

As I've been slowly trying to work through some material concerning Baptist versus Presbyterian thought on the subject of church-state relations (or the nature of God's two kingdoms), I've been confronted with some puzzling anomalies.

For instance, one of the ways I was first introduced to reformed writing on how Christians are to regard the state was through John Robbins' book *Freedom and Capitalism*. It was through other publications by the Trinity Foundation that I was brought to the *Reformed Libertarian* site, whose contributors (including C.J. Engel and Brandon Adam) compiled a wealth of information regarding liberty, tyranny, the free market and a critique of interventionism from a biblical perspective.

Considering the way men like John Robbins (and other writers for the *Trinity Review*) responded to statism and anathematized church-state amalgamations, these men sounded more like reformed Baptists than they did Presbyterians. Trinity's contributors, holding as they did to the Westminster Confession (following Robbins, and Gordon Clark before him), I wondered how their logical and systematic dismantling of church-state "one kingdom" theology (and Christian Reconstructionism/theonomy) could be reconciled with their allegiance to the WCF.

I recently posed this question to **Brandon Adams**. He affirmed that "Robbins' views would be inconsistent with historic Presbyterianism. But the vast majority of modern Presbyterians are inconsistent with historic Presbyterianism."

Shortly after Brandon replied with some insightful comments and articles, Sam Renihan wrote a very helpful post on the context of historic Presbyterianism and the development of Particular Baptist distinctives. His post really helps set the historical context for paedobaptists' initial repulsion of the Particular Baptists, the progression of Presbyterian thought, and the false but common tendency to find a connection between the Particular Baptists and the Anabaptists (I also addressed the alleged Anabaptist connection [here](#)). He writes:

"A Particular Baptist...believes that the conscience cannot be forced in matters of religion, that the civil magistrate has no right whatsoever to establish, enable, or enforce a national church, and that all authority and power for the government of churches resides in the churches themselves, subject to no higher power as a church power. If the Particular Baptist is right about this, the Westminster Assembly's very existence and purpose are invalidated...."

We have seen several contextual historical and theological reasons for why the 1640s Presbyterians viewed the Particular Baptists as so different from themselves. What we must be careful to do is to read the Presbyterian reception of Particular Baptists through their own lenses. But the difficulty is that modern Presbyterians are so different today. Few of them hold the original views on liberty/compulsion of conscience and the role of the civil magistrate in the same....

...this means that many modern Presbyterians are at odds with key features of their own tradition because as noted above, if the state cannot and should not establish national religion, the Westminster Assembly should never have been called for the purpose that it was called. Strangely, the American Westminster Confession essentially invalidates the reasons for the existence of the original Westminster Confession" [full post here].

Brandon Adams and Sam Renihan have made very helpful contributions to this study, which have served to solidify my convictions on Baptist views regarding God's two kingdoms and our opposition to the view that the state has any jurisdiction over the human conscience. Read Sam Renihan's very helpful post, "Lost Presbyterian Lenses" at Particular Voices.

For further research, links to some of Brandon Adams' articles pertaining to this evolution of paedobaptist views, particularly related to American Presbyterianism, are below:

Baptism to a thousand generations?

The evolution of reformed paedobaptism

Presbyterian vs Congregationalist vs Baptist sacramentology

Kline's argument against Presbyterianism

History of the theory of the relationship of church and state (Waldron)

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