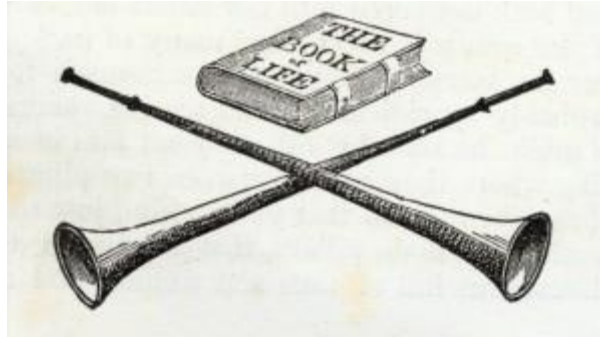


The Reformed Baptist Trumpet



“For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for battle?”

1 Corinthians 14:8

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The Reformed Baptist Trumpet is an occasional e-journal of the Reformed Baptist Fellowship of Virginia (RBF-VA), a network of ministers, church officers, and congregations in Virginia committed to promoting renewal and reformation in congregations throughout the Commonwealth and beyond. The RBF-VA gladly affirms the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689. The editor is Jeffrey T. Riddle, Pastor, Christ Reformed Baptist Church, Louisa, Virginia.

In this issue:

Editorial	Invitation: Keach Conference 2015	p. 2-3
Article	“The Word of God: A Two-Fold Revelation” by W. Gary Crampton	pp. 4-8
Article	“The Administration and Administrators of Baptism” by Jeffrey T. Riddle	pp. 9-17
Book Review	Timothy Michael Law’s <i>When God Spoke Greek</i>	pp. 18-20
Paradosis	Keach sermon excerpt: “The Voice of Christ”	pp. 21-27

Of Free Will Keach Conference 2015



Invitation: 2015 Keach Conference

The 2015 Keach Conference (an annual theology and ministry conference) will be a one day event on **Saturday, September 26, 2015**. The meeting will be hosted at **Christ Reformed Baptist Church of Louisa, Virginia (2997 Courthouse Road, Louisa, Virginia 23093)**. For location and directions, [look here](#).

The theme will focus on chapter IX of the *Second London Baptist Confession of Faith* "Of Free Will."

The speakers will be Bryan Wheeler, Emmanuel Baptist Church, Verona, VA; Steve Clevenger, Covenant Reformed Baptist Church, Warrenton, VA; Alpheus Atkins, Trinity Reformed Baptist Church, Boone's Mill, VA; and Jeff Riddle, Christ Reformed Baptist Church, Louisa, VA .

Keach Conference Schedule (Saturday, September 26, 2015):

8:30—9:30 AM Arrival: Coffee and Fellowship

9:30—11:30 AM Session One:

Bryan Wheeler: Man in the State of Innocence

Steve Clevenger: Man in the State of Sin

11:30—12:30 PM Complimentary Lunch on Site (BBQ and sides)

12:30—2:30 PM Session Two:

Alpheus Atkins: Man in the State of Grace

Jeff Riddle: Man in the State of Glory

Question and Answer Session with the Speakers

The conference is free to attend. We do ask, however, that you pre-register here.



Image: Scene from 2014 Keach Conference

The Word of God: Verbum Dei

Chapter Two – A Two-Fold Revelation

By Dr. W. Gary Crampton

Note: In the last issue of the *RBT*, we reprinted chapter one of W. Gary Crampton's book *The Word of God: Verbum Dei*. We continue in this issue with chapter two.

Jonathan Edwards has stated that reason alone should make it obvious that God, who created the world and all persons and things therein, would reveal Himself to His creatures in a manner that they could understand. Scripture, of course, puts it beyond question. Edwards is correct on both accounts. Nevertheless, Immanuel Kant, and present day atheists and agnostics, have insisted that one cannot know God or anything else that exists in the spiritual or noumenal world, i.e., that which is beyond the senses. Certainly if God had not revealed Himself, religion and all of its disciplines would not be possible. Man could not discover God apart from divine revelation. Scripture, however, is clear in teaching that the Lord has given mankind revelation, which is two-fold. As we have seen, God has chosen to reveal Himself to man via general and special revelation.

General Revelation

General revelation is so named for its audience (all persons) and subject matter (broad theology). It does not come in the form of verbal communications. Special revelation is so named because it is more specific or restrictive in audience (those who read the Bible); yet it is more detailed in content. It is not greater than general revelation but it is more precise in detail. Due to its limited nature, however, general revelation must always be interpreted in light of special revelation. This was true even before the Fall of man (Genesis 3), but even more so afterwards; the reason being that the universe is now in a state of abnormality (Genesis 3:14-19; Romans 8:19-25). Thus, knowledge of God and His creation can only be derived from Scripture.

In Romans 2:14-15, the apostle Paul teaches the doctrine of innate general revelation. There is an innate knowledge of God in all men. All are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27) and have the work of the Law written in their hearts. This is ineradicable and inescapable. The Law of God is a transcript of His holy character – it is part and parcel of God Himself (Leviticus 20:7-8). This being so, it is also a part of His image bearer – man. This is not the same as the Law, which is indelibly inscribed in the heart of every Christian (Hebrews 8:10). The former (Romans 2:14-15) is a moral/ethical consciousness of good and evil, as per the Law, and it is found in every man, woman, and child. The latter (Hebrews 8:10) is a work of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and it is present only in God's elect. The former is solely moral in nature and does not include the ceremonial (way of salvation) aspect of the Law. Whereas the latter is fully

salvific in import and includes the all-powerful Holy Spirit, who causes the believer to walk in obedience to the Law. The innate revelation leaves the non-believer without excuse (Romans 1:20). The knowledge is general, but it is true (albeit, not saving) knowledge. Calvin rightly comments that there is a “sense of the Deity” in all mankind, thereby acknowledging this fact.

General revelation, then, is both propositional and ineradicable. Because of these innate ideas God the Creator is perceived through His creation (Romans 1:18-21; Psalm 19:1-6). When man interacts with creation, which illustrates God’s glory, power, and wisdom, man, as God’s image, is forced to “think God.” Scripture teaches that the Triune God created all things (Genesis 1) and His creation reveals His Deity.

All men know the true God through His creation. This is inescapable. All persons are without excuse. No one will be able to claim that he did not know God. Fallen men choose to worship the creature rather than the Creator (Romans 1:22ff.), but that does not mean that they do not know God. Again, we are speaking of a cognitive knowledge, not a saving knowledge of God (1 Thessalonians 4:5; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; 1 Corinthians 1:21). But it is true knowledge. It is objective truth, which is subjectively appropriated by all mankind. The knowledge of the Deity is plain to men (Romans 1:19); it is clearly perceived (verse 20). Fallen man has the truth but suppresses it. He purposely holds down, or incarcerates, that which he knows to be true (verse 18). In other words, there is a clear biblical distinction between knowing God (verses 21, 32) and acknowledging Him to be God (verse 28). Even the demons know the true God (James 2:19), but they do not acquiesce to this truth.

General revelation, then, reveals God through creation, and leaves men without excuse (Romans 1:20). But due to the effects of sin on the mind, fallen man, even though he possesses this seed of true religion, continually suppresses the information he has and cannot avoid (Romans 1:20). Hence, as sufficient as general revelation is to reveal God to all men, leaving them inexcusable, it is insufficient to give man the knowledge of God and of His will which is necessary for him to come to a sound and saving knowledge of God. This makes the special revelation of God’s Word necessary.

The teaching of Scripture is clear that the revelation of God through nature “gets through” to mankind. This idea of general revelation getting through to the non-believer is denied by some theologians, such as Karl Barth, but it is the view espoused by Aurelius Augustine, John Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, John Owen, B. B. Warfield, and numerous others in the camp of Reformed theology.

Calvin speaks of the numerous proofs in nature for the existence of God. Indeed, every fact of the created order proves the truth of the Triune God of the Bible. Said the Reformer, there are “sparks of His [God’s] glory” to be seen in all creation. James Boice correctly states that, “There is enough evidence of God in a flower to lead a child as well as a scientist to worship Him. There is sufficient evidence in a tree, a pebble, a grain of sand, a fingerprint, to make us glorify God and thank Him.” When one studies chemistry, biology, anthropology, etc., he is studying general revelation. This is why Augustine could say, “Learn as much as you can about as many things as you can because all truth [as found in general and special revelation] is God’s truth.” Chapter 21 of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (properly) goes so far as to claim that general revelation gives mankind certain guidelines by which to worship the Lord.

The doctrine of general revelation accounts for “religion” even among the heathen nations. It explains why non-believers consider themselves to be the seed of the God (Acts 17:28). It gives account for the common grace of illumination that is with all men (John 1:9). And it explains why men “generally” accommodate themselves to God’s Law (they have a natural, innate abhorrence to murder, theft, etc.).

This doctrine also teaches us that there is no such thing as an innocent individual in some distant land who never has had a chance to turn to God. According to the Apostle Paul all men fall into the category of knowing God, in this cognitive fashion, and thus find themselves without excuse before their Creator (Romans 1:20-21). It is not as if they are guilty of rejecting Christ as Savior of whom they have never heard. Rather, they are guilty of rejecting the knowledge of the Triune God, which knowledge they do have through general revelation, including the fact that His divine wrath is upon them (verse 18). The apostle is saying that men are guilty and know it. And still they reject their only source of help.

As sufficient as general revelation is to reveal God to all mankind, it is nevertheless insufficient in several ways. First, general revelation was never meant to be without special revelation, or *vice versa*. God spoke (special revelation) to Adam in the Garden of Eden prior to the Fall (Genesis 2:16-17). Nature itself could not (and cannot) give man an understanding of that which God requires of him. Likewise, the doctrine of the Trinity cannot be found in natural revelation, *per se*. This form of knowledge comes through the verbal communication of God’s Word. General revelation is incomplete without special revelation. But the reverse is also true; without the general revelation of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil “in the midst of the Garden” (Genesis 2:9), the command not to eat from it would have been meaningless. There is a perfect harmony between God general and special revelation. They go hand-in-hand together and are dependent on one another.

As noted, natural revelation must always be viewed through the “spectacles” of the Word of God. The general must be analyzed by means of the specific. Special revelation speaks with more precision about those things which we find in nature. Thus, all science, history, etc., must be analyzed via Scripture. General revelation can aid us in the study of special revelation (e.g., scientific and archaeological findings). But the former must always first be tested by the latter to see if it is in line with the overall teaching of Scripture. One must never attempt to make the Bible adhere to scientific discoveries; rather, the findings of science must be held in conformity with the more precise verbal communications of Scripture. It is not that special revelation is more accurate than general revelation, but it is more specific in content and aids us in properly viewing nature.

John Calvin’s analogy of the Bible being our “spectacles” is appropriate. Since the Fall, man has the light of nature shining brightly about him, but in his sin he views this revelation as hazy; thus the need for the Word of God. Again it is stressed that nature is clear in its revelation of the Deity. There is no fault with God’s creation. The fault lies with man. As we have already seen the broad, metaphysical image of God in man was not effaced at the Fall. But it was defaced. It is due to this that the created order is somewhat cloudy. Only the Spirit of God, through the inscripturated Word, can clarify the picture.

Second, general revelation is insufficient in that it is incapable of revealing God as Redeemer. By itself, nature cannot bring mankind to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Nature (creation) reveals God as Creator and Judge; Scripture alone presents the Son as Savior. Thus, all mankind needs to hear the gospel to be saved (Romans 1:16-17; 10:17). Obviously, pre-Fall man, although he needed God's verbal communications to tell him what to do, did not need this communication to reveal the Savior. Post-Fall man is in desperate need of the latter revelation. The need for Christians to be involved in the fulfilling of the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20 cannot be overstressed.

Special Revelation

As has already been studied, the second of the two-fold revelation of God to man is that of special revelation. Throughout the history of progressive revelation and redemption, God has spoken to His people in various ways (Hebrews 1:1-3), which revelation was later inscripturated for us. This special revelation is now found in the Bible alone. It is a form of verbal communication.

Speech is an attribute of God. Before there was any creation there was an eternal dialogue taking place between the members of the Trinity (Psalms 119:160; Proverbs 8:22-31; Genesis 1:26). The Word of God is part and parcel of God Himself. God and His Word cannot be separated. This is true of each member of the Triune Deity.

We see this taught to us in the Bible in various ways. For example, it is the Father who speaks (Hebrews 11:3); the Son is the Word incarnate (John 1:1-3); and the Spirit is the One who authors the Word of God (2 Peter 1:20-21) and interprets it for the believer (1 Corinthians 2:6-16). The Spirit brings about the salvation and sanctification of the Christian by savingly applying the Scripture to the heart of the individual (James 1:18, 21) and then molding his life into conformity with the Word (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18). Likewise, we recognize the power of the Word that could only be of divine origin. It is God's decree that foreordains all things (Ephesians 1:11). It is the spoken Word of God that creates (*ex-nihilo*, "out of nothing," i.e., out of no pre-existent material) the world and all things therein (Hebrews 11:3, Colossians 1:16). And it is His Word which providentially governs all things bringing them to their God-ordained end (Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:17; Psalms 29).

When we speak of the fact that God has chosen to reveal Himself to mankind in a verbal form we are of necessity referring to an anthropomorphic language. God speaks to us in the language of man (Greek, *anthropos*), because we are men (i.e., human beings) and it is the only language that we are able to understand. It is as Calvin states that God must "stoop" to communicate with His creatures. There is an "anthropic" nature to all special revelation. Thus, the verbal communication must take the form of "analogical" language. This is midway between "univocal" and "equivocal" language, neither of which is possible in biblical revelation. In the former a term is used in only one sense. In the latter a term possesses different meanings. In analogical language the meaning of a term differs proportionately with the being described. For example, if we are to say that God is good and a man is good the term "good" is

used in both cases. But the meaning of God's goodness and man's goodness is to be understood analogically. Man's goodness can never be equivalent to the goodness of the Deity.

If the Bible were to use univocal language, there would be no distinction between God and His creatures. Identical knowledge about a subject would be inferred and pantheism implied. The infinite being of God would be confused with finite man. On the other hand, if equivocal language were used, there would be no similarity or point of understanding and skepticism would result. This would eliminate the possibility of knowing anything about the triune God who has chosen to reveal Himself to us. Thus, the Bible is written for us in the form of analogical language. This is the only possibility with the anthropic nature of special revelation.

This does not mean, however, that there is no univocal point of understanding between God and man, because such a univocal point is necessary for knowledge to be conveyed. There is always a univocal point where that which God speaks is understood by mankind, i.e., where the mind of God overlaps the mind of man. Though there are differences in the levels of God's understanding and of man's understanding, there is a point of contact. A univocal element must be present in the understanding of each verse or passage.

Thus, when God reveals to mankind that David is king of Israel, mankind can never understand the fullness of this message as does God. At the same time man does understand it. The difference in the understanding is one of degree rather than kind. Recognition of the analogical nature of special revelation allows us to distinguish between the infinite God and His finite creatures, while at the same time it gives us a biblical relation which is knowable.

Note should also be made of the personal nature of special revelation. The God of Scripture is personal and He presents Himself to people in a personal fashion. The Triune persons of the Godhead (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) reveal this clearly. Additionally, He is Immanuel, God with us. He enters into personal covenants with His creatures. He speaks to us in Scripture in propositional, universal truths, but in such a fashion that He calls us into a personal relationship with Himself that we may share in His glory. Ω

Dr. W. Gary Crampton is a member of The Reformed Baptist Church of Richmond, Virginia.

The Administration and the Administrators of Baptism

By Jeffrey T. Riddle

Modern questions and challenges:

Where and in what context should baptism be administered? Can Christian baptism be conducted as a private event, outside of the oversight of a local visible church? Who should administer the sacrament or ordinance of baptism? Can it be administered by any person, by any baptized Christian, or must it be administered only by a minister who has been set apart to office in the church?

These are ancient and important ecclesiological questions, which are being raised in anew in our day. Since the 1960s many Americans and other Westerners, in particular, have looked with skepticism and cynicism at traditional institutions and organizations. The traditional church has not been exempt from this scrutiny. The modern spirit of personal liberty and individuality had led some to chaff at the concept of being under the oversight of a local church including dependence upon an ordained minister to administer the ordinances. In the 1970s those in the “Jesus movement” were spontaneously baptized in swimming pools or in the ocean. “Getting saved” was something that happened quite apart from any formal gathering of the church under the intentional guidance of elders. With the rise of the Christian homeschooling movement in the 1980s and 1990s, professed Christians of the baby-boomer generation who had opted out of the institution of public schools found it easier to opt out of the institution of the local church in favor of “home church” or “un-church” gatherings. For some, the “church” became an informal gathering of friends with no leadership structure, no confession of faith, and no membership covenant. Some have become nomads wandering from gathering to gathering or from conference to conference. In some patriarchal circles the emphasis has come increasingly to be upon the father as the “priest in the home.” It is he who can teach and even administer the ordinances to his family, even if he has never studied for the ministry, been examined by a council of elders, or ordained to office by any local church. Many have come to believe that such informal practices are in fact a more primitive, liberating, and Biblical form of Christianity.

Biblical patterns

When one closely examines the New Testament descriptions of the practices of the early church, however, it does not seem to fit with this egalitarian construal which has emerged in the last few decades among low-church or no-church evangelicals.

First, the New Testament clearly describes the important role of church officers—ministers, pastors, or elders—in shepherding the people of God. Compare:

Acts 14:23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

1 Corinthians 16:15 I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and *that* they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) 16 That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with *us*, and laboureth.

Philippians 1:1 Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

1 Timothy 5:17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

Hebrews 13:7 Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of *their* conversation.

Hebrews 13:17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you.

Hebrews 13:24 Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.

1 Peter 5:1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:
2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight *thereof*, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 Neither as being lords over *God's* heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

Furthermore, it is clear that these elders would have been responsible for the administration of the ordinances in the primitive churches. This conclusion begins with the acknowledgement that the elders were responsible for the public doctrinal preaching and teaching. The overseers or elders must be “apt to teach” (1 Tim 3:2). Paul exhorted Titus to ensure that the elders were appointed “in every city” and that the elder hold fast “the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayer” (Titus 1:5, 9). Paul likewise exhorted Timothy, “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim

2:2). James makes plain that the teaching office is not open to all men when he exhorts: “My brethren be not many masters [*didaskaloi*, teachers] knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.”

If the apostles urged great care in the preaching and teaching of doctrine would they not also have extended equally diligent care in the administration of baptism and the Lord’s Supper? Paul saw church officers as special stewards and guardians of the Christian faith. In 1 Corinthians 4:1 Paul describes “ministers of Christ” as “stewards [*oikonomoi*] of the mysteries of God.” Paul likewise exhorted Timothy not to be in too great a hurry to ordain men to church office: “Lay hands suddenly on no man” (1 Tim 5:22). Before setting apart a man for the office of deacon, he must “first be proved” (1 Timothy 3:10). If this was true for those in the serving office (deacons) it must also have been true of those in the teaching office (elders). The important responsibility of the officers, particularly the elders, in being stewards of the ordinances meant that special scrutiny must be given them before appointing them to this duty.

There are admittedly relatively few narrative descriptions of the observance of baptism in the New Testament and even fewer of the administration of the Lord’s Supper. Most of the references to baptism come in the book of Acts, which describes the expansion of the early church after the ascension of Jesus. Many of the descriptions of conversions and baptisms are, indeed, presented as taking place in spontaneous and informal settings. We must remember, however, that most of these narratives describe the initial conversions that came under the gospel preaching ministry of the apostles and other primitive preachers. In many cases these foundational conversions came even before the establishment of local churches. They must not then be seen as *prescriptive* or normative for how the church is to function in the “ordinary” times after the apostles but *descriptive* of how the church functioned in the “extraordinary” times of the church’s beginnings.

Even so, it is clear that the baptisms described in Acts were performed by designated church officers. The context of Acts indicates that the converts at Pentecost were baptized by Peter and the other apostles (see Acts 2:38-43). The first Samaritan converts were apparently baptized by Philip who had preached the gospel to them (Acts 8:12). Philip was one of the seven ministers of the church at Jerusalem (Acts 6:5). Luke notes specifically that the Ethiopian Eunuch was baptized by Philip (Acts 8:36-38). Saul (Paul) was apparently baptized by Ananias, who, though he is only overtly described as a “disciple,” likely served as an officer of the church at Damascus (Acts 9:10-18). Cornelius and the other converts at Caesarea seem to have been baptized by the apostle Peter aided by the six men from the church at Joppa (most likely including at least some of the church’s officers) who accompanied him (Acts 10:23, 44-48; 11:12-17). Paul and Silas apparently baptized Lydia, the Philippian jailer, and the converted members of his household (Acts 16:14-15, 31-33). Paul also apparently baptized Crispus and the other converts at Corinth (Acts 18:5-8; cf. also 1 Corinthians 1:14, 16 where Paul says he baptized only Crispus, Gaius, and the household of Stephanus in Corinth), as well as the twelve disciples at Ephesus (Acts 19:5). A survey of Acts reveals that there is not a single explicit narrative description of a believer being baptized by anyone other than a church officer.

Our understanding of the proper context for baptism in the ordinary life of the church is also enlightened by the instructions which Paul offers for the administration of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11. This ordinance is to be observed "when ye come together in the church [*en ekklesia*]." The Lord's Supper was not an individual, private, or family ordinance but a church ordinance. When the church came together, no doubt, its assembly was led and its meeting overseen by its elders (along with apostles and prophets if they too were present). No doubt, this came to be the ordinary practice for the administration for the ordinance of baptism as well, after the initial conversions and forming of churches described in Acts.

Reformed and confessional understandings:

What did the Protestant Reformers, the Reformed confessions, and later Reformed and evangelical ministers teach regarding the proper administration and administrators of baptism? An examination of the evidence clearly indicates that they held that baptism should only be administered within the context of the local church and that baptism should only be properly administered by the church's officers. Their arguments came not in response to the modern hyper-egalitarian mindset described above but primarily as a response to the Roman Catholic teaching of "baptismal regeneration," the idea that baptism was a necessary requirement for salvation. The development of this doctrine was necessarily accompanied by the teaching that baptism could be administered in any context and by any person. Its administration was not limited to the church's assembly and its administration was not limited to church officers. This especially allowed "emergency" baptisms of "necessity" to be administered to dying infants, especially by those who attended the birth, usually women. This teaching remains a part of the modern Roman Catholic catechism which gives the following answer to the question, "Who can baptize?":

The ordinary ministers of Baptism are the bishop and priest and, in the Latin church, also the deacon. In case of necessity, anyone, even a non-baptized person, with the required intention, can baptize, by using the Trinitarian baptismal formula. The intention required is to will to do what the Church does when she baptizes. The Church finds the reason for this possibility in the universal saving will of God and the necessity of Baptism for salvation.¹

The Reformed and evangelical ministers, however, rejected "baptismal regeneration" as works righteousness. Though baptism was an important act of obedience to Christ's command and clear practice of the apostolic church, it did not save. Thus, there was no warrant for departing from the Biblical pattern of baptism conducted within the church and by her officers. To

¹See Part Two.Section Two.Chapter One.Article 1.V (page 320) in *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Second Edition (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, English translation, 1994, 1997).

examine how this subject was approached, we will look to a representative sample, including John Calvin, the Reformed confessions, John L. Dagg, and A. A. Hodge.

John Calvin:

One of the prooftexts to justify “emergency baptism” sometimes cited by Roman Catholics (and even some Lutherans) was the “emergency circumcision” conducted by Zipporah (Exodus 4:24-26). John Calvin addresses this passage and its ramifications in his *Institutes* (Book IV.XV.22).² He begins, “The example of Zipporah is inappropriately cited by our opponents.” He continues:

But other valid reasons prove that it was stupid to be led to imitate what the foolish woman did. If I were to say that this was something unusual which ought not to be taken as an example, and (particularly since we nowhere read that an express command to circumcise was given to priests) that the case of circumcision was different from that of baptism—this should be sufficient refutation. For Christ’s words are plain: “Go, teach all nations, and baptize [Matt. 28:19]. Seeing that he ordained the same men as heralds of the gospel and ministers of baptism, and no one in the church (as the apostle testifies) takes that honor upon himself except one which has been called as Aaron [Heb. 5:4]—whoever baptizes without a lawful call usurps another’s office [cf. 1 Peter 4:15].

He later adds here in refutation of “baptismal regeneration”: “But this principle will easily and immediately settle the controversy: infants are not barred from the Kingdom of Heaven just because they happen to depart this life before they have been immersed in water.” Calvin makes clear, however, that this does not invalidate his belief in the practice of infant baptism. He only wants to make plain “that we should seek the sacraments from those only to whom the Lord has committed them.”

Reformed Confessions:

The Westminster Confession of Faith is the standard Puritan and Reformed Presbyterian confession of faith. Richard A. Muller offers this description of the classic confession: “Westminster is, undoubtedly, the greatest confessional document written during the age of

² The quotations from Calvin’s *Institutes* are taken from John T. McNeil, Ed., *The Library of Christian Classics*, Vol. XX, *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Ford Lewis Battles, Trans. (Westminster John Knox Press, 1960).

Protestant scholasticism.”³ In section IV of Chapter XXVII “Of the Sacraments,” the confession reads as follows:

There be only two sacraments ordained by Christ our Lord in the gospel, that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord; neither of which may be dispensed by any but by a minister of the word, lawfully ordained.⁴

Though the framers of Second London Baptist Confession (1689) differed from the compilers of the Westminster Confession in their belief that baptism was only properly administered to believers and by the mode of immersion, they agreed with their Presbyterian brethren on the matters of the proper context and administrators of baptism, as demonstrated by the teaching given in Chapter XXVIII “Of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper”:

1. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are ordinances of positive and sovereign institution, appointed by the Lord Jesus, the only lawgiver, to be continued in His church to the end of the world.
2. These holy appointments are to be administered by those who are qualified and thereto called, according to the commission of Christ.⁵

Likewise in Chapter XXVI paragraph 8 of this Baptist confession it notes that a “particular church” which is “completely organized according to the mind of Christ” will have officers “for the peculiar administration of ordinances.”⁶

A Nineteenth Century Baptist View: John L. Dagg:

This confessional perspective on the sacraments and their proper administrators was perpetuated by both Presbyterian and Baptist ministers in America through the nineteenth century. John L. Dagg (1794-1884) was an influential Baptist pastor, born in Middleburg,

³ Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics, Volume 2, Holy Scripture: The Cognitive Foundation of Theology* (Baker Books, 1993): p. 77.

⁴ *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (reissued by The Publications Committee of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, 1976): p. 113.

⁵ *The Baptist Confession of Faith & The Baptist Catechism* (Solid Ground Christian Books/Reformed Baptist Publications, 2010): p. 61. The two prooftexts cited here are Matthew 28:19 and 1 Corinthians 4:1.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

Virginia, who served as President of Mercer University in George from 1844-1854.⁷ In his influential *Manual of Church Order* (Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1858), Dagg addressed various issues relating to ecclesiology. This included the proper practice of baptism under a section titled “The Administration of Baptism” (pp. 254-257). It is noteworthy that Dagg rejected not only the Roman Catholic arguments for “emergency baptism” but also more modern, individualistic arguments for persons other than ministers to administer baptism (including parents who were not elders who desired to baptize their children):

Among those who have held that baptism possesses a saving efficacy, it has often been a matter of pressing importance, to obtain that administration of it, in case of sickness, when a priest was not at hand. It has been held, that, in case of necessity, the rite may be administered by laymen, and even by women. Some persons who are free from such superstitious reliance on outward ceremony, have held that any who make a disciple, may baptize him. According to this interpretation of the commission, it would be proper for a mother, whose instructions have been blessed to the conversion of her son, to be the administrator of his baptism. But the interpretation is inadmissible. If some work to which the apostles were especially appointed, may, to some extent, be performed by other persons, it does not follow, that persons are invested in full with the apostolic commission.⁸

Dagg based his argument on his interpretation of Biblical practice, especially the commission given the apostles in Matthew 28:19-20:

The commission specifies duties, for the performance of which the apostles were to provide. One of these was the administration of baptism. They were commanded, not to make disciples and teach them the duty of being baptized; but to make disciples and baptize them. The administration of the rite was in their care; and, where they could not perform it in their own person, it was made their duty to provide for its performance. This reasoning proves satisfactorily, that the administration was not designed to be left to any one whom the candidate might select; and it is confirmed by the words of Paul: “Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.” These words imply, that Christ has sent some persons to baptize. The duty was to be performed; and these words, taken in connection to the fact that John the Baptist and

⁷ For more on Dagg, see Mark E. Dever, “John L. Dagg” in *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition* (Broadman & Holman, 2001): pp. 52-72. Dever says Dagg “was the first Southern Baptist systematic theologian to be widely read by Southern Baptists” (p. 52).

⁸ J. L. Dagg, *Manual of Church Order* (The Southern Baptist Publications Society, 1858; Gano Books reprint, 1990): p. 255.

other apostles were commanded to baptize, confirm the deduction that the work was to be done by the agents provided....

Although baptizing is not necessarily connected with preaching and teaching; yet the manner in which it is conjoined with them in the commission, appears to indicate that the connection is suitable. No separate class of officers is anywhere provided in the New Testament, for administering the rite, and yet, if we have reasoned correctly, the apostles were under obligation to provide for it. We are led to the conclusion, that this provision was made, in the ordinary method instituted for transmitting the ministerial office. Paul had committed the office to Timothy, in the presence of many witnesses, by the laying on of his hands, and the hands of the presbytery. Timothy was, in like manner, to commit the office to others, and enjoin on them the same duties which Paul had enjoined on him. There was a fitness in the arrangement that this ceremonial induction into office, should add the ceremonial authority to baptized. It cannot be proved to be given, in the internal call of the Spirit. It was not given in the extraordinary commission of Paul. If Paul receive it in the ordinary way, whether in his being set apart at Antioch, or in some similar service at some previous time, we have this point established:--the authority to administer baptism is conferred in the ordinary course of the ministerial succession, when an individual, called by the Holy Spirit to the ministry of the word, is publically set apart to this service....⁹

Thus, according to Dagg, baptism was only to be administered by church officers.

A Nineteenth Century Presbyterian View: A. A. Hodge:

A. A. Hodge (1823-1886) was the son of the esteemed Presbyterian theologian Charles Hodge. After serving as a missionary in India, as a pastor of several American congregations, and as a theological educator, he succeeded his father as professor systematic theology at Princeton from 1877 till 1886. A. A. Hodge's best known work was his *Outlines of Theology* first written in 1860 and then significantly revised in 1878. The *Outlines* pose various questions on doctrine and practice and provides responses. In a section on the "The Validity of the Sacraments" Hodge asks, "What are the various opinions on this subject" (pp. 598-599). Hodge makes plain that though churches agree there must be the right matter (proper elements and actions) the right form (proper words in administration), and the right intention (the serious design of doing what Christ commanded), not all churches agree on these points. Citing the Westminster Confession, he adds there is further agreement that "the efficacy of a sacrament does not

⁹ Ibid., pp. 255-256.

depend upon the piety of him that doth administer it.”¹⁰ He then cites, however, his differences with the Roman practice:

But on account of the absolute necessity (as they hold) of baptism for salvation, they admit “all, even from among the laity, whether men or women, whatever sect they profess (to baptize). For this is permitted, if necessity compels, even to Jews, infidels or heretics, provided, however, they intend to perform what the Catholic Church performs in the act of her ministry”.....¹¹

He adds:

Protestants regard the sacraments both as a preaching of the Word, and as authoritative seals, and badges of church membership. Their administration consequently must be confined to those church officers who possess by divine commission the office of teaching and ruling.....¹²

Thus, Hodge affirmed and reinforced the old Westminster view on the sacraments.

Pastoral Conclusions:

With the rise of individualism and the corresponding rise in suspicion of the authority of the local church, ministers and churches may well face circumstances in which they will be called upon to defend Biblical and historical Christian practices. These challenges might come in the form of individuals in our churches (either as members or attendees) who do not have a clear or confessional understanding of the doctrine of the church, including the doctrine of the ordinances. There might be a homeschooling family who announces that they plan to baptize their teenage child upon his profession of faith, apart from the church’s examination and oversight. There might be a person who petitions for membership who has been baptized under such irregular circumstances. Each situation must be handled with appropriate pastoral care, without compromising Biblical standards and confessional convictions. It is especially important that we teach these standards and convictions to our current members so that they can offer discernment and support for the ministers and elders as they uphold these practices.

Ω

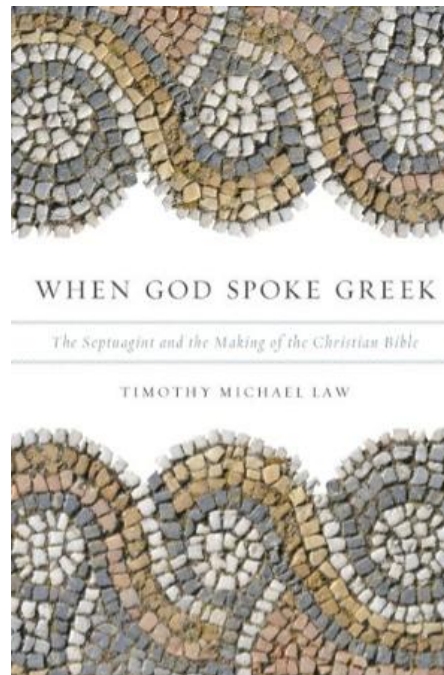
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¹⁰ A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology* (The Banner of Truth, From the 1879 revised edition, reprinted 1972, 1983): pp. 598-599.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 599.

¹² *Ibid.*

Book Review



Timothy Michael Law, *When God Spoke Greek: The Septuagint and the Making of the Christian Bible* (Oxford University Press, 2013): 216 pp.

The author is the publisher and editor of *The Marginalia Review of Books*. This work presents a non-technical introduction to the influential Greek translation of the Old Testament, which came to be known as the Septuagint (LXX). It also presents an apology for the Septuagint's ongoing significance for Christians. Law would revive the ancient debate between Jerome, who argued that the Hebrew text of the Hebrew Bible was authoritative for Christians and should be the basis of its translations of the Old Testament (as in his Latin Vulgate), and Augustine, who defended the church's use of the Greek Septuagint (the basis of the Old Testament translation of the Old Latin).

Overview of Content:

After an introduction in which Law argues that "the Septuagint lies at the foundations of Christianity" (p. 7), he traces the historical background of Hellenization in the ancient world, particularly under Alexander, which resulted in *koine* Greek becoming the lingua franca of the ancient world. He concludes this section: "The translation of the Hebrew Torah, the creation of the Septuagint, was arguably one of the greatest cultural achievements of any people in the ancient world" (p. 18).

Law points, in particular, to the ways in which the twentieth century Dead Sea Scroll discoveries have altered our understanding of the Septuagint and of the Old Testament. Some of the texts found in the Judean desert support Septuagintal readings in places where it diverges from the traditional, Hebrew Masoretic text, which Law is fond of describing as “medieval.” Law calls attention to an early period of “textual plurality” for the Hebrew Bible and urges the reader not to distort this picture by looking back “through the lenses of our present knowledge of the authoritative status later gained by the Hebrew Bible” (p. 32).

How did the LXX translation come about? Law discusses the *Letter of Aristeas* and its account of the work being completed by seventy-two translators (six from each of the twelve tribes) upon a commission for the royal library at Alexandria, Egypt, attempting to discern history from legend. His modest conclusion is that the Septuagint began with the translation of the Torah by Jewish scholars in Alexandria in the late third to early second century BC (Law prefers the term BCE, p. 35) and later expanded to include the rest of the Old Testament writings. One of the distinguishing features of the Septuagint is the fact that it also contains the apocryphal books that are not included in the canon of the Hebrew Bible. Law provides a particularly insightful review of these works (see chapter six, pp. 58-74).

The Septuagint obviously exerted a significant influence upon the authors of the New Testament writings as evidenced by their frequent citations of Old Testament passages from the Septuagint. Law provides a survey of various such usages from the Gospels to Paul to the general epistles. He is particularly keen to argue that the distinctive usage of the LXX shaped early Christian doctrine. Sometimes this is overstated. For example, Law comments that “the doctrine of the virgin birth would not have been found in the Hebrew version” (p. 116). This might be challenged, however, given that the Hebrew *almah* in Isaiah 7:14 would likely have been taken to have the same meaning as the Greek *parthenos* in the same verse.

Law’s contention is that early Christian usage of the Septuagint initially led to the adoption of a “New Old Testament,” based on the Greek translation and not the Hebrew original. This had an impact on the early Christian view of canon as many accepted the apocryphal books and additions of the Septuagint as authoritative. Thus, he concludes: “The Septuagint stands at the heart of the early church” (p. 139). According to Law, most early Christians would have been shaped by the LXX “without knowing anything about its relationship to the Hebrew” (p. 139).

Given this early success, how then did Christians come to a consensus that the Hebrew Masoretic Text and not the Septuagint should be authoritative for the Christian Old Testament? Law concludes that the root of the blame (or credit) goes back unintentionally to Origen’s *Hexapla*. The *Hexapla*, now no longer extant, was a book which laid out the Bible in six columns of various languages (including Hebrew, the Septuagint, and other Greek translations) and allowed its readers to compare them. Early Christians noted the difference between the

Hebrew and Septuagint and instinctively believed that their authoritative text should not be based on a translation but the original. This shift was solidified when Jerome based his Latin Vulgate translation of the Old Testament on the Hebrew and not the Septuagint, despite the protestations of the likes of Augustine.

Law wants to revive what might be called the Augustinian position on the Septuagint, though he wants nothing to do with Augustine's theology, which he terms "the pessimistic Calvinistic model of predestinarian theology" (p. 162). He thus joins with other scholars who "have sounded as voices in the wilderness, calling for a reappropriation of the Septuagint as Christian scripture" (p. 169), while conceding that, as yet, "the Septuagint has not been given the part it deserves in the drama of the church's reception and use of scripture" (p. 171).

Analysis and Response:

Law can be thanked for the survey he provides of the historical origins and theological influence of the Septuagint in Christian theology. Indeed, the movement he describes to reappropriate the Septuagint is becoming more self-evident as time goes by, particularly when one examines how modern translations of the Old Testament are increasingly preferring readings from the LXX and the Dead Sea Scrolls over against the traditional readings of the Hebrew Masoretic Text. This remains a live issue also with regard to canon, one that still divides Protestants from Roman Catholics.

In the end, however, we must defend the "Jerome position" with regard to preference for the Hebrew Old Testament, over against Law's Augustinian view. The original Hebrew text, particularly that which came to be the traditional standard, the Masoretic text, must be defended as authoritative over against versions like the Septuagint, no matter how they might have been providentially used in the formation of the New Testament or shaped later Christian doctrine.

This matter was wisely studied and a consensus reached and articulated in the classic Reformed confessions like the Westminster Confession of Faith and, later, in the Second London Baptist of Faith (1689). These confessions stake out a "Jerome" position in that they explicitly state that "the Old Testament in Hebrew ... and the New Testament in Greek" were "immediately inspired by God" (WCF; 2LBCF, chapter one, "Of the Holy Scriptures"). The Septuagint cannot be authoritative for Christians, because it was not immediately inspired. The "Jerome position" on the Hebrew Bible as authoritative over the Septuagint is, therefore, the Reformed confessional position. Furthermore, those same confessions also clearly articulate a canon that is limited to sixty-six inspired books. Furthermore, they describe the apocryphal books, including those in the LXX, as "not being of divine inspiration." Ω

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Paradosis

Paradosis is the Greek word for “tradition.” This is a recurring feature of The Reformed Baptist Trumpet highlighting voices from the Reformed, Puritan, and Baptist past.



Image: Benjamin Keach (1640-1704)

Benjamin Keach was a Puritan Particular Baptist pastor who lived from 1640-1704. He is the namesake for the annual Keach Conference. Keach's *A Golden Mine Opened* was published in 1694. In the preface, the author notes that he offers this work in response to “the grand controversy” in his day over election and the final perseverance of the saints. He confesses, “I am sensible of my great insufficiency,” and then asks for the readers prayers’ that the printed words will be granted as much spiritual success as when they were spoken from the pulpit. Indeed, the book consists of some thirty-six sermons on four Biblical texts: Matthew 3:12 (two sermons); John 10:27-28 (sixteen sermons); Hebrews 6:4-6 (three sermons); and Hebrews 2:3 (fifteen sermons).

In the last two editions of the *RBT* we began reprinting Keach's series on “The Blessedness of Christ's Sheep” from John 10:27-28. In this installment, we continue that transcription. The text has been slightly modernized and edited to conform to contemporary standards for style, capitalization, and grammar.

The Voice of Christ

There is a four-fold voice of Jesus Christ which his sheep hear:

1. The voice of his Word.
2. The voice of his Spirit.
3. The voice of his Holy Doctrine.
4. The voice of his Rod.

First, Christ's sheep hear the voice of his Word: The holy Scripture is Christ's word, and therefore the voice of Christ, and this voice his sheep hear. They give full credit to the truth of the sacred Scriptures. They believe they are of divine authority. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16). They are none of Christ's sheep that do not, will not hear this voice of Christ, that is, do not believe the truth of the sacred Scriptures, do not hear nor regard what they speak, but magnify unwritten traditions above the Word of God, or the light of natural conscience. The sheep of Christ hear Christ's voice *in the ministry of his Word*. They attend upon the preaching of the gospel, and look upon the Word delivered in Christ's name, by his faithful ministers, to be the voice of Christ unto them. But how, or after what manner, Christ's sheep do hear his voice, viz. the voice of his Word, I shall open under the third head.

Secondly, there is the voice of Christ's Spirit: This voice of his his sheep hear also, and indeed none but they. Sirs, this is that voice of Christ which doth the work, and that which discovers who are his sheep. The voice of Christ's Word, without the Spirit, is not sufficient. The Word will not make sinners hear, though it be spoken a thousand times over, except the Spirit's voice do accompany it. I shall therefore open to you the nature of this voice of Christ, I mean, the voice of his Spirit.

1. It is an awakening voice: Sinners are asleep, yea, in a dead sleep, and sleep they will till they hear his voice. The powerful voice of Christ awakened dead Lazarus after he had lain in the grave four days. And it must be the like voice that awakens that doth awaken the sleepy and dead sinner. "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee [life]" (Eph 5:14). It is sad to see what a multitude of poor people sit, day by day, under the hearing of the Word, and yet remain in their sins. They are asleep. The Word doth not awaken them. But when the Spirit's voice is heard, when that works with the Word, they are quickly roused up out of that dead sleep in which they lay.

2. The voice of Christ's Spirit is a convincing voice. "Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did" (John 4:29). The Spirit of Christ reached her heart, convinced her what a vile

sinner she was. We do not read of many things Christ told her she had done, but that he she had then was not her husband (John 4:18), so that she lived in adultery with him. But now as soon as the Spirit convinced her of this one sin, she is convinced of all her other abominable evils. Therefore, she cries out, "Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did; Is not this the Christ?" (John 4:29). Intimating, none but Christ can make the evil of men's hearts and lives appear unto them. So it is none but the Holy Spirit can pierce the soul, or convince the sinner thoroughly of his sin and misery, and discover the vileness of their hearts and states unto them. "They were pricked in their hearts and said, men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Is there any hope that such sinners as we may be forgiven and be saved? "Verily we were guilty concerning our brother" (said Joseph's brethren). God's Spirit now convinced their consciences and brought their sin to remembrance. So there are none that hear the voice of the Spirit, but their sin appears presently before their eyes. Their sin is aggravated on their consciences, and is most hateful and odious to them.

3. Christ's voice is a soul-quickenning voice: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live" (John 5:25). The voice of Christ doth not only cause the ear to hear, but the heart to hear also. All mankind naturally are dead in a spiritual sense. They have no divine nor spiritual life in them. Man is not by original sin, or by nature, only wounded or maimed. The Holy Ghost doth not make use of an improper metaphor. We by nature were as truly and really in a spiritual sense dead. That is, we had not more life, spiritual life, motion, heat, feeling, or strength in us, than a dead man hath natural life, motion, heat, feeling, or strength in him. But when the soul hears the spiritual and powerful voice of Christ, it is immediately quickened. A principle of divine life is infused. "You hath he quickened that were dead in sins and trespasses" (Eph 2:1). Thus the greatness of Christ's power toward sinners appears, that were dead, or destitute of a principle of spiritual life. Those that assert the power of the creature, or that every man is put into a capacity to saved if he will, certainly do not consider this, lay this to heart, ponder on this, viz. that all mankind, before grace is infused into the soul, are dead. What short of almighty power can raise the dead to life? Power is not in the dead to quicken himself. Nor can dead Lazarus resist the principle of life infused into him. It is not what the sinner, but what Christ the Savior will. And he quickens not all, but whom he will. "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth *them*; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will" (John 5:21). It is not in him that willeth, nor in him that runneth, but in God that sheweth mercy.

4. Christ's voice, by his Spirit, is a soul-humbling and self-abasing voice: They who hear his voice are straightway brought to his feet, loathing and abhorring themselves. The voice of Christ hath the same effect on the soul, as the sight of God in Christ. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor *myself*, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5-6). After Paul had heard the voice of Christ, saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutes thou me?" how humble was he. Though called to be an apostle, yet he esteemed himself less than the least of all saints. Now to be less than the least, is to be nothing. Man

before grace, or before he comes to hear the voice of Christ, is a proud creature. But grace humbles him to such a degree, that he is little, nay nothing, in his own eyes.

5. Christ's voice is a soul-regenerating voice: Christ's voice is powerful and shakes the old foundation down. All former hopes and fleshly confidence is gone. It was the voice of the Spirit that first made us, and made this world. By the Word of God were all things made and created. And it is his voice that creates us again, or that renews us, or forms his sacred image in us. He that commanded by his voice light to shine out of darkness doth but speak the Word and so it shines into our hearts and thereby transforms us and gives us "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor 4:6).

6. It is a sin-killing voice: It lays the old man a bleeding (as it were). The Spirit destroys the body and power of sin. It breaks down all the strongholds of sin. Christ slays this enemy by the sword that does out of his mouth, that is by his word, through the operations of the Spirit. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom 8:13). It is not enough to forbear the acting of sin, but we must kill and crucify it. And this we cannot do without the powerful assistance and help of the Spirit.

7. It is a soul-strengthening voice: As sin dies, grace lives, and the soul receives strength. Faith is the life and strength of the soul. And this life and strength we receive by the Holy Spirit.

8. It is a comforting voice: It is by the Spirit God speaks peace to the soul. "He will speak peace unto his people and unto his saints, I will speak comfortably to her" (cf. Psalm 85:8; Hos 2:14). I will speak to her heart. None can speak to the heart but God, by his Spirit. It is the Holy Ghost that is the Comforter. And after the sinner has been deeply wounded in the true sense of sin, and is dejected, grieved, and sorely troubled, then the Spirit comes with its sweet, still, and comforting voice, and revives the drooping soul. To comfort the conscience, recall that Luther said that faith is as great a work as to make the world.

1. Now the Spirit speaks comfort to the distressed conscience through the blood of Christ, that is, by showing the soul that Christ died in its stead, and bore the wrath that was due to us, having fully satisfied God's justice, and answered all the demands and requirements of the law, being made a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith (cf. Gal 3:14). The blood of Christ speaks. It hath a voice in it. It speaks good things, yes, "better things than the blood of Abel" (cf. Heb 2:24). But it never speaks comfort to the soul, till the Spirit applies it and sprinkleth it upon the heart. O what peace and comfort then doth the Spirit speak to a wounded spirit!

2. The Spirit speaks comfort to the soul by applying the promises of pardon and peace unto us, causing our souls to take hold of them, and to cleave to God in them. This promise is mine. God hath fastened and fixed it on my heart, the faith of a believer.

3. By opening the greatness and preciousness of Christ's love to us. Because he hath loved us with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving kindness hath he loved us and helped us to believe and to receive him.
4. The Spirit speaks comfort to believers, by opening unto them, the nature and excellency of the covenant of grace, which is "ordered in all things and sure" (2 Sam 23:5), being confirmed by the oath of God, etc.
5. By showing them the power, mercy, and faithfulness of God, etc. O, sirs, there is no voice like the voice of the Spirit. Happy is that soul which hears this voice. It is this voice of Christ that all his sheep hear.

Thirdly, there is also the voice of Christ's doctrine: I mean, the true, evangelical doctrine of the gospel. The true faith of the gospel, or the sacred doctrine thereof, is the voice of Christ, which his sheep will hear. And they will not hear the voice of strangers. They will not hear the voice of false teachers, or their pernicious doctrines. They know not the voice of strangers. They can distinguish between Christ's voice, Christ's doctrine, and the doctrine of false prophets, and false teachers. They know not the voice of strangers, that is, they approve not of their doctrine, but they know, they approve of Christ's doctrine. Though never so hard, never so difficult, and never so unpleasant to others, yet it is approved of by them. It is easy and pleasant to them that are Christ's sheep.

They hear what Christ hath said. They hear Christ's voice, e.g., the doctrine he taught. This is my beloved Son (saith the father) in whom I am well pleased; hear him.

1. Not Moses, Moses is not our Shepherd, our Guide, our Lawgiver. We are not his disciples, his sheep. No, no, but we are Christ's sheep, Christ's disciples. The Jews said they were Moses' disciples.
2. They hear Christ's voice, not the Pope's, not the voice of Antichrist.
3. They hear Christ's voice, not the voice of the light of nature only, of the teaching of natural conscience. Though, it is true, they hear and follow that light, yet they know the light that is in all men, which is in pagans, Turks, and heathens, is not the voice of Christ, as he is Mediator, and the great Shepherd of the sheep.
4. They hear Christ's voice, follow his voice, not the voice of general councils and national synods. They will no further hear any, than they hear and adhere to the voice and doctrine of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, they will not receive or embrace any capital errors. They will not hear the voice of strangers, but keep to all the essentials of Christ's doctrine of the principles of true religion.

Particularly,

1. They believe the Holy Scripture is of divine authority, and that it is the only rule of faith and practice.
2. They steadfastly believe the doctrine of the blessed holy Trinity, that “there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and that these three are one” (1 John 5:7), one in essence, yet three persons or subsistences.
3. They steadfastly believe the doctrine of Christ’s divinity, or have a right faith about the person of Christ, not doubting but that he is God by nature, the most high God, coeternal and coequal with the Father and the Holy Ghost, abominating the doctrine of Arius, who asserted he was not the same substance of the Father, but a created spirit, the first and chief spirit or angel God created.

And the doctrine of Socinians, who affirmed, he is a mere man, and had no pre-existence before he was conceived and born of the virgin.

They abominate that voice or doctrine of Eutychians, who maintain, that the matter of Christ’s flesh was from heaven, or that it was a conversion of deity of the second person of the Trinity into flesh, and that he partook not of the nature of the virgin.

They abominate their doctrine, who declare, that Christ doth consist of one nature only, and those who affirm that the light that is in all men (which is but an inward quality created of God, with which the soul of mankind is naturally endued) is the only Christ of God. They know these are strangers, and the voice of strangers they will not hear.

4. They hear and steadfastly believe, and receive the doctrine of Christ’s headship over the church.
5. The doctrine of satisfaction by Christ, in his expiation of sin, and of justification by his righteousness imputed, as it is received by faith alone, without inherent righteousness wrought in us, or good deeds done by us.
6. The doctrine of regeneration, the resurrection of the body, and of the eternal judgment, and the world to come.

In all these respects they hear Christ’s voice, i.e., his doctrine, and in all other respects so far as they receive light and knowledge touching any one, or all of the blessed truths and ordinances of the gospel.

Fourthly, there is the voice of Christ’s rod also, which his sheep hear: “The LORD’S voice crieth unto the city, and *the man of wisdom* shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it” (Micah 6:9). When Christ’s sheep will not hear as they ought the soft and sweet voice of God’s Word, he speaks to them by the voice of his rod, by affliction and sharp rebukes, which by his providence he brings upon them. And though others cannot hear so as to

understand this voice of Christ, yet his sheep do, they “see his name,” and “hear the rod,” and know whose voice it is, and to what end it is appointed. But this I shall not insist further upon here.

I should now come to show you how Christ’s sheep hear his voice, but that must be for the next time.

Application

1. Bless God you have Christ’s voice, Christ’s word sounding in your ears. “Blessed are they that know the joyful sound, for they shall walk in the light of thy countenance, O Lord” (Psalm 89:15). It is not all they that hear the joyful sound, but only such that know it, with an experimental knowledge, who have felt the divine power of it on their souls.
2. Rest not therefore upon a bare hearing of the Word of Christ. Take heed that the gospel come to you not only in word only, but in power also.
3. Labor to hear the voice of Christ’s spirit in and with the Word, or you are undone forever. Ω