORT TO THOSE PLACES
WHERE THE WORD IS PREACHED.**

But to return to that, from which I have digressed a little — To be short, let us look unto that which is in Acts 18:4, *that Paul abiding at Corinth, disputed in the synagogue every sabbath day, and exhorted the Jews, and the Greeks.* Here the Holy Ghost witnesses of him that he did *openly teach the scriptures every sabbath day,* and in the forenamed place, that is in the chapter going immediately before this (Acts 17:2), that *it was his manner so to do.* Then it must needs be the custom of the Church to come to the public ministry of the Word upon those days, and it must be a common manner with them. Which is spoken to this end, that we might not be of that brutish mind that some are of, that know no other thing to do upon the Sabbath but to rest, and take their ease; and therefore lie many times at home sleeping most profanely. And so their ox and their ass in ceasing from work, keep as good a Sabbath as they. Neither to be so ignorant as others are, who content themselves with their own private readings at home, or with the bare reading of the Word in the Church, neglecting the preaching of it; not laboring to procure it to themselves, nor repairing to those places in the mean season where it is, though it be the chiefest part of God's service, and therefore the most especial means whereby the Sabbath is sanctified, and without the which all other things in the service of God, are less accepted of God, and more unprofitable to our own selves.

Therefore how many places of scripture have we seen before, commanding us so straightly, *to sanctify the sabbath,* so many are there binding *all men of what estate and condition soever to listen after the preaching of the Word, and to be at it every sabbath,* if they have any care to discharge themselves of that obedience unto God, which he so straightly requires at their hands. As we may see in the scriptures, how they that feared God, living in the corrupt times of the Church, and so not having their ordinary

teachers, have upon the Sabbath day frequented those places, though far off, where, by the doctrine of the Word, they might sanctify the day in some good manner.

In which consideration, *the Shunamite* (as it is recorded in 2 Kings 4:23) *when his wife told him that she was going to the prophet,* but concealed the cause from him (which was for the restoring of her son to life, which she had obtained by his means before), he demanded of her, *why she should go that day, seeing it was neither new moon, nor the sabbath day* — as though he had said, 'If it had been any of these days, which the Lord had commanded to be kept holy, then no marvel if she hastened thitherward so fast.' For so it ought to be, and so it appears she used to do, that by *hearing of his doctrine,* she might *keep holy the day,* and so thereby be furthered in all other holy duties.

In this respect I would to God we might say of our time, as Justin Martyr does of his:⁸ *Die, qui solis dicitur, omnes qui in oppidis vel agris morantur in unum locum conveniunt. Upon the day that is called Sunday, all that dwell in the towns or villages do meet in one place; and for the space of an hour the canonical scriptures of the prophets and apostles are read.* It is a canon in the provincial council of Matisgon, *That if any men have a church near them, they should go thither, and there upon the Lord's Day to be occupied in prayer, etc.,* where their meaning was not to dispense with them that were further off, but to enjoin all to go to their next churches. And in another council, this is the main reason why they should give over all worldly affairs:⁹ *Quo factilius ad ecclesiam venientes. That they might the more easily come to the church and pray.*

And unto this does that learned father and bishop Augustine exhort his auditors,¹⁰ in a sermon which I have often alleged, which is worthy of all men for this purpose to be read over: *Let no man separate himself from divine service. Neque otiosus quis domi remaneat.*

⁸ Justin Martyr, *Apolong.* 2.

⁹ Concil. Arelat. 3. cap. 17.

¹⁰ Augustine, *de temp.,* serm. 251.



Neither let any man tarry idle at home, when others are gone to church. Which also as it was very Christianly provided for under her late most excellent Majesty [Queen Elizabeth], of famous memory, both by statute, and also by her injunctions;¹¹ so it had been happy for this land, if in all places it had been executed but with half that care that it was first meant. For in a statute made in the beginning of her reign, entitled *An Act for the Uniformity of Common Prayer*, and prefixed to the *Book of Common Prayer*, it is enacted:

... that all and every person and persons inhabiting within this realm, or any other [of] her Majesty's dominions, shall diligently and faithfully, having no lawful or reasonable excuse to be absent, endeavor themselves to resort to their parish, church or chapel accustomed, or upon reasonable let [*hindrance*] thereof, to some usual place, where common prayer, and such service of God shall be used in such time of let upon every Sunday; and then and there to abide orderly and soberly, during the time of common prayer, preachings, or other service of God, there to be used and ministered, upon pain of punishment by the censures of the church; and also upon pain, that every person offending shall forfeit for every such offense twelve pence, to be levied by the church wardens of the parish, where such offense shall be done, to the use of the poor of the same parish, of the goods, lands, and tenements of such offenders, by way of distresses.

And for the due execution of this statute, the parliament did then:

... require and charge all archbishops, and bishops, and their ordinaries, that they should endeavor themselves to the uttermost of their knowledge, that the true execution thereof might be had throughout their diocese and charges, as they would answer before God for such evils and plagues wherewith almighty God may justly punish his people, for neglecting so good and wholesome a law.

And also it was enacted by the authority aforesaid, that:

... all and every Justicer of Oyer and Determiner, or Justices of Assize, should have full power and authority in every of their open and general sessions, to inquire, hear, and determine the offenses that should be committed contrary to this present Act within the limits of the commission to them directed; and to make process for the execution of the same, as they may do against any person being indicted before them of trespass, or lawfully connected thereof.

Thus far the words of the statute which is still in force; which if it had been in all courts both civil and ecclesiastical, executed by the space of these fifty years almost complete, much good might have been done to the Church of God, great glory brought to his holy name, and many sins prevented, and God's judgments for the same.

But may I complain of it, with Master Calvin, rather than amend it, *that whereas, if we were so fervent in the love of God, as we should, all would morning and evening, assemble themselves together, to the end they might be edified more and more in the service of God. We see that with much ado, men will assemble themselves on the Sunday, and that many are to be held to this order, by force and violence.*¹²

AND NOT CARELESSLY TARRY AT HOME AS MANY DO.

And a little after: *It suffices not that every one withdraw himself to his own house, either to read the holy scriptures, or to pray unto God; but it behooves that we come into the company of the faithful, and there declare the concord and agreement we have with the whole body of the Church, and celebrate in such wise this order, as the Lord has commanded.*¹³

But our hope and comfort is that the Lord has so inflamed the princely heat of his excellent

¹¹ ... that all should resort unto their parishes upon all Sundays, and there to continue the whole time of godly service, under the pain of some penalties. Q. Injunct. articl. 46.

¹² Calvin upon Deut. 5, Ser. 34.

¹³ Ibid.



Majesty ([James I] who now sits in the throne of the kingdom) with zeal of his glory and the love of his church, that he will not only revive all the ancient laws before established for the sanctifying of the Sabbath, as he has already done, but add so many new unto them as may be thought necessary; both that all the means of God's pure worship may be everywhere established, that none may have just cause to absent themselves, and also that all men may be compelled to come unto the same. And so as in the days of Asa King of Judah a universal covenant may be made with all sorts, to seek the Lord God of our fathers, with all their heart, and with all their soul; and whosoever will not seek the Lord God of Israel, that he should be slain, whether he were small or great, man or woman; and the same accordingly with justice put in execution (2 Chron. 15:12).

So then, as we have seen heretofore that it is lawful upon these occasions to travail upon the day of rest, now we learn that it is necessary — not only tolerated, but enjoined unto us, because it is the day that must be sanctified. And therefore all labors commanded, whereby we may hallow it in the best manner. Therefore let us in all conscience and care to serve God, cast away such vain pretenses (as that the weather is too hot, or too cold; the ways are too foul, the journey too long, and a thousand more), which might hinder us at any time from coming to the preaching of the Word, and common prayer, in which consists the head and the foot of keeping holy the Sabbath day. For these are so necessary, and have been so continually practiced of the Church, and by succession as it were from hand to hand delivered to the posterity, that we should too much degenerate from them, if we should debar ourselves from these holy things.

The apostle, writing to the Corinthians, where he had before taught every Sabbath day (Acts 18:4), and so by his example and doctrine showed them the right manner of keeping holy the day; when afterwards some great abuses were crept into the church, he (I say), writing unto them, corrects the faults that were in their solemn assemblies upon the Lord's Day, as appears most plainly in the process of the whole

chapter, but more especially, when he so many times at the least thrice together, repeats their general coming together, saying (1 Cor. 11:17-18, 20):

Now in this that I declare, I praise you not, that ye come together not with profit, but with hurt. For when ye are come together in the church, I hear that there are dissensions among you. When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper, etc.

**WHERE THE WORD IS NOT PREACHED, OR MEN
COME NOT TO IT: THIS DAY CANNOT BE
HALLOWED AS IT OUGHT.**

Seeing then he finds fault with the corruptions in prayer, prophesying or preaching, and the sacrament; it is most evident, and must needs be granted, that these were the holy exercises upon that day usually in their common meetings, *whereby the day was made holy unto the Lord*, and most glorious to them. If then it be so (as it cannot be denied unless we will deny the clear light of the sun at midday), that *the chiefest point of hallowing the sabbath day, consists in coming to God's house*, where he offers unto us the special parts of his service to be occupied in, and no where so much as there; then it must needs be subscribed unto, that in Popery, and all false religion, there is nothing else but a mere *profaning of the day*, by abominable idolatry and superstition. And how many days we were under that intolerable bondage, so long we were set free from God's service, and so long lived we in a continual breach of this commandment. And not only so, but wheresoever the preaching of the Word is not, or where men have it, and come not to it, there can they not sanctify the day in that manner that they should; because they want [lack] the principal part of God's service, and that which should direct them in all the rest, and make them most profitable unto them.

Which if it be so (as we cannot with the least show of reason deny it), then what cause have we to be sorry for ourselves and others? which have so many times broken this law by willful absenting ourselves from the church without any



just cause; or by not seeking to the prophets to teach us, when we had not them at home; and which do so continually see our brethren in many places, for want of teaching, willingly to break this law; and which must needs foresee, ours and their posterity to fall into the same sin, nay to continue and die in it, unless by establishing a preaching ministry everywhere,¹⁴ the disease be now cured, and so to be prevented in time to come.

THE MINISTERS THAT CANNOT, OR WILL NOT PREACH, ARE SPECIAL CAUSES OF UNHALLOWING THIS DAY.

And if this is the estate of the poor people, that have not the preaching of the Word among them, that by breaking the Sabbath continually they must needs provoke the most patient Lord's wrath at the last, and endanger their own souls' health; what can be said or thought sufficiently, and answered unto the sin of them, who being called *the ministers of God*, as they that should be the chief in his service, and go before others in it, by preaching unto them, are able and willing to do nothing less in the world than that? For partly they are ignorant, and cannot do it; partly they are given to ease, and will not do it; and partly they have so many charges to look unto, that they know not where to begin to do it. And so do not only unhallow every Sabbath day that they live, and do bestow no day in the week so ill as that (which they should bestow best of all) because they neglect that which God requires most of all at their hands; but also are the only chief causes everywhere of unhallowing the Sabbath, and do compel the people to break it, whether they will or no. Which sin is yet so much the greater in them, because it is not accounted of, and so there is no care to amend it. But let them be assured, that all the charges given concerning the sanctifying of the Sabbath in scripture must be double charged upon them, for themselves, and for their people. And look how

earnestly this is by the Lord commanded, so severely will it one day be required at their hands; when they shall have nobody to speak for them, nay they shall plead against themselves, and better it were for them a thousands times to be in the mean season, than to eat up, and to live upon (as it were), their own sins, and the sins of their people (Hos. 4:8); and to carry about with them their own bane, not by slipping into, of human frailty, but stubbornly falling into, and more willfully lying in so manifest a breach of so great a commandment, and that in the highest point of it.

Therefore today if we will hear God's voice, let us not harden our hearts against it (Psa. 95:7, 8); but, let us receive the truth in love, lest he give us up to strange illusions, effectually to be deceived, and to believe a lie (2 Thes. 2:10-11). And let us confess as the truth is, that the Lord would have *every sabbath to be sanctified, by the minister and the people*; and that in the church he ought to preach the Word, and they to hear it every Sabbath day. And though we be not so grossly blinded to imagine that it is not necessary one whit upon that day, as some do; we must not also be deceived to think, that now and then is sufficient, once a month, or twice a quarter; and so sometime both minister and people should be exempted from it, as though they could sanctify the day after some other manner, and without it.

And though I have justly stood upon the preaching of the Word especially, because it is the greatest part of God's service, and yet that which is most neglected; my meaning is not to exclude the others, as though they appertained not unto us; for it is wholly and every part of it does concern us, and is to be practiced upon this day.

WE MUST BE PRESENT ALSO AT THE READING OF THE WORD, COMMON PRAYER, AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS FROM THE BEGINNING TO THE END.

Therefore we must also come to the reading of the Word, and common prayer, and receive the sacrament so oft as it is administered, yea though we received it the Lord's Day immediately before,

¹⁴ Which we are commanded publicly [in our English Litany] to pray for in these words, *Give grace, O Heavenly Father, to all bishops, pastors, and curates, that they may both by their life and doctrine set forth thy true and only word.*



and to be *present at the baptism* of others. For we have in the forenamed places, seen all these practiced together, and seeing they be parts of God's public worship, we must leave no holy work of his undone, whereby the day might be sanctified unto him. So we must be present at the whole action, *and continue at the divine service, from the beginning to the ending* (as it is provided by the law of the realm, which is grounded upon God's Word), neither forslowing [*delay*]¹⁵ to come at the beginning, nor hastening to depart at the ending; which is so much the more diligently to be taken heed of on every side, because herein many do offend carelessly, and yet the danger of it is very great.

**AND NOT CONTENT OURSELVES WITH SOME
PIECE OF THEM.**

Some under the pretence of coming to the sermon, tarry at home a great part of the service; and so neither are they at the confession of sins with God's people, nor are made partakers of the prayers of the church for the forgiveness of their sins, neither do ever hear much of the scripture read. Others under the color of being at all these, depart away before the blessing is pronounced upon them, and so many times lose the fruit of all (as Judas did), or else tarry not the ministering of the sacrament, as though it were a thing impertinent unto them.

Therefore it is in express words set down by the prophet Ezekiel (46:10, where he speaks of God's worship upon the Sabbath day), that *the prince shall be in the temple in the midst of the people; he shall go in, when they go in, and when they go forth, they shall go forth together*. Which Lyra thus expounds, ¹⁶*that they should all come in, and go out at the same time; because that the coming in, and going out of the King did not hinder the people neither in the one, nor the other, because they went and came two sundry ways*. Where we see he requires that *all should be present from the beginning to the ending, even the very chiefest in*

every congregation, as well as the meanest. And no privilege is to be given to any one more than to another, for coming unto, abiding at, and departing from the service of God; which concerns them all alike in the whole, and in every part of it. Than which nothing can be spoken more truly, nor more plainly; which the prophet David, as he knew very well, so he labored to persuade the people of it, when in the eighty-fourth Psalm (84:10), *He accounted the doorkeepers of God's house blessed, who were first and last in the temple, and so partakers of the whole worship, when he says, I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tabernacles of wickedness*. Wherefore whensoever we do voluntarily bereave ourselves of any part of the public ministry, we cannot sanctify the day so in every portion of God's work, as he would have us to do.

Hereunto it seems they had respect in that council, wherein they say,¹⁷ *Si quis, whosoever he be, let him go to the church upon the Lord's Day*. And they bring their reason: *For it is just, that we all celebrate this day, unanimiter, with one consent, or all together, in which we are made that, which we were not before, for we were the servants of sin; but by it, we are made the children of righteousness*. St. Augustine complains in his time of this abuse in one kind.¹⁸ *Aabue quoque, quod valde dolendum est, conqueri vobiseum vole: I will further complain unto you of one thing, for which there is great cause to be grieved, that there are some, especially the great mighty men of the world, who when they come to the church, have no devotion to praise God, but compel the minister to curtail the service,¹⁹ and to say it according to their pleasure, and will not permit him to follow the order of the Church, for their belly's sake, and covetousness, as though but one little part of the day were appointed for God's service, and all the rest of the day together with the night, were ordained for their pleasures*.

See how true he sets out, as it were in their colors, the manner of a great many in our time.

¹⁵ [Ed. To be slow or dilatory about...to delay, neglect, omit, put off (OED).]

¹⁶ Lyra, *in hunc locum*.

¹⁷ Concil. Matisgen. 2. cap. 1.

¹⁸ Augustine, *de temp.*, serm. 251.

¹⁹ As too many in our time do.



So that how many times soever we have made unnecessary delays, and have been afraid as it were, lest we should come too soon (though in all worldly matters we suspect that we should come too late; and we are loathe to lose the least part of that, which we might make for our profit), we have hindered ourselves from doing some part of God's service, which the rest of our brethren have been occupied in, and so have not done unto him all that same service, which he required of us upon that day, which must be dedicated unto him alone.

And lest that we might imagine that the Lord does not so strictly require this service at our hands (besides that we must remember, that it has been proved unto us out of the Word, and declared how the practice of the church in all times has yielded unto it), if we do further consider the reasons why the Lord would be thus openly, and together of all his servants worshipped, we shall easily perceive that they stand still in force, and bind us as much as ever any before. So that we cannot justly say, 'it is true indeed, it was thus once, but now it is not so necessary -- we have more liberty than others, and so discharge ourselves of our obedience to God, at leastwise of some part of it.'

GOD WOULD HAVE US TO SERVE HIM PUBLICLY IN THE CHURCH.

For first of all the Lord would have such solemn assemblies of his people in one place, worshipping him together in those principal parts of his service, which otherwise cannot be done. And has not left it to every man's discretion, alone in some corner to serve Him when it pleases himself,²⁰ but would have all resort to the common meetings, and there jointly to agree in his service, *praising him in the assemblies* (Psa. 107:31-32), *and declaring his name unto our brethren in the midst of the congregation* (Psa. 22:22). That thereby his Church might be known

²⁰ Though he requires that of everyone also, even *that entering into his chamber, he should shut the door, and there pray unto him in secret, which will reward him openly* (Matt. 6:6).

and discerned in this world from the synagogues of idolaters, and conventicles of the schismatics; that so it being, *as a city set upon an hill which cannot be hid* (Matt. 15:14), *and the mountain of the house of the Lord, being prepared in the top of the mountains, and exalted above the hills, all nations might flow unto it* (Isa. 2:2), and that they descrying [catch sight of; discover] it a far off might repair unto it, *as the eagles do resort thither, where the dead carcasse is* (Luke 17:37). And so not only the godly might encourage one another, saying, *Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths. For the law shall go forth of Sion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem* (Isa. 2:3); but also that all the wicked which should by apostasy forsake it, and revolt from it, or through contempt not join themselves unto it (as many have, and do still in our time), might justly be condemned, and left without all excuse, when it should be so visible, and as it were palpable unto them.

And therefore Master Gualter says, ²¹*They that use the sabbath day rightly, Sacros cœtus adeunt, go to the public assemblies to hear the word of God and pray.* And the same man in another place:²² *It is evident that it was the ancient custom of the people of God, to frequent the holy meetings, for which cause we do read, that holy days and holy places in time past were ordained of God.* Whereupon he infers in the same place, that their perverseness is to be detested, who do profanely scoff at the public meetings of Christians, *wherein they manifestly bewray* [reveal] *that they are not touched with any desire of wholesome doctrine, or true religion.*

A COMMENDATION OF PREACHING OF THE WORD WHICH THERE IS TO BE HAD.

For there the Lord does offer unto his Church those most notable and singular means of their salvation, which as they cannot want [lack], so they can find no where but there. For there is the

²¹ Gualter upon Mark 3. Homil. 23.

²² *Idem* upon Act. 17. Homil. 108.



preaching of the Word, *which is God's own arm, and power to save all them that believe* (Rom. 1:16), in so much that without the ministry and preaching of those that have the public authority and callings of the Church, most ordinarily men are not saved, as the apostle says: *How can they believe without a preacher? And how can they preach unless they be sent?* (Rom. 10:14). For indeed this is the *incorruptible seed whereby we are born again* (1 Pet. 1:23), without which we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven; and this is that *sincere milk, whereby as newborn babes we are nourished, and grow up unto eternal life* (1 Pet. 2:2); even that Word, *that is preached* (Acts 8:31); in so much that we *cannot understand what is read* (understand I mean to salvation), *except we have a guide to preach unto us, who may give the sense, and cause us to understand the reading* (Nehem. 8:8). For our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 4:8-16):

... when he ascended up on high, and led captivity captive, gave rich and plentiful gifts unto men, pastors, and teachers, for the gathering together the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the building up of the body of Christ, till we all meet together in the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, and unto the full measure of the age of Christ; that we from henceforth might be no more children, wavering and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the deceit of men, and with craftiness, whereby they lay in wait to deceive; but might follow the truth in love, and in all things grow up unto him, which is the head, that is Christ, by whom all the body being coupled, and knit together by every joint, for the furniture thereof (according to the effectual power, which is in the measure of every part), receiveth increase of the body, unto the building up of itself in love.

Seeing then there are so many excellent and glorious things spoken of the preaching of the Word, by the spirit of wisdom and truth itself, the like whereof cannot be verified of anything else under heaven — namely, that it should be the principal, and most ordinary means to begin, to continue, to increase, and to make perfect in us faith, and all other graces of God, which accompany salvation; and this can no where be

had, but at the hands of the ministers, *whose lips must preserve knowledge, and the people must seek the law at their mouth, for they are the messengers of the Lord of hosts* (Malac. 2:7); therefore it is as needful for us now still to come to the place of common preaching, as it has been for any people heretofore, and to serve the Lord with this part of his worship, which he has appointed for our most especial good. Besides that in so doing, we shall draw on our brethren by our example, and (as it were give light unto them to see) where *the mountain of the house of the Lord* does stand; and shall rise up in judgment against them, who willingly shut their eyes against so clear a light, that they might not be saved.

THERE IS THE PUBLIC READING OF THE SCRIPTURES.

There is the public reading of the scriptures by the minister of God; which as it is a singular ordinance of his, so it has a promise of great blessing annexed unto it. And as all other parts of God's worship done in the congregation, where many are met together in the name of Christ, are under the greater hope of blessing, than when they are done privately; so is this one, of the public reading of the Word of God. So that in the commending of preaching, my purpose is not to diminish one whit of the credit of public reading, but to give it the whole praise that is due unto it, and I wish that it were a great deal more used, and frequented, than it is. St. James the apostle says, *that the books of Moses were publicly read in the synagogues of the Jews every sabbath day, not only in his time, but of old* (Acts 15:21). Unto which were adjoined the books of the holy prophets, and were read with them every Sabbath day also; as may appear by the practice of the church of Antioch, *whither Paul coming, and his company, entered into the synagogue upon the sabbath day, and sat down. And after the lecture or reading of the law and prophets, the rulers of the synagoge sent unto them saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on* (Acts 13:14-15).



So that this was ordinary, to have the Scriptures, even the Law and the Prophets, and so much as was then written, to be openly, plainly, and distinctly read unto the people. And though there was preaching, yet that did not exclude or shut out reading; for when the ordinary lecture of the Law and the Prophets was ended, then they were desired to preach. And Master Beza upon this place says:²³ *In the synagogue (after the pattern of which it is evident, that the assemblies of the Christian Church were appointed), primùm tradebatur sacrorum librorum lectio: First there was the reading of the holy scriptures, and after that there was leave given to speak by the rulers of the synagogue unto them, which seemed to have learning or skill that way.* And so is it with us, and so ought it to be everywhere.

And concerning the antiquity of this practice, some think it to be as ancient as the scripture itself, for so soon as it was written, so soon was it commended to the Church to be publicly read; which we may easily believe, seeing as the apostle says, *Whatsoever things were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope* (Rom. 15:4). Where he says not of any particular part of the word, as St. John the evangelist does of his gospel, saying (John 20:31), *These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is that Christ, the Son of God, and that in believing ye might have life through his name.* But of the whole scripture from the beginning of it, in that he says, as we have already heard, *Whatsoever things were written afore time, even from the beginning of the world.* And therefore that title that it pleased the Spirit of God to give unto one particular psalm above all the rest, as that it is called (Psa. 92), *A Psalm or song for the sabbath day*, because it was appointed to be read or sung every Sabbath day in their public assemblies; the same inscription may truly be prefixed unto the whole Bible generally, because the Old and New Testament was written principally, that they might be openly read in order every Sabbath day.

And this is that which the learned doctor Tremellius observes in his Syrian Paraphrase out of the writings of the ancient Jews.²⁴ He says, *Morem recitandi legem: The manner of reading the law in the synagogue of the Jews upon the sabbath days, was brought in by Moses himself, as the rabbis do teach; and afterwards when they returned from the captivity of Babylon, it was brought into use again, and greatly enlarged by Ezra the priest, by joining the reading of the prophets unto the books of Moses. And they divide the law (that is all the five books of Moses) into so many sections or parts, as there are sabbath days in the year.* Of which the first section ended at the eighth verse of the sixth chapter of Genesis; and so of the rest, as appears in the Hebrew text: *And by this means it came to pass, that the whole law was once read over publicly every year; and was ended at the Feast of Tabernacles, and then the next sabbath day they began at the beginning of it again. And out of the prophets certain chapters were selected and appointed, correspondent unto the reading of the law, both in number, and in consent of doctrine as near as might be, which were read with them. And when the reading of the Law and Prophets was ended, they did rise up, having leave first granted unto them by the rulers of the synagogue, who did purpose out of the scripture to speak unto the people.*

Thus by his judgment we see how ancient this order of public reading of the scriptures on the Sabbath day is, even as ancient as Moses is, that is, as the scriptures themselves are. For he first by the Spirit of God began that order, and when it was by the captivity of Babylon interrupted, Ezra by the same spirit did restore it, as he did many things else. So that this is one part of God's divine service, not to be neglected there, where the most preaching is; and all sorts ought to attend diligently upon it. By this, that the whole Old Testament was publicly read over once every year upon the Sabbath days, it appears that very much was read at one time. As the first day's reading contained the five first chapters of Genesis, and half [of] the sixth; besides the

²³ Beza in hunc locum.

²⁴ Tremellius, upon Act. 13:14, in Test. Syriac.



chapters of the prophets which were answerable unto them. And therefore I think, that ordinarily not only so many chapters should be read in the churches every Sabbath day, as by the liturgy of our church is appointed, but much more; especially seeing now unto us the scriptures are greatly increased by the access of the New Testament; if we had in every church (as there are in many) some to read, and some to preach, or if every man had strength sufficient to do both. So far am I from thinking that the public reading should be neglected, no not under the color of preaching, where both may conveniently be had. For whiles the Word is read reverently, and distinctly, and with understanding, we are sure that we hear God speaking unto us; but not always so, when man preaches. And this public reading ought very precisely to be continued, not only that it might be the ground of all men's preaching, as it was unto Ezra,²⁵ and to our Savior Christ,²⁶ but also and especially that by this means the people might be better acquainted with the will of God. For as at the assizes and sessions there is always a generally and summary recital of the laws made by the judge, that so they might know after what manner to proceed; so in the assemblies of God's people it is meet and convenient, that his voice should be heard. And if it be not thus, how ignorant must needs the people be? even as in the time of Popery, when as instead of holy scriptures the lying fables and false legends of counterfeit saints were openly read to the people; or else the Bible in an unknown tongue. For how few of the common sort can read, or have Bibles, or do use them at home? Therefore it is necessary that their want should be supplied by public reading in the church. For if notwithstanding this reading that we have, a great number in most places are found to be utterly ignorant in the most common stories of the Bible, and they are as strange unto them, as any news that you can tell them (which is a lamentable thing to think of, and yet it most

true), so that they are more cunning in a tale of Robin Hood, than they are in the histories of the Bible, because they hear them so seldom, and it may be some parts never; what ignorance would there be (think you) if they came not to this reading that we have?

And so I will conclude this point with the saying of Theophylact,²⁷ who upon these words of St. Mark (Mark 1:21), *That they entered into Capernaum, and straight way on the sabbath day Christ entered into the synagogue, and taught,* says thus: *Cum congregati essent legentes: When they were gathered together upon the sabbath day to read the scriptures, then Christ came in among them to teach, for the law has commanded us to rest upon the sabbath day; ut lectioni vacent homines: that men might give their attendance unto the public reading of the scriptures.* Where we see how he makes this one principal end of resting from all other things upon the Sabbath day, even that we might the more freely give ourselves to the public reading of God's Word.

It were to be wished therefore that we might say of our times, as Justin Martyr does of the Church and people of God in his time:²⁸ *Omnes qui in agris vel oppidis morantur: Upon the Lord's Day all that are in the towns or villages do meet in one place, and for the space of one hour the canonical scriptures of the prophets and apostles are read.* I mean my desire is, that in all places there were more reading of the scriptures than is, and that men would make more account of it, than they do. And seeing that the public reading is to be had in the church every Sabbath day, therefore we would of conscience come thither, even in regard of that.

THERE ALSO ARE THE SACRAMENTS, WHICH WERE WONT TO BE ADMINISTERED EVERY LORD'S DAY.

But that we might yet the rather be encouraged unto this, and see the necessity of it to be so great as it is, we must further consider that *there*

²⁵ Who read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused the people to understand the reading (Neh. 8:8).

²⁶ Who when at Nazareth upon the sabbath day in the synagogue he had read a text out of the prophet Isaiah, closed the book, and sat down, and began to preach of it (Luke 4:16).

²⁷ Theophylact, *in hunc locum*.

²⁸ Justin. Martyr, *Apolog.* 2.



are also the sacraments administered, which are most sure pledges, and seals as it were, of all that good which is offered unto us in the Word, and whereby the delivery of them is confirmed unto us. And it seems by St. Paul's writing unto the Corinthians, that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered among them every Lord's Day. For speaking against certain abuses, that were in their ordinary public assemblies, he finds fault with a great disorder in the sacrament, saying (1 Cor. 11:20), *When ye come together into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper.* Now they came together every first day of the week, which is now called the Lord's Day, as appears in the sixteenth chapter of the same epistle, and as has been proved before; where he shows what they should do *every first day of the week*, when they were met together (1 Cor. 16:2). So then he grants that every first day of the week, when they met together, even the whole church, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was celebrated, but not after a right manner.

And this is much more evident, if we read the text, as the Syrian Paraphrasist does.²⁹ *Therefore when you are gathered together, you do not eat and drink, as it is meet you should do upon the Lord's Day:* where he appropriates this kind of eating and drinking (namely of the sacrament) unto the Lord's Day, in express words, as that [which] was then usually frequented among them in it. And so does the Arabic also, as Master Beza well observes,³⁰ *Non comeditis et hibitis, pro ut vere diebus Domini nostri decet: You do not eat and drink, as properly it becomes men to do upon the Lord's Days.* Where he speaks not of one, but of many Lord's Days, as that [which] was then common to them all; upon which as they had their meetings then, so they did keep them after this manner, that among other parts of God's worship, the celebration of the Lord's supper was one chief and principal.

And as this was the practice of the Corinthians, so of other churches also planted by the apostles in those days. For when Paul came to Troas, and had tarried there seven days (Acts 20:7), *the first*

day of the week the disciples came together to break bread, and Paul preached unto them, etc. Where by breaking of bread is meant under one kind the administration of the Lord's supper; as by that sacrament, which is but one part, is meant the whole worship and service of God. For as the making mention of the bread does not exclude wine, but rather includes it, seeing that they were never severed either in the first institution of Christ, nor in the practice of his apostles; so this sacrament, for which they then met, did not exclude the other parts of God's service then publicly used, but rather included them, seeing that it was not administered without them. And so the meaning is, that they then met for the public service of God, whereof the celebration of the Lord's Supper was one part.

And this practice of the church begun by the apostles (that the sacrament of the Lord's supper was administered every Lord's Day) continued a long time in many places. For about four hundred years after Christ, Chrysostom, bishop of Constantinople, writes that the Sabbath day in the primitive church was known and called by three names:³¹ *Dies Dominicus, dies Panis, et dies Lucis.*

[1.] *Dominicus -- the Lord's Day, because upon that day, which was solemnized for the memory of Christ's resurrection, they did attend upon the word and worship of the Lord.*

[2.] *Dies panis -- the day of bread, because upon that day the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered in the churches.* Where he notes this sacrament by one of the creatures, namely bread, as the apostle did before, not making any mention of the wine; which is a usual *synecdoche*, and makes nothing for the administration of this sacrament in one kind unto the Latin.

[3.] Thirdly, *Dies lucis -- the day of light, because in it the sacrament of baptism was administered.*

²⁹ Vide Tremellius, in 1 Cor. 11:20.

³⁰ Beza, in hunc locum.

³¹ Chrysostom, Serm. 15, *De resur.*



And St. Augustine of the same time with him,³² or rather somewhat before him, writing to Januarius, shows that in his time, *in some churches they did receive the sacrament every day, and in others only upon the Lord's Day*; and though he says there, *Totum hoc genus rerum liberas habet observationis: That in these cases the churches had authority to take order for the time, as it seems best to them*; yet this several practice of these churches does show, that in his time the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was used in all places upon the Lord's Day, though some did use it upon other days also, and some upon that alone.

And so myself, though I do not appropriate this sacrament unto this day only, yet I take that day to be most fit for it, according to the practice of the ancient churches, even in the apostles' times. And Justin Martyr, living between these times, I mean of the apostles and of these ancient fathers, who died a martyr in the year of Christ 170, in one of his Apologies that he makes for the Christians,³³ shows what was the practice of the Church of Rome then; namely, that among other parts of God's worship among the Christians upon the Lord's Days, this was one. For first, he said, the Word was read, and preached: *Quibus finitis, panis et vinum. Which being ended, there is bread and wine brought; and then the minister offers up prayers and thanksgiving, and the people say, Amen, unto them; and afterwards these creatures being consecrated and blessed, are distributed unto every one of the people*. Thus we see that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper has from time to time in all places been ministered upon the Lord's Day especially, and for the most part, in the beginning, every Lord's Day. We do not so now, neither may we well do it, for the great ignorance and carnal security of the people; yet we hold this day to be most meet and convenient for it, though we do not exclude other days.

And as for the sacrament of baptism, though there be no express scripture to show a commandment for it, or any practice of it unto

this day, more than upon any other; yet we have heard even now of the judgment of St. Chrysostom, that in former times it was administered usually upon the Lord's Day, and therefore that it was called the day of light, for that cause which we have already heard. And there are reasons agreeable unto the Word that will easily prove the equity of the same. For seeing that baptism is not a private action of faith, but public and of the whole congregation, whereby another member is to be received into the visible Church, and as it were incorporated into that body; all ought to have their part in it, as they are members of the same church. And so it ought to be then done, when all may best take knowledge of it; both to give thanks unto God for the engrafting of another into the body of Christ, and also to pray for it, that God would make the outward baptism effectual unto it, by giving the inward grace, and fruit of it by his Spirit. And as in corporations both of the universities, and also of cities and towns, none are admitted into them, but in a full congregation (as they say), or in a public assembly, where all may be present and give their consent; so into the visible Church by baptism they ought then to be incorporated, when the assemblies are greatest, and when all may most conveniently be present — which is the Lord's Day, when all sorts of men are commanded to abstain from all worldly business, that they may wholly attend upon the Lord's.

And baptism is most fit for this day, not only for these causes already alleged; but also that by the continual use of it publicly in the church from time to time, all men might be put in mind of the benefits which they have received by baptism; and so make a double profit of their presence there: the one for the child, the other for themselves, and one of them for another. That so thereby they might help themselves in calling to mind how they have been joined to Christ by baptism themselves, and so to examine themselves, what fruit they find of the death and resurrection of Christ, *into which by baptism they are grafted*, as the apostle says (Rom. 6:3); that so either they might be humbled, or made thankful.

³² Augustine, *Ad Januar.*, Epist. 118.

³³ Justin Martyr, *Apolog.* 2.



Seeing then that all are bound to be present upon the Lord's Day, it is most meet to reserve baptism for that time. And the people being then gathered together, they ought to make conscience of tarrying unto the end of it, as well as of any other part of divine service; not only for the above named causes, but that lest also by their departure they might seem to offer some disgrace unto God's holy ordinance; and most of all should all men make conscience of being present at the baptizing of their own children; that so they might to their further comfort be eyewitnesses, that the seal of God's covenant is set upon them.

And so I conclude with that reason which Danæus alleges,³⁴ why the sacraments, both of them, should be administered upon the Lord's Day; even *because upon the sabbath day the sacrifices, into the room and place of which our sacraments did succeed, were then doubled, though there were daily morning and evening sacrifices.* So we grant that the sacraments may be administered upon other days of the week, yet especially upon the Lord's Day, when all our service should be doubled unto him; in which respect all men should be willing then to come unto the Church, that so they might be partakers of other parts of God's worship, so also of these.

THERE IS THE BENEFIT OF COMMON PRAYER.

And there again we are helped not only with the prayers of so many of our brethren and sisters, by whose means that which was wanting in us is supplied by them; and that which with many strivings we have not obtained alone, by their help we shall more easily attain unto; but also and especially our prayers are offered up by the minister of God, who is appointed to that end, and in respect of which his ministry is a thousand times more acceptable unto God, than Aaron with his rich attire was beautiful in the eyes of men, when he carried the names of the

twelve tribes of Israel before God, on his shoulders and in his breast (Ex. 28:12, 29).

Therefore I may say, as that grave and learned man says, Master Melancthon:³⁵ *His atque alijs rationibus: By these and such like reasons every man should stir up himself to love the society of the Church, in which there is so much good, that if there be any commodity in other societies, it is but a shadow of that, and they are beholding to that for it.* Which if they do not, then let them hear what the apostles say:³⁶ *Quam excusationem afferre postest: What excuse can he pretend before God, who comes not diligently upon the Lord's Day to praise God, and hear his word?*

THE GREAT SIN OF THOSE THAT NEGLECT THE CHURCH UPON THE LORD'S DAY.

I doubt not but they please themselves in many of their excuses, and think that thereby they are able to satisfy men; but I say as before, how can they excuse it before God? All which should move us to be willing to come to the Church upon those days. For as a godly man says:³⁷ *It must needs be a very great contempt of God, not to bestow one day in the whole week in the knowing and serving of our Creator, of whom we have received ourselves, and all things else that we enjoy.*

THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST FREQUENTING THE TEMPLE.

Master Musculus,³⁸ writing of these words of the gospel (Luke 4:16), *that our Savior Christ, when he came to Nazareth (as his custom was) went into the synagogue on the sabbath day,* says:

Considerandum hic: We must here consider what use was of the sabbath among the Jews, which Christ himself did diligently keep, as we see here, when it is written, that according to

³⁴ Danæus, *Ethic. Christ.*, lib. 2. cap. 10.

³⁵ Philip Melancthon, *in præcept.* 3.

³⁶ *Constit. Apost.*, Cap. 63.

³⁷ Bucer upon Psal. 92.

³⁸ [Musculus upon Luke 4:16]



his custom, he went into the synagogue upon the sabbath day. If Christ did thus keep the sabbath day, and went into the synagogue, that it is written, that this was his custom, when he had no need of the lecture of Moses; what excuse shall they have in these days, who either by too much disdain, or contempt upon the Lord's Days, do neglect the Church, in which the doctrine of life is delivered? Who does not see here that Christ by his presence does confirm a good custom?

And Melancthon,³⁹ speaking of the sundry breaches of this commandment, reckons up this: *Seldom or never to come to the public ministry of the Church, where it is rightly taught, and by their example to draw away others from that ministry which is not defiled with impiety, as the Donatists did, and as the Brownists and Familists of our time have done.*

WE STAND IN GREAT NEED OF GOD'S PUBLIC SERVICE.

Now lest we might grossly imagine that we stand in no need of all these things, we must soberly, and in a godly trembling and holy fear, remember that the Lord in his wisdom has appointed them, and therefore to refuse them, were to make ourselves wiser than he. And he that has established the ends of all things, has also ordained all the means to bring everything thereunto; and therefore as he has chosen us to salvation in Christ, so he has in great wisdom and mercy provided these rare and wonderful means, which he has made to be effectual and mighty by his blessing, to bring that most happily to pass. And therefore we in voluntarily neglecting the means, do bereave ourselves of our salvation, and shall justly perish, whatsoever we fondly dream, or others vainly persuade us to the contrary.

WHICH IF WE NEGLECT, WE MUST NEEDS PERISH.

For if the nature of man was such in the beginning (as we have already seen it in Adam), that in his most perfect and blessed estate, he

stood in need of all those most holy exercises, wherein he was commanded to sanctify the Sabbath, for the better preservation of himself in his first perfection and happiness; how must not we needs be persuaded that we (being fallen so clean away from it as we are) do stand in need to sanctify the Sabbath again and again in all the means of God's worship, and especially then in the most principal, that thereby happily we might be recovered into our former estate? Nay, what a blockish presumption it were for a man to think that Adam was bound to sanctify the Sabbath, according to the commandment, that being holy and righteous still, he might have been preserved in the favor of God forever; and that we ourselves being through sin fallen away from his love, might make less account of these means, whereby he does first of all offer himself to be reconciled unto us, and then never to fall away from that estate, as though it were not so needful for us to sanctify the day by them? 

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³⁹ Melancthon, in *præcept.* 3.



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Worship Services: 10:30 AM and 2:00 PM on each Lord's Day. Visitors are welcome to stay for **lunch** between the two services. **Biblical Institutes:** 4:00 PM.

Location: First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett meets at 8210 Schrade Road, Rowlett, TX. From Interstate 30, take exit 64 north on Dalrock Road. From the Diamond Shamrock gas station, go 1.5 miles north to Schrade Road. Turn left and go approximately 1/4 mile. We are in the first building on the left. Parking is in the rear of the building.

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