



*The Log College
& Seminary*

Psalm 107:43

THEOLOG
THE JOURNAL OF THE LOG COLLEGE
& SEMINARY

CONTENTS

The Authority of Scripture	7
John McDonald	
New Covenant Theology and the Framework of Reformed Orthodoxy	10
Samuel Bathiran	
Law and Covenant: The Pastoral Implications of Confessionalism	27
Win Groseclose	
A Puritan Primer (Part 1)	41
Tim Goad	
The Log College: Yesterday and Today	48
John McDonald	
To Know as We are Known: A Lesson on Life and Learning	63
John Knox	
Divine Mediation in Paul's Financial Policy	67
Conley Owens	
Authority and Application: An Introduction to Biblical Counseling	80
Reagan Marsh	
The Progressive Mindset	95
Andrew Underhile	
The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry	116
Gilbert Tennent	
From the Editor's Desk	133

Theolog

The Journal of the Log College & Seminary ©2021

ISBN: 978-1-68474-240-0

Chief Editor: Rev. Win Groseclose

The Log College and Seminary

P.O. Box 3435

Sumter, SC 29151

TheologEditor@gmail.com



Manuscripts for *Theolog* should be emailed directly to: info@logcollege.net. All contributions are to conform to The Log College and Seminary's paper guidelines and should be original work of an LCS Oversight Board member, alumnus, student or mentor in the disciplines of Systematic Theology, Historical Theology, Biblical Theology, Pastoral Theology, Church History, Apologetics, or Practical Theology and should be consistent with LCS's doctrinal statement.

Theolog has the right to publish, sell, or circulate any articles sent as submissions, but the author retains the copyright. The Oversight Board of LCS has complete authority and control over *Theolog* as a journal and can reject any article if it does not fit the parameters of this journal or this institution's interests.

The primary format of *Theolog* is designed to be electronic, but print copies are available through Amazon.com. Electronic editions can be downloaded from logcollege.net.

Electronic versions of *Theolog* may be freely distributed so long as nothing of its content is altered or removed.



The Log College & Seminary desires to see theological education restored to the local church. Ministry preparation is, after all, a part of the church's discipleship task! LCS seeks to serve the local church by providing an academic platform that pastors can use in the training of their members and the preparation of men called to the gospel ministry's work.

Our vision is to help prepare a new generation of Reformed pastors who are passionate for the glory of God, the proclamation of the Gospel, and the equipping of the church for ministry - without the financial obligation of the traditional seminary!

How do we do this? By offering a challenging curriculum coupled with pastoral mentoring and oversight (the old Puritan apprenticeship model). Thus, the student receives both a firm theological foundation and the practical ministry skills necessary for effective ministry.

President: Dr. John McDonald

Advisory Board: Dr. Timothy Goad

Dr. Samuel Bathiran

Rev. Win Groseclose



From the Desk of the President:

The establishment of the Log College was as humble as it was extraordinary. It might be said that its beginning stemmed principally from parental responsibility – the obligation felt by William Tennent Sr. to faithfully educate his children. But this great patriarch would soon realize his duty as a faithful father in the church. Tennent recognized the great need for ministerial education in the expanding colonies and was determined in the Lord to provide a workable solution. The rest, they say, is history.

Today in the United States, there is no lack in the number of seminaries available for aspiring ministerial candidates. However, despite the great numbers, there are still two significant needs that remain – the need for faithful seminaries and the need for affordable seminaries. Ironically, there is no better solution to the challenges presented by modern ministerial education than a return to the Log College mentor-based model. A return to the Log College model is, in principle, nothing more than a return to the pastoral discipleship model presented to us in the New Testament. There we find that the Biblical expectation is that pastors disciple future pastors.

Like the Seminary, Theolog dedicates itself to the preservation and proclamation of Biblical Truth. It is a publication containing both old and new wine – cherished truths with a view toward modern pastoral application. Academics must never be for the sake of study, but rather for the sake of living. The commitment of the Log College men was that orthodoxy (right doctrine) should always culminate in orthopraxy (right living). The Log College men were known for their happy marriage of education with experientialism. May this always be true of the Log College men.

Dr. John H. McDonald
President
The Log College & Seminary

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

JOHN H. McDONALD, TH.D.¹

One of the most intriguing book titles in Christian literature of the past half-century is Francis Schaeffer's classic, *He is There, and He is not Silent*. God exists, and He has spoken! Integral to the Christian Worldview is the concept that God has communicated absolute propositional truth about Himself, creation, and mankind. This communication is possible because God created mankind in His own image, Gen. 1:26 (rational, self-aware, self-active, and moral).

While God has revealed certain general truths about Himself in nature (natural revelation), He has communicated more specific truths via spoken and written words (special revelation). God chose certain men to convey His words and provided attestation to His messengers through miraculous signs.² We know these men as the Prophets and Apostles.³ The prophetic formula was, "Thus says the LORD." The apostolic formula was "Thus says the Holy Spirit."⁴ The messages of both Prophet and Apostle, in both spoken and written form, were identified as the very Word of God, and the miraculous signs attested to this bold yet genuine claim.

Uniquely embedded in God's special revelation about Himself, creation, and mankind is revelation about this special revelation itself! In 2 Timothy 3:16, we read that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God..." (or translated more literally as "God-breathed"). In 2 Peter 1:20, we read that "...no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, ...but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." In 2 Peter 3:15-16, we find that Paul's writings were considered "Scripture." These passages teach that all of the prophetic and apostolic writings were ultimately of divine origin. While God spoke through

1 Dr. John McDonald currently serves as President of the Log College & Seminary. A direct descendant of Scotch Presbyterians from Argyllshire, Scotland, Dr. McDonald has served churches in Mississippi and Florida. Aside from his normal administrative duties with LCS, Dr. McDonald also serves as a LCS mentor and remains actively engaged in research, writing, counseling, and pulpit supply. Dr. McDonald is available for speaking engagements and as a conference speaker by request.

2 Acts 2:22; Hebrews 2:3-4.

3 2 Peter 3:2.

4 1 Corinthians 2:13; 1 Timothy 4:1; 1 Peter 1:12; Revelation 3:22.

men and utilized their intellects and unique personalities, at the same time, He also ensured that what His messengers spoke and wrote was exactly and precisely what He wanted to be communicated – a superintendence extending even to the very words.⁵ Theologians refer to this divine superintendence as the “Inspiration of Scripture.” Because Scripture is verbally (every word) and plenary (every portion) inspired, it is infallible (cannot err) and is therefore inerrant (does not err).

The Inspiration of Scripture is foundational to the Authority of Scripture. If God (infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth) has indeed addressed a particular subject, then it follows that such information must be considered ultimate, final, and absolute. In Scripture, God addresses morality, sin, salvation, and eternal life. But He also addresses science and history. Whenever God speaks, the result is ultimate, final, and absolute truth. The authority of Scripture has as its very basis the authority of God Himself. Put simply, “What God says, goes!”

Obviously, many books claim to be authoritative revelation from God. What makes the Bible so different? Many things! The Bible was written over a period of about 1,500 years by almost forty different authors, yet has one central overarching theme: the redemption of sinners through the person and work of Jesus Christ. The Bible contains hundreds of predictive prophecies (there are over three hundred Messianic prophecies alone), which are fulfilled in minute detail hundreds, and sometimes, thousands of years from the original prophecy. The multiple typologies presented in the Old Testament all find their complete fulfillment thousands of years later in the person and work of Jesus Christ. The public (and therefore indisputable) miracles performed by the prophets and apostles as God’s messengers attest to the divine origin of their message. Jesus, as the Great Prophet, taught that the writings of the Old Testament were divine in origin⁶ and His resurrection attests to the truth of this teaching. This same resurrected Jesus promised that His commissioned apostles would be directed and taught by the Holy Spirit.⁷ Lastly, the martyrdom of the Apostles is a strong testimony to the integrity and authenticity of their writings as God’s messengers.

God has not left us in the dark as to which book He has authored. But if the

5 Matthew 22:31-32; Mark 12:35-37; Galatians 3:16.

6 Matthew 5:17-18; John 10:35.

7 John 14:26; 16:13-15.

Author is divine, then the book is divine. The “author-ity” of Scripture stems from its Author!

NEW COVENANT THEOLOGY AND THE FRAMEWORK OF REFORMED ORTHODOXY

SAMUEL BATHIRAN, D.D., TH.D.¹

In the history of the Church, the traditional covenant idea underwent major attacks in terms of its relevance to the unity of Scripture. The critics of covenant theology have made several attempts, by way of eisegesis, to bring several changes in the biblical covenantal schema so as to philosophize and popularise their views in opposition to the framework of reformed orthodoxy. In recent times, some new terminologies were coined by these critics, in a variety of ways, to distinguish their identity within the protestant theological sects, more precisely from classic covenant theological schema, in an attempt to promote their newly conceptualized ideologies against the reformed faith and practice. They were not mere new terminology with new concepts or new ideas but new interpretations distinctly inappropriate to the reformed heritage. In this way, deviating from the Reformed interpretive methodology, they inconsistently insist on numerous contradicting new interpretations in Protestantism. For instance, Progressive Covenantalism, a distinct view within evangelical theology, was coined and promoted by Peter J. Gentry and Stephen Wellum,² just as progressive

1 Dr. Samuel Bathiran has served the Lord in various capacities as Church Planter, Pastor, Administrator, and Professor in Christian Organizations since 2001. After his completion of the Doctor of Divinity (Puritan Studies) program, he has been greatly influenced to be a student of the Puritans. Dr. Samuel currently serves as President of Puritan Reformed Biblical Seminary. He also serves at The Log College & Seminary as Oversight Board Member-Mentor. Dr. Samuel holds a Doctor of Divinity in Puritan Studies, and a Doctor of Theology in Reformed Theological Thought (*Jure Dignitatis*) from The North American Reformed Seminary; a Bachelor of Arts in English from Annamalai University; a Master of Arts in English from Manonmaniam Sundaranar University. Dr. Samuel and his wife Salam Sanatombi Chanu are blessed with four children: Rachel Nganbi, Elisheba Rahel, Enoch Joshua and Melchizedek Joshua.

2 Peter Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, eds., *God's Kingdom through God's Covenants* (Illinois: Crossway, 2015); Peter Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018); Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker, *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course between Dispensational and Covenantal Theologies* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2016); See a critic from a Reformed perspective, Michael Horton, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Review by Michael Horton* www.thegospelcoalition.org/reviews/kingdom-covenant-michael-horton/ (accessed December 2020).

dispensationalism³ a distinctly separate group from traditional dispensationalism,⁴ was being promoted and popularised by Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock. Like these neo-theological paradigms, a new theological framework is in development to repudiate the traditional covenant idea and is being popularised in the name of ‘New Covenant Theology’ (NCT) among the so-called evangelical circles. Both progressive covenantalism and new covenant theology have found common agreements invariably at certain tenets, followed their own interpretive methods, and have dogmatically no conviction and assertion with what the traditional covenant theology profoundly propagates at several major points.⁵

New Covenant Theology is an innovation within protestant theology. It proudly stands in opposition to Reformed theology and is not recognized as Covenant Theology from the reformed perspective since it has no adherence to the key distinctive features of covenantal idea. It seeks a mediating position between the classic covenant theology and dispensational theology,⁶ thus forming a new theological scheme as a middle way. It is, indeed, contradictory to the pure teachings of Scripture in several aspects to what was faithfully taught by the reformed theologians in the past. Currently, this movement is anticipating a rapid-worldwide-growth bewitching various evangelical mindsets to be delved into their developing ongoing theological process, in doing their own theology within their own shed, in a contradicting-inconsistent-hermeneutical-approaches that are foreign to a faithful interpretation of Scripture, just as the rise of liberal theological interpretive methods as well as Roman Catholic theological interpretive methods have distorted and adulterated the Scriptures in the history of the Church. More vehemently and more emphatically, by its un-unified irrelevant

3 Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Wheaton: Bridgepoint, 1993); Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992); Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface Between Dispensational and Non-Dispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993); Thomas D. Ice, *What is Progressive Dispensationalism?*, (2009), Article Archives, Paper 119. http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/pretrib_arch/119 (accessed November 2020).

4 Stephen J. Nichols, *The Dispensational View of the Davidic Kingdom: A Response to Progressive Dispensationalism*, TMSJ7/2 (Fall 1996), 213-239.

5 Stephen Wellum, *Progressive Covenantalism and New Covenant Theology* www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/progressive-covenantalism-and-new-covenant-theology/ (accessed December 2020).

6 NCT came into formation as a result of their theological struggles with federalism and dispensationalism. Kevin Hartley, *The History of New Covenant Theology*, https://web.archive.org/web/20070312021230/http://www.pressiechurch.org/Theol_1/history_of_new_covenant_theology.htm (accessed on December, 2020). Dennis M. Swanson, *Introduction to New Covenant Theology* (TMSJ 18/1, Fall 2007), 150.

developing theological schema, it contradicts the covenantal understanding of Hermeneutics, and at utmost confidentiality, by negligence to the covenantal truths in toto, it undermines the veracity of Scripture. Christians and theologians within the reformed camps should beware of this growing movement so as to preserve the reformed biblical teachings that were handed down to us so diligently by faithful reformed divines in the past centuries.

History

The history of New Covenant Theology could be traced back to the 1970s as the various theological writings of its proponents such as John Zens, John G. Reisinger, Fred G. Zaspel, Tom Wells, and Steve Lehrer et al., emerged, frequently at online self-publishing platforms, promoting its unsystematic tenets in a disorganized method.⁷ The notable evangelical theologians of our time, such as D. A. Carson and Douglas Moo, self-identify themselves as NCT proponents.⁸ It is true that until recently, from its inception, there was no dogmatic system of beliefs within this movement since each of its proponents was unsure about it as they develop their theology with a distinctly inappropriate interpretation, which culminated in out of context.⁹ This happened, as their theology is yet under construction process, among NCT proponents, no systematic theology is published till date, and indeed, none in NCT camps could point out the *Sine Qua Non* of New Covenant Theology,¹⁰ and as a matter of fact, there is no such thought established by any of its proponents to promote the uniformity of their doctrines as non-negotiable essentials to which NCT should be subscribed unquestionably until the year 2012 when Blake White published *A Short Primer on New Covenant*

7 John Zens, *Studies in Theology and Ethics* (Malin, Ore.: BREM, 1981); John G. Reisinger, *Abraham's Four Seeds* (Frederick, Md.: New covenant Media, 1998); John G. Reisinger, *But I say unto You* (Southbridge, Mass.: Crowne Books, 1989); John G. Reisinger, *Tablets of Stone*, (Southbridge, Mass.: Crowne publications, 1989); Tom Wells and Fred Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology* (Frederick, Md.: New covenant Media, 2002); Steve Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 2006; Gary D. Long, *New Covenant Theology*, 2013.

8 Swanson, *Introduction to New Covenant Theology*, 157.

9 NCT promotes its new theological innovative ideologies to set forth a new camp between Reformed theologians and Covenant theologians.

10 Swanson, *Introduction to New Covenant Theology*, 157.

Theology Essentials providing the six key distinctions of NCT.¹¹ Nevertheless, NCT could not provide their final statement of faith as their unstable indefinite theological systems will need several modifications in the process of their study at any point of time, no matter when such a new idea is formulated. A leading NCT proponent D. Gay writes, “You see, I am unable to reach an absolute, definitive, final, unchangeable statement on what I understand the Bible to teach about the new covenant.”¹² Since they do not have a statement of faith and the preparation of such one is in progress, they have adopted the confessional statement of ‘the Gospel Coalition’ for a time being.¹³ Despite the fact that these matters go side by side, other doctrinal conflicts spurn out inevitably in the new covenant theological school of thought as they are ready to modify their conflicting doctrinal issues after their own thoughts at any point. Their new covenant ideas, so persistently, they do, penetrating in the mindsets of the Christians who anticipate a new school of thought between covenanters and dispensationalists, promote their new system of thought by conferences, writings, and teaching.¹⁴

NCT a Distinct Sectarianism

The NCT claims that they agree with Calvinistic views in some measures, but in reality, they have distorted Reformed heritage by their new theological system of tenets. They do proclaim themselves as their views are closely related to reformation when they differ from Reformed theology. They asserted, denying

11 Available at <https://crosstocrown.org/about/what-is-new-covenant-theology/> (accessed December 2020) ; See, A. Blake White, *What is New Covenant Theology* (New Covenant Media, April 9, 2012).

12 D. Gay, ‘*No Confession? Nothing to Debate!*’ (2016), as quoted in Kevin McGrane, *New Covenant Theology: Weighed and Found Wanting* (Essex: The Gospel Magazine Trust, 2017), 2.

13 <https://crosstocrown.org/about/what-is-new-covenant-theology/> (accessed December 2020) ; <http://www.newcovenantschooloftheology.org/faqs/> (accessed December 2020) ; <http://www.newcovenantschooloftheology.org/statement-of-faith/> (accessed December 2020).

14 Their online articles could be accessed here; *In-Depth Studies* www.ids.org, the teaching ministry of Geoff Volker. They host *The John Bunyan Conference* annually, and their bible institute is known as *Providence Theological Institute of New Covenant Theology* in Warren, RI www.ptinct.org originally started as *Providence Theological Seminary* in Colorado, on 4 September 2007. Their web page states that this institute is closed in 2016 as an educational institution but continues its role as a theological institution. In 2010, Douglas Goodwin founded *New Covenant School of Theology* (www.newcovenantschooloftheology.org), which offers an MDiv degree and a Certificate of Biblical Studies under an apprenticeship model for pastoral training.

the traditional Reformed theological thought, in attestation to this fact that they believe in Doctrines of Grace (TULIP).¹⁵ The reason behind embracing the doctrines of Grace and rejecting the body of Reformed theological thought sharply appeared in the NCT camps from some of their proponents who were educated in Reformed seminaries. While it is true that some NCT proponents studied at reformed seminaries¹⁶ but they are not truly Reformed in their doctrines and were no longer able to move forward in Reformed paths; rather, they paved their own ways, which birthed the idea of ‘new covenant theological thought,’ the identity that has no relation to the classical covenantal schema. Kevin Hartley argued that the earliest proponents of new covenant theology came from Presbyterianism and Reformed Baptist movement, and the earliest advocates of new covenant theology had their roots in the Reformed faith.¹⁷ He further believes that NCT “offers its contributions to protestant dogma as a next step in the continuing reformation of the church.”¹⁸ He goes on to say that new covenant theology is a baptist theology when he asserted,

*It has been suggested that new covenant theology is a derivative of John Bunyan’s treatise on law and grace. It has also been suggested that new covenant theology strongly agrees with the London Baptist Confession of 1649. New Covenant theology is clearly Baptist theology, but it is not Anabaptist or Reformed Baptist theology.*¹⁹

New covenant idea propagated by NCT, in fact, does not agree with the London Baptist Confession of 1649, since it does not teach even Baptist covenant theology as taught by reformed Calvinistic Baptists, for the Baptist covenantal paradigm has a significantly distinct idea that brings partition between NCT and reformed Baptists. In other words, NCT by no means can correlate their new covenant idea even with Baptist covenant theology. By carefully evaluating

15 Refer their websites www.ptinct.org ; www.ids.org ; <https://crosstocrown.org>

16 Geoff Volker received his M. Div from Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis, and Steve Lehrer received his Master’s degree in Theology from Westminster Seminary in California. Douglas Goodwin, the founder of Cross to Crown Ministries (www.crosstocrown.org) and New Covenant School of Theology (www.newcovenantschooloftheology.org) studied at Covenant Seminary and completed his M. Div at New Geneva Seminary, Colorado Springs.

17 Hartley, *The History of New Covenant Theology*.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

the NCT system of thought in the light of Baptist distinctives, this becomes crystal clear. One can then apprehend that NCT has no standards that could comprehensively affirm their new covenant schema in the lineage of Baptist heritage, as no proper confluent dogmatic grounds between them are revealed in a sophisticated and logical manner. NCT can not be labeled as Baptists. Though they claim themselves as Baptists or followers of Baptist ecclesiology, it is, in reality, far from Baptist faith and practice since their connection to Baptist history is vulnerable and not viable. They are neither Baptists nor Presbyterians but a distinct sect within protestant theology. They oppose reformed theology attacking the key tenets of its faith and practice traditionally followed by reformed theologians in confirmation to the whole counsel of God. NCT proponents Steve Lehrer and Geoff Volker view the covenant theology as ‘Calvinistic Sacred Cow-ism.’²⁰ They affirm this by denying the active obedience of Christ when they write, “...A sacred cow in Calvinistic theological circles is the imputation of the active obedience of Jesus Christ. It is a doctrine that is a lynchpin of the system of theology known as Covenant Theology.”²¹ Students of reformed theology need more awareness in apprehending and analyzing the NCT flaws to stand in the grips of faithful teachings of Scripture as clearly expressed in the confessional standards like Westminster Confession of Faith, Heidelberg Catechism, and other reformed confessions like London Baptist Confession of Faith which are the God-given immeasurable treasures through God-fearing pious reformed giants to His Church.

New Covenant Theology in the Context of Reformed Views

New Covenant Theology has several theological issues that bring great damage to the doctrine of Christ. They bring their new findings regularly to their new theological system. As they develop their new ideas under this new schema, they dethrone the traditional covenantal thought within their ongoing theological framework, thus nullifying the entire body of divinity in error. They have several issues in their completed writings to date; this writer will address some of their key issues selectively that may appear to be perplexing within the context of the Christian community in general and the Reformed community in particular. Among their abundant erroneous tenets, in this section, only the following concepts are treated briefly to the point: a) Rejection of Classic Covenant Theology, b) Old Covenant vs. New Covenant, c) NCT’s Antinomianism, d) Abrogation of the Law, and e) Denial of the Perpetuity of Sabbath.

20 Steve Lehrer and Geoff Volker, *Examining the Imputation of the Active Obedience of Christ: A Study in Calvinistic Sacred Cow-ism* (http://www.ids.org/pdf/imputation_append.pdf) (accessed December 2020)

21 Lehrer and Volker, *Examining the Imputation of the Active Obedience of Christ: A Study in Calvinistic Sacred Cow-ism*.

Rejection of Classic Covenant Theology

The covenant theology traditionally taught as the pre-fall covenant of works (*foederus naturae*),²² Covenant of Redemption (*pactum salutis*)²³ and the Covenant of Grace (*foederus gratiae*) are biblical teachings and its theological structure is believed by early Christians which is evident from the early Church onwards.²⁴ Therefore, the classic covenant idea is tenable and viable. However, NCT rejects the biblical idea of covenants from its inception. John Reisinger, who is considered as the father of NCT, writes,

*We agree that the Bible is structured around two covenants. However, the two covenants that you keep talking about, namely, a Covenant of Works with Adam in the garden of Eden and a Covenant of Grace made with Adam immediately after the fall, have no textual basis in the Word of God. They are both theological covenants and not biblical covenants. They are the children of one's theological system. Their mother is Covenant Theology and their father is logic applied to that system. Neither of these two covenants had their origin in Scripture texts and biblical exegesis. Both of them were invented by theology as the necessary consequences of a theological system.*²⁵

According to the claims of NCT in rejecting the covenant idea of reformed orthodoxy, their reasoning is that there is no direct mention of the word covenant found in Scripture texts which are used to prove classic covenant theology, therefore the covenant idea should be repudiated. They portray themselves that they are not against biblical terms found in the Word of God but theological terms assumed from the Scripture.

In response to their claims, a proper in-depth knowledge on the

22 For a good discussion on *foederus naturae* in seventeenth-century reformed orthodox standpoint, Richard A. Müller, *The Covenant Of Works And The Stability Of Divine Law In Seventeenth-Century Reformed Orthodoxy: A Study In The Theology Of Herman Witsius And Wilhelmus Àbrakel* (Calvin Theological Journal, 29 (1994): 75-101.

23 In covenant theology, the Covenant of Redemption is known as an Intra-trinitarian covenant.

24 Scott Clark, *The History of Covenant Theology* (Tabletalk Magazine, October 1, 2006) available at <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/history-covenant-theology/> (accessed December, 2020); J. Ligon Duncan, *Covenant Theology A Biblical, Theological, and Historical Study of God's Covenants*, 42ff.

25 John Reisinger, *Abraham's Four Seeds* (Frederick, Md.; New Covenant Media, 1998), 129.

interpretation of Scripture in the whole counsel of God as deposited by God himself should be gained for using any theological term so as to comprehend the clearest theological notion in the passages as an absolute concept perspicuously expressed in the Scripture. Their objection here raises contradiction, as NCT, in opposition to their claims, uses several theological terms assumed from the Scriptures, in doing their theology as mentioned above (e.g., TULIP). Such thought of NCT appears very strange in the theological thinking, and it further raises the question of how one can theologize without theological terms? The Reformed divines in the past have spent years diligently exposing the God-revealed truths in the best ways to simplify the whole theological concept in a single word or phrase, to convey the scriptural interpretation so significantly and meaningfully to those who are sincerely attentive to grow in the Grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord. Failure to grasp its significance in the light of the Word of God causes misunderstanding and consequently in misinterpretation of the terms employed by these theologians, which lead automatically one to deny the entire body of truth related to that particular term in toto. This is so evident from the people who misread the Scripture. For instance, one cannot deny the personality of Holy Spirit on the basis that He is not mentioned as a person in Scripture. In truth, He is the third person of tri-unity. Now, the word Trinity is not found in the Bible, and on this basis, we do not deny their teachings because they are profoundly clear in the overall interpretation of Scripture. Similarly, we do not find several theological terms in Scripture, and on this basis, we don't deny them; rather affirm it because they are profoundly clear in the overall interpretation of Scripture. In doing so, we emphatically believe the teaching based on these theological terms have their grounds in Scripture in terms of its concepts, albeit not these terms are explicitly stated in Scriptural passages. One must always be clear that these theological terms are not a mere invention by the theologians in a vacuum, but they came in formation by the pious God-fearing Men who diligently devoted themselves to the study of Scripture in interpreting and exposing them by careful exegesis with the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit, certainly not by any means by way of eisegesis. We believe these theological terms were masterfully crafted and carefully weighed, and applied in the light of Scripture in consultation and faithful evaluation with the whole counsel of God as breathed out by God. Any theological term that could not pass this standardized testing process were simply denied if there is no warrant for it in Scripture, and in the same way, any theological term that is believed and interpreted from the early Church onwards in conformity to God's standards, interpreters thinking God's thoughts after Him with proper authorial intent, we unanimously accept it for our faith and practice. Any theological term that undermines the body of divinity, in opposition to the whole counsel of God, against the biblical teachings presented faithfully and so diligently generation after generation into our hands, we underestimate them as heretical, for this nullifies the unity of Scripture and it was so done within Christendom. Therefore, NCT claims on denying the traditional covenant idea on the basis of the absence of the term covenant in the text does not establish the point of their explanation, for the idea is clearly expressed in the light of

biblical interpretation on the passages related to it. The defense of reformed theological interpretation in this regard is rightly understood when we go back to the voluminous writings of these giants in the history of Reformation theology.

Mono-covenantal Structure vs. Bi-covenantal Structure

In the history of the post-reformation theology, the traditional covenant view known as tri-covenantalism²⁶ has undergone several criticisms both within the Reformed community and non-reformed community. Consequently, some embraced mono-covenantalism while others believed in bi-covenantalism. The classic covenant idea as a Tri-covenantal structure is clearly expressed in Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) which teaches a three covenant view in Chapters 7 and 8. The Neo-orthodox theologian, Karl Barth, has criticized the bi-covenantal view,²⁷ and set his idea on a single eternal Covenant of Grace, denying the law-gospel distinction. In Reformed circles, we have many reformed theologians such as John Murray and Herman Hoeksema who have denied the bi-covenantal view having their attestation in single covenant scheme, without denying the importance of law-gospel distinction.²⁸ The Reformed theologian John Murray²⁹ denying bi-covenantalism, called the pre-fall arrangement an ‘Adamic administration’ viewing the covenant idea in Bible is always gracious.³⁰ However, he failed to accept the terminology ‘covenant of works’ since he believes in mono-covenantalism. While Barthians and Hoeksemanians favor mono-covenantalism, there exists a difference in the affirmation of the law-gospel distinction among them as one can understand the difference between Barthian covenant theology

26 Herman Witsius, *The Economy of The Covenants between God and Man: Comprehending A Complete Body Of Divinity* “Two Volumes” (T. Lochhead Glasgow; And T. Nelson, Edinburgh, 1822). J. Ligon Duncan, *Covenant Theology A Biblical, Theological, and Historical Study of God’s Covenants*.

27 Daniel L. Migliore’s introduction to *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*, by Karl Barth (ed. Hannelotte Reiffen; trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 1:xxxviii, quoted in Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith : A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 146.

28 Herman Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1973), 217-325; John Murray, “The Adamic Administration,” in *The Collected Writings of John Murray* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977).

29 John Murray, “The Adamic Administration,” in *The Collected Writings of John Murray* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977).

30 Duncan, *Covenant Theology A Biblical, Theological, and Historical Study of God’s Covenants*, 100.

and Hoeksemanian covenant theology.³¹

The debate within mono-covenantal reformed theologians regarding the concept of covenant was based on the terminology usage, not based on the idea related to it, as expressed above. A closer look at the writings of these covenant theologians reflects the idea of terminology differently, not to the idea associated with some aspect of covenantal structure involved within the covenantal or federal scheme, albeit their interpretation based on the covenant terminology, seems inconsistent and contrary to the classic reformed covenant view. Thomas Boston viewed the Covenant of Redemption and the Covenant of Grace as one.³² Palmer Robertson views the pre-fall Covenant of Works as a Covenant of Creation and the Covenant of Grace as a Covenant of Redemption.³³ The terminology WCF mentions is Covenant of Works; however, it is mentioned as Covenant of Life in the Catechisms. Covenant of Nature is another phrase used to understand the covenant of works. Some orthodox Reformed theologians call the intra-trinitarian covenant the Council of Peace, the Council of Redemption, Eternal Covenant, and Covenant of Redemption.³⁴ Whether the orthodox reformed theologians use the language of the covenant with different terminology, there remains some aspect of covenantal ideas within their interpretations, which could be in some aspects, correlated to the reformed orthodoxy. Even in this case, denying a proper terminology usage in the covenantal structure brings their interpretation flawed to the distinctive features of classic covenant theological schema. Wilhelmus à Brakel rightly pointed it when he commented,

Acquaintance with this covenant is of the greatest importance, for whoever errs here or denies the existence of the covenant of works, will not understand the Covenant of Grace, and will readily err concerning the mediatorship of the Lord Jesus. Such a person will readily deny that Christ by His active obedience has merited a right to eternal life for

31 In the post-reformation theology, the law-gospel distinction among Lutherans and Reformed theologians are hotly debated. Lutheran's view varies from Presbyterian's. Similarly, there is a distinction between Baptist covenant theology and Presbyterian covenant theology on this subject. If a reformed student understands the law-gospel distinction as expressed in WCF, he overcomes the confusion related to the covenant schema.

32 Thomas Boston, *The Complete Works* (London: 1953), 1: 333–334, quoted in Morton H. Smith, *The Church And Covenant Theology* (*JETS* 21/1 (March, 1978) 50-51.

33 O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980); Duncan, *Covenant Theology A Biblical, Theological, and Historical Study of God's Covenants*, 68.

34 Smith, *The Church And Covenant Theology*, 50-51.

*the elect. . . . Whoever denies the Covenant of Works, must rightly be suspected to be in error concerning the Covenant of Grace as well.*³⁵

By examining these views in reformed theology, we come to know that there are different interpretive ideas within reformed orthodoxy concerning the concept of covenant thought, formulated and propagated by covenant theologians. However, this does not fall under the umbrella of NCT school of thought as there is always a vast difference between new covenant theologians and covenanters on covenants in terms of its interpretation and application.

Old Covenant vs. New Covenant

NCT affirms that the NT Christians are under the new covenantal system, not under the old covenantal system. Their point of the argument is New Covenant is New and is different from the Old. Thus, the New Covenant of Christ is distinct from the Old Covenant of Moses. In affirmation of such erroneous understanding, they highlight no continuity between Old Testament and New Testament. For NCT, “To disobey the law of the Old Covenant before Jesus went to the cross (that is, “before everything is accomplished”) was to sin against God.”³⁶ In their judgment, after Jesus went to the cross, old covenant laws have no value. By emphasizing this, they further repudiate the observation of old covenant laws since all of these laws were fulfilled by Christ for all the believers, and therefore believers of this age are under no obligation to keep these laws, but only the laws under the new covenant are applicable for NT Christians. In response to NCT, in the light of Scripture, we see continuity between Old and New Testaments (Cf. Jer 31:33 ; Heb 10:16 ; 1Tim 1:8), and the fulfillment of Old Testament through Jesus Christ (Mtt 5:17-19). Further, Christ came to fulfill the law, not to provide a new set of law codes for the Church.³⁷ Denying the law-gospel distinction, they asserted that Old Covenant is fully abrogated, and only the new covenant is in force.³⁸ In his paper *In Defense of the New Covenant*”, Michael W. Adams said, “The primary premise of NCT is that the New Covenant as mediated by Christ is a brand NEW covenant, which totally replaces the Old Covenant:” The NCT view is closely associated with dispensational thought which expresses the similar idea in the dispensational camps, however with certain peculiar explanations. In

35 Wilhelmus à Brakel, *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, Trans. Bartel Elshout, Ed. Joel R. Beeke, USA: 1999, 1:355.

36 Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 135.

37 Samuel Bathiran, *The Divine Chastisement on God's Family: An Alarm to the Sinning Members of the Churches Today* (US: Amazon Digital Services LLC - KDP Print, 2019), 39-42.

38 The abrogation of the law is treated under a separate heading below in this paper.

affirmation of this fact, Larry D. Pettegrew asserted, “Dispensationalists are in agreement with New Covenant Theologians who also teach that the New Covenant is new. Though this is true to some extent, some disagreement with NCT also exists regarding how the New Covenant should be defined and explained.”³⁹ NCT views, by rejecting Reformed covenantal diagram, are closely associated to the interpretation of dispensationalists who opposed the classic covenant theological schema at every point. Both dispensationalism and NCT rejects the covenant theology.

NCT's Antinomianism

NCT claims that they are not antinomians.⁴⁰ However, in his book, *But I say unto You*, Reisinger resembles that they are. In the same time, they teach the obligation of obedience to the commands of Christ and Apostles in the new covenant era, which are applicable to Christians of this age.⁴¹ They further affirm that even certain laws of Christ are not binding on the Christians today because they were given by Christ under the old covenant era.⁴² Their new covenantal ideas with several interpretive flaws led them to affirm the marriage between siblings is not a sin but holy in God's sight if they live in a country that allows them to practice it. Lehrer affirms it as follows,

*In the New Covenant Scriptures, no mention is made of the impropriety of marrying one's sister. Although the practice is illegal in many countries, which makes it sinful for Christians living in those countries to do (Romans 13:1), it seems that if you and your sister are both believers and you live in a country that deems marriage between siblings to be a lawful practice, then your marriage would be holy in God's sight.*⁴³

This view violates the ethical standards established by God and destroys

39 Larry D. Pettegrew, *The New Covenant And New Covenant Theology*, TMSJ 18/1 (Fall 2007), 192.

40 Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 112; Tom Wells, *Is John G. Reisinger an Antinomian?* (Frederick, MD: New Covenant Media, 2001).

41 Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 112.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid, 115.

the purity of life practiced by biblical Christians in the centuries past, as they were strictly obeying the oracles of God given in Scripture. NCT's new interpretations have lead them to take such a position, which is a foreign thought in the lifestyle of genuine biblical Christianity. Again, NCT proves it that they are antinomians because they abhor the moral laws of God given in OT. Though dispensationalists take a different stand from NCT on marriage, they claim that NCT are not antinomians and do have similar views like dispensationalists differentiating Mosaic Law from the Law of Christ. In this regard, on the basis of 1 Corinthians 9:20-21, making a distinction between the Law of Moses and Law of Christ, and expressing the interpretive agreements between NCT and dispensationalists, Michael J. Vlach observes,

This view that the Christian is not under the Mosaic Law has led to the charge of lawlessness or antinomianism by some. Many Dispensationalists have also faced this charge because the NT Christian is not under the Mosaic Law but under the Law of Christ. Now New Covenant theologians are facing this accusation as well. The charge is baseless, however. It is not as though New Covenant theologians (and Dispensationalists) are saying that Christians are not bound to any law—they are. However, there is a new law for the New Covenant era—the Law of Christ, which consists of the commands, principles, and precepts of the NT. Thus, it cannot rightfully be claimed that New Covenant theologians are antinomians.⁴⁴

It is true that both new covenant theologians and dispensationalists accept that they are bound to the Law of Christ, rejecting the laws given under the old covenant era. Here, both NCT and dispensational theologians err in their interpretation when they contrast the Law of God in OT given through Moses and the Law of Christ in NT as if they are entirely different from one another when actually they are not. Albert Barnes more precisely interpreted this passage 1 Corinthians 9:20-21 with its context as follows,

The phrase, "under the law," means undoubtedly the law of Moses; and probably he here refers particularly to those Jews who lived in the land of Judea, as being more immediately and entirely under the law of Moses, than those who lived among the Gentiles. ...There can be no doubt that Paul, when he was in Judea, submitted himself to the laws and lived in conformity with them. ...Not regarding myself as being absolutely without law, or as being freed from obligation to obey God. Even in all this, I endeavoured so to live as that it might be seen that I felt myself bound by law to God. I was not a despiser, and contemner and neglecter of law, as such, but only regarded myself as not bound

44 Michael J. Vlach, *New Covenant Theology Compared With Covenantalism*, TMSJ 18/1 (Fall 2007), 211.

by the peculiar ceremonial law of Moses. This is an instance of Paul's conscientiousness. He would not leave room to have it supposed for a moment that he disregarded all law. He was bound to God by law; and in the conduct to which he was referring, he felt that he was obeying him. He was bound by higher law than those ceremonial observances which were now to be done away. This passage would destroy all the refuges of the Antinomians. Whatever privileges the gospel has introduced, it has not set us free from the law's restraints and obligations. That is binding still, and no man is at liberty to disregard the moral law of God. Christ came to magnify, strengthen, and to honor the law, not to destroy it. But under the Law of Christ. Bound by the law enjoined by Christ; under the law of affectionate gratitude and duty to him. I obeyed his commands; followed his instructions; sought his honour; yielded to his will. In this he would violate none of the rules of the moral law. And he here intimates, that his grand object was to yield obedience to the law of the Saviour, and that this was the governing purpose of his life. And this would guide a man right. In doing this, he would never violate any of the precepts of the moral law, for Christ obeyed them, and enjoined their observance. He would never feel that he was without law to God, for Christ obeyed God, and enjoined it on all. He would never feel that religion came to set him free from law, or to authorize licentiousness; for its grand purpose and aim is to make men holy, and to bind them everywhere to the observance of the pure law of the Redeemer.⁴⁵

The message is very clear here. Apostle Paul is not referring that Christ gave a new set of law codes to the Church, rather he fulfilled the Mosaic Law for us, and we are obliged to obey His Law which he has fulfilled in His life, which includes the moral law given under old covenant as the ceremonial laws are done away at the death of Christ. The term 'law' when we find in Scripture must be interpreted carefully in its context, as the term may denote either part or the whole thing. Similarly, the passage in Romans 6:14, which reads that the believers are not under the law but under grace must be interpreted in the light of this understanding. What did Paul mean by 'law' here? Paul actually points out the message here that we are not under the law as the first Adam was in the covenant of works but under grace, as all believers are in the Covenant of Grace, which began from Eden after the fall.

Abrogation of the Law

Both NCT and dispensational views chop up the Bible, bringing contradicting statements in the body of divinity. NCT fail to distinguish between

45 Albert Barnes, *Barnes New Testament Notes*, ed. Robert Frew (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1950), 2383-2384.

the civil, ceremonial, and moral aspects of the law in OT⁴⁶ because they never accept that there is such distinction or division explicitly highlighted in Scripture. They are Antinomianists, and their strong belief in the total abrogation of the entire Mosaic Law code, including moral law in OT, caused them to provide new theological ideas, as said above. For NCT, NT Christians are bound by the New Covenant alone. The fallacy of their interpretation lies when they teach the OT laws are fully abrogated, and it is not obligatory for believers to obey them. John Owen believed that Mosaic Law is fully abrogated, and NCT often quote him stating that their position is similar to Owen's. Though Owen affirmed the abrogation of the entire Law of Moses, he strongly emphasized its continuing validity and relevance of moral law for Christians.⁴⁷ Francis Turretin writes, "Whether the moral law is abrogated entirely under the New Testament. Or whether in a certain respect it still pertains to Christians. The former we deny; the latter we affirm against the Antinomians."⁴⁸

Reformed theology on the interpretation of Mosaic Law, unlike New Covenant Theology, places its importance on the unity of Scripture.⁴⁹ All the reformed theologians, in one sense, inevitably hold the biblical teaching of

46 D. Gary D. Long, *What are the Major Characteristics of New Covenant Theology?* presented at the 29TH Annual Sovereign Grace Doctrinal Conference, Texas: October 9, 2004. Available at www.gracechurchatfranklin.org/newcovenanttheology.htm (accessed January 2021).

47 John Owen, *The Works of John Owen* (Edinburgh, Scotland: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1991), XXII:78-90; 215-218.

48 Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* (Phillipsburg, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1994), II:ix.

49 See the exposition of WCF on this subject, Archibald Alexander Hodge, *A Commentary on The Westminster Confession of Faith With Scripture Proofs*, 117-147 (available at www.heologue.wordpress.com).

Theonomy.⁵⁰ However, the debate surrounds the issue regarding what laws are applicable today. Reformed orthodoxy affirms the point clearly that the Christians are not under any compulsion to keep the ceremonial law as it is done away on the Cross of Christ, but the obligation to keep the moral law continues, although not as a system of salvation, but toward an obedient life as saved people of Christ to progress in our sanctification, because it is not abrogated and is still relevant for us as a rule of life. The question concerning the relevance of the use of the civil laws in the modern-day context is perplexing and challenging with its applicability in different contexts of the countries among the church community. Therefore, some within the reformed circles who are non-theonomists (as technically applied to its theological system), does not believe that civil law is applicable in today's context.

The Denial of the Perpetuity of Sabbath

NCT proponent Lehrer provided a three-point summary to understand their position on the Sabbath as follows,

1. *The Old Covenant has passed away, and none of the commands of the Mosaic Law are binding on believers today, including the command to keep the Sabbath holy.* 2. *There is not a "1 in 7 pattern" of rest and work that believers in the New Covenant era are obligated to follow because there is no such command in Scripture.* 3. *Although the early Church may have regularly met on Sundays (the first day of the week) as a way of commemorating the resurrection, there is no command to meet on that day. In addition, early church patterns are not binding on believers. Therefore God's people are free to gather any day or days of the week that they so choose to gather.*⁵¹

This is a faulty understanding of the Sabbath. By firmly indulging in

50 Greg L. Bahnsen, *By This Standard: The Authority of God's Law Today* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1985); Greg L. Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics* (Nutley, NJ: Craig, 1977); R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* : 3 vols. (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1982); Michael J. McVicar, *Christian Reconstruction: R. J. Rushdoony and American Religious Conservatism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015). For reformed critics on this subject, Meredith G. Kline, *Comments on an Old-New Error: A Review of Greg Bahnsen, Theonomy in Christian Ethics*, *Westminster Theological Journal* 41 (1978-79), 172-189; William S. Barker and Robert Godfrey, *Theonomy: A Reformed Critique* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990); Douglas A. Oss, *The Influence of Hermeneutical Frameworks in the Theonomy Debate*, *Westminster Theological Journal* 51 (1989), 227-258; David Gordon, *Critique of Theonomy: A Taxonomy*, *Westminster Theological Journal* 56 (1994), 23-43 For a reformed Baptist view on Theonomy, see Sam Waldron, *Theonomy, A Reformed Baptist Assessment* <http://www.reformedreader.org/rbs/tarba.htm> (accessed January 2021)

51 Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 181.

the belief of the abrogation of the law, they denied the Sabbath view, which our creator God himself observed in the creation week. According to them, believers are not obligated to keep the fourth commandment since it is not repeated in NT, and thus it is not binding on believers. Tom Wells claimed that John G. Reisinger “has adopted John Owen’s view of the Mosaic and New covenants, without adding Owen’s ‘creation ordinance’ view of the Sabbath”.⁵² He further asserted that Owen held a mediating position on the relationship between Mosaic and New covenants is similar to the stand taken by New Covenant theologians like Reisinger.⁵³ A careful read on NCT interpretations, in this regard, enlightens what Owen and other reformed theologians believed are different from NCTs. In reply to the faulty understanding of NCT, Reformed orthodoxy emphasizes that God instituted Sabbath as a creation ordinance, that it was observed in the OT on the seventh-day of the week, and that it continues in NT on the first day of the week. Though NCT proponents deny the perpetuity of the Sabbath, we see its credence in the Bible. Thomas Watson rightly pointed out the importance of keeping the Christian Sabbath in this way, “The Sabbaths we now keep, would be earnest of the everlasting Sabbaths which we shall celebrate in heaven.”⁵⁴

Conclusion

In summary, what NCT does is *eisegesis*, not *exegesis*, and by doing their *eisegesis*, the growing movement of NCT, brings disaster to the core traditional theological system of reformed orthodoxy. It nullifies the whole counsel of God by denying the old covenantal system breathed-out by God the Holy Spirit. More diligence is required in the context of this age since NCT, which spreads their faulty interpretive new ideas against the biblical theology of the Reformed theological system. Reformed theology is biblical theology. Being aware of the new covenant theological flaws, by the help of our Holy Spirit, let us be diligent and faithful “to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3), as the militant church battles doctrinally to safeguard the biblical teachings.

52 Wells, *Is John G. Reisinger an Antinomian?*, 6.

53 Richard C. Barcellos, *John Owen and New Covenant Theology: Owen on the Old and New Covenants and the Functions of the Decalogue in Redemptive History in Historical and Contemporary Perspective*, 20.

54 Thomas Watson, *The Ten Commandments* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library), 115.

LAW AND COVENANT: THE PASTORAL IMPLICATIONS OF CONFSSIONALISM

WIN GROSECLOSE¹

In our era of church history, it would seem that confessionalism has largely fallen into disrepute. Perhaps this is a result of the fact that there are as many different confessions and revisions of confessions to choose from as there are denominations that proclaim themselves to be Christian. Further, rather than viewing confessions as establishing a binding law for the beliefs and practice of the church, many churches and denominations take a piecemeal approach to the confession, affirming aspects they like, but not the whole, allowing nonconformity in areas where the teachings are not esteemed essential.

The task of developing a systematic, pastoral theology of confessionalism is far too great to be contained in an article such as this. Thus, our purpose here will be to briefly explore the basis and purpose of confessional language and to make several applications as to how the embracing of a high view of confessional language benefits the pastor in his labors and thus benefits the church. Further, it will set forth a call to the church to once again embrace the notion of *strict-subscription*² to Canon Law to promote unity and wellbeing within the church as a whole.

Canon and the Covenant Church

Ordinarily, protestants only think of the Scriptures when Canon is discussed. The Belgic Confession states of the Canon of Scripture that these books are for the “regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith.”³ To that, Westminster clearly affirms the Scriptures to be:

The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose

1 Pastor Groseclose is a graduate of Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, MS and is ordained in the Reformed Church in the United States. He currently serves bi-vocationally as pastor of Light of Resurrection Reformed Church in Zelenople, PA. He is the author of over a dozen books, and serves as Adjunct Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology for a mission seminary in Ukraine operated by Reformed International Theological Education. He is also a member of the Advisory Board for The Log College and Seminary as well as acting as Chief Editor for Theolog.

2 Strict-subscription or plenary-subscription is defined as requiring one to adhere not only to the overall theology the Confession affirms, but to every point and detail within the document.

3 Belgic Confession, Article 5.

sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.⁴

While the confessions speak of Scripture as the “only rule of faith and practice,”⁵ it is also clear that they understand themselves (namely the body of confessional language) as subordinate standards, yet as subordinate standards that they are necessary in the life of the church.⁶ This is demonstrated by the fact that all of them go forward and authoritatively lay down principles for both faith and practice that are expected to be followed by the church as a whole. Unlike the view of Eastern-rite Orthodoxy, these Councils understand that their writings are not in and of themselves authoritative, but that their writings are authoritative in as much as they draw from and accurately explicate and apply sacred writ.

The Presbyters who set forth these authoritative explications and applications also recognized that it was the role of gathered Councils and not individuals to develop and define such guidelines and rules for the church. As is clearly stated in the Second Helvetic Confession: “The Apostle Peter has said that the Holy Scriptures are not of private interpretation, and thus we do not allow all possible interpretations.”⁷ Instead, it is insisted that the Scriptures and the “Rule of Faith” are to be the authoritative judges and interpreters so long as that interpretation is “gleaned from the Scriptures themselves.”⁸ It was thus seen as the responsibility of ruling authorities to call Synods and Councils to examine

4 Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter I.X.

5 Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter I.II.

6 The phrase *norma normans* (the rule that rules) is applied to Scripture and *norma normata* (the rule that is ruled) to the Confession. Philip Schaff would write: “The Bible regulates the general religious belief and practice of the laity as well as the clergy; the symbols regulate the public teaching of the officers of the church, as Constitutions and Canons regulate the government, liturgies...and worship of the church. Any higher view of the authority of symbols is unprotestant and essentially Romanizing.” Schaff, Philip. *The Creeds of Christendom*. (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1919). v1, 8.

7 Second Helvetic Confession, Chapter II. We might note here that while Guido de Bres was the sole author of the Belgic Confession, the duly called Synod of Dordrecht affirmed the Belgic Confession’s Articles as orthodox and binding for the church in its concluding statement.

8 Ibid.

theological points of dispute and then to put said points to rest.⁹ These conciliar documents were considered to be binding not only to those who sought ministry, but there was also attached a warning to those who would “bear false witness against the confessions of so many churches.”¹⁰

It should be stated that the assemblies who produced such documents did not see themselves as entering into a novel practice, but instead, they saw themselves following the model set forth in both the Jewish and the Christian church from the very earliest of eras. When God sent Moses back to Israel with the express purpose of delivering the people from under Pharaoh’s oppression and fulfilling his covenantal promise to Abraham¹¹, God sent him to gather the “Elders of Israel” and tell them that the God of their fathers had sent him to lead them out from Egypt.¹² When this text is translated as part of the Septuagint, the Hebrew אֲזָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל is translated into Greek as τὴν γερουσίαν τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ. Why might God have sent Moses to the “Council of the Sons of Israel”? The simplest answer is that a decision was being called for¹³ and to call a Council was the normative practice for God’s people.¹⁴

Arguably, the most significant passage with respect to the practice of calling councils to render a decision that is binding on the life of the church takes place in Acts 15. Here, a council is called to resolve the question as to how the church is to handle the influx of Gentile converts to Christianity. Must they be

9 Thomas Scott. *The Articles of the Synod of Dort*. (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1993), 347. It is also recorded here that the authority to make such rulings was considered by the people to be without question, and such was the view of the Reformers without exception.

10 Canons of Dort, Conclusion.

11 Genesis 15:12-16.

12 Exodus 3:16.

13 Like the Elders of Berea did with the teachings of Paul (Acts 17:11), these Elders examined the witness of Moses and confirmed his prophetic calling.

14 Note that by the first century AD, the Jewish church was still using the same language, as Acts 5:21 also refers to the Sanhedrin as τὴν γερουσίαν τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ. It is sometimes suggested that the advice of Jethro in Exodus 18 marks the beginning of the model for conciliar leadership in Israel; nevertheless, the presence of this language in Exodus 3 is a clear indication that the model is older still.

circumcised?¹⁵ Must they keep the Law of Moses?¹⁶ Thus, a council was called in Jerusalem, and along with the Apostles, presbyters were appointed¹⁷ from the various churches to engage in the decision-making process.¹⁸

The solution provided by the Council of Jerusalem stated that it was not right to “cause unnecessary trouble”¹⁹ for these Gentiles who had been saved by grace through faith. Even so, there were four considerations from the Law of Moses that were impressed upon these churches: “abstain from the pollution of idols, from sexual immorality, from that which has been strangled, and from blood.”²⁰ Paul is then sent as an emissary to deliver this letter first to Antioch and then to the other churches in question.²¹ If one is tempted to simply see this as a matter dealt with and then forgotten, that notion is quickly disposed of by pointing out that as Paul travels on his following missionary journey, he is said to have been delivering the decisions of this council to all of the churches he visited.²² Similarly, it should be noted that by Paul’s final trip into Jerusalem, he is still referencing this letter as being authoritative to the Gentile branch of

15 Acts 15:1,5.

16 Acts 15:5.

17 Acts 15:2.

18 It should be noted that this was a case that the Apostles, who were still living and present, could have simply spoken to in an authoritative way. Yet, they established a principle for the church that would proceed after their deaths. The office of Apostle, being temporary, would come to an end within roughly 60 years, with the death of the Apostle John. With no continuing apostolic succession, the church needed to be ready to handle matters it would face as time went on. This Jerusalem Council provided the church with a blueprint as to how one handled matters of theological debate.

19 Acts 15:19.

20 Acts 15:20.

21 Acts 15:22-29.

22 Acts 16:4. Notice the use of the term *δόγμα* to refer to the decisions made by the Council. These were not suggestions nor were they pieces of contextual advice, they are considered to be established tenets of the Christian faith that were to be obeyed by Christians in every location where Christ’s church was present.

the Christian church.²³ This then provided a model for the church to follow, and when the Councils of Nicea, Chalcedon, Dortrecht, and Westminster (et al.) were meeting, they saw themselves as fulfilling this practice.²⁴

Establishing Unity while Preserving Orthodoxy

What is the purpose of councils such as these? Why not permit every church or presbytery to determine rules as they see fit? The simple answer to this question is one of unity. As Paul eloquently writes, we are to strive to “maintain unity in the bond of peace.”²⁵ Note that this does not mean we sacrifice all theological doctrines for an “ecumenical” approach that is simple enough that it can be embraced by all. That is not how Paul describes a mature congregation just a little later in the passage. He states that a mature church is not “infants tossed about and carried about by every wind of doctrine”²⁶ and that is able to be “truthful in love,” grown-up “in every way into Him who is our Head, Christ.”²⁷

All too often churches have fallen into the mindset that they as a local church, or that they as a denomination, are able to act autonomously and distinguish truth from error without the guidance of the universal church as a whole. Yet, such is not the historic view held by the church. The term ἐκκλησία, in the Greek-speaking world, referred to a “sovereign assembly of the citizens of a city-state, summoned — ‘called out’ by the herald.”²⁸ Those who belonged to said city-state²⁹ had a law that governed and united the people as one body. When the

23 Acts 21:25.

24 Note, too, that this was not a uniquely Christian practice, but the Jewish Midrash also contained the tradition of Halakhah, by which the scribes would apply the Scriptural laws and canons to new situations. Taylor, Justin. “Canon in the Age of the Fathers.” In *Readings, Cases, Materials in Canon Law*, edited by Jordan Hite, et al. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1980. 38.

25 Ephesians 4:3.

26 Ephesians 4:14.

27 Ephesians 4:15.

28 Justin Taylor. “Canon in the Age of the Fathers.” In *Readings, Cases, Materials in Canon Law*, edited by Jordan Hite, et al. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1980. 34.

29 Note the frequency with which the church is referred to as the “Kingdom of God” or the “Kingdom of Heaven” and how the Apostle Paul refers to Christians as “citizens” of such.

word was used, it would have conveyed a distinct meaning to any gentile hearer, especially when heard in the context of Paul's instruction to live as a citizen worthy of the Gospel of Christ.³⁰

Nevertheless, the choice of the term ἐκκλησία also communicated meaning in the Hebrew-speaking world as ἐκκλησία was the term commonly used to translate לָקָה, the gathered or "called-out" people of God. From the days of the Exodus, the people had understood themselves to be not just a people, but a nation set apart by and governed by God and His law.³¹ By choosing distinct, Hebrew terminology, the Christian church in the age of Pentecost and beyond was the natural continuation of that which was begun in ancient Israel³² and thus were the inheritors of all of God's promises to Israel by faith in Christ.³³

Further, it should also be noted that the term ἐκκλησία is used to speak of the whole church body — a reference to the church catholic.³⁴ Within this larger catholic body, local churches and presbyteries of churches were seen to be microcosms of the whole, not as unique or distinct bodies.³⁵ That notion has ramifications in terms of the church's unity. The only way that such unity could exist is that if there were laws that governed the whole and to which all constituent

30 Philippians 1:27. Note that the term Paul uses here is πολιτεύομαι, which specifically refers to someone living in accordance with the laws of the city or kingdom of which they are a citizen. Philippians 3:20 identifies the kingdom as heaven.

31 Exodus 33:16.

32 Galatians 3:29; Romans 9:6-8.

33 2 Corinthians 1:20-22.

34 Note that the phrase "catholic" comes from the Greek word καθολικός, referring to a "general" or "universal" church body. While the notion is Biblical (John 17:11; Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 10:17; 12:20; Ephesians 2:16-18; 4:4; 5:30; Colossians 3:15), the term seems to originate with Ignatius of Antioch, who lived in the late first century and who used the term to communicate the notion of the church as a whole, spread across the world (*Letter to the Smyrnaeans*, Chapter VIII). The second-century *Muratorian Fragment* also uses this term to refer to those books useful for regulation and ecclesiastical discipline in the universal (catholic) church. Hence, though not a Biblical Greek word, it is a word that has been embraced by the church as early as the second century and ought not be seen as belonging only to Rome as many protestants have incorrectly assumed. Courthial thus argues that "the opposite of catholic is heretical, and vice versa." Courthial, Pierre. *A New Day for Small Beginnings*. Translated by Matthew Miller. Tallahassee, FL: Zurich Publishing Foundation, 2018. Pg 164.

35 Justin Taylor. "Canon in the Age of the Fathers." In *Readings, Cases, Materials in Canon Law*, edited by Jordan Hite, et al. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1980. 35.

parts submitted. It can naturally be presumed that the Scriptures formed the basis and the measure of this unity, but in the first century, the writing of the New Testament Canon was still in process and it was not until the fourth century that the Canon was authoritatively affirmed by the church.³⁶

Even with a still incomplete Canon, it is clear that even during the lifetime of the Apostles, creedal statements had begun to form. We have already mentioned Paul's language in Ephesians 4:4-6, but an even more fundamental statement can be found in 1 Timothy 3:16. Paul writes:

*And we confess that the mystery of godliness is great: wherein he was made known in flesh, pronounced righteous in Spirit, witnessed by messengers, proclaimed in the nations, believed in the world, and taken up into glory.*³⁷

The Apostle's choice of ὁμολογοθμένως is not only a clear statement that Paul understands these facts to be incontrovertible doctrine within the church and thus essential precepts of the Christian faith, but also that they were to be confessed together as a body when the church gathered together. They were clearly a rule by which the church was to be measured.³⁸ Though this is the only occurrence of ὁμολογοθμένως in the New Testament, we find similar confessional

36 Note that the Synod of Hippo of 383 AD is the first Council of the Church to authoritatively affirm the listing of the 27 books we now refer to as the New Testament. The Third Council of Carthage (397 AD) and the Sixth Council of Carthage (419 AD) soon afterward confirmed these lists, with the latter issuing an anathema against any who would add to the list of Canonical books. It should also be noted that at the time these Councils were held, Augustine considered the question of Canon resolved. This only affirms the position that the Councils were simply recognizing what the churches already understood. At the same time, it is a reminder that the churches did look to Councils to ratify these things for the benefit of the catholic church. Much more could be said as to the process of the ratification of the Canon, but such would go beyond the bounds of our purposes here.

37 Author's own translation. Note too, the previous verse where Paul instructs that the church is to be the pillar and the buttress of truth. What is the content of that truth? How is that truth to be defined? The confession that follows indicates what Paul had in mind. If the church is to be the church, it must boldly defend the confessional statements of Christianity, not simply pay lip-service to them.

38 It should be noted that while 4 Maccabees is neither part of the Jewish nor Christian Canon, we can learn some things by how language was used even from this extra-biblical text, namely that ὁμολογοθμένως is consistently used in the context of the phrase εὐσεβῆς λογισμῶς, indicating that the common confession of the people was an understood and commonly held exhibition of Godly reasoning (e.g. 4 Maccabees 6:31; 7:16; 16:1).

statements in the writings of John³⁹, Peter⁴⁰, and of Jesus Himself.⁴¹ This too is built on the practice in the Old Testament of using creedal statements for the purpose of unifying and regulating the covenant people as a whole.⁴² This practice seems to be the background behind Jude's reference to "faith that was once for all time delivered to the saints."⁴³

These creedal statements, along with the conciliar canons, provided the means by which the catholic church could find order and unity as the world and the culture changed around it. With successive conciliar documents affirming, clarifying, and correcting preceding decisions (that were erroneous), a living body of canon law was developed.⁴⁴ Space does not permit the useful exploration of the early church councils in this context, but for our purposes we will work on the premise that the Seven Ecumenical Councils form the basis of that continuing canon law that was established to govern and unite the church. Amongst the many things that these Councils have provided us was a clarification of the New Testament Canon, the hypostatic union, the nature of the Trinity, the principle that a deaconess was simply a vow of service within the church and not an office of authority, the practice of psalm singing and many rules against asceticism to name

39 John 1:1-2; 1 John 3:5, 23-24; 5:6-8.

40 Matthew 16:16; 1 Peter 1:20; 3:18-22.

41 John 4:24.

42 The most fundamental of these is known as the "Shema" and is found in Deuteronomy 6:4-5. Yet, there are other similar passages found in Micah 6:8 and Habakkuk 2:4 to name but a few.

43 Jude 3. Irenaeus and Tertullian both authored treatises dealing with what they called "The Rule of Faith" which also addressed essential doctrines that were necessary to be confessed if one was to be considered Christian. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, 1.2-3 and Tertullian, *Liber de Praescriptionibus adversus haereticos*, 13.

44 We should note here, the distinction between Conciliar decisions and Jewish Midrash. The latter was comprised largely of the interpretation of influential rabbis and decisions were seen as guidance and not binding on the thought of the people. The former were rules decided upon by leaders of the church as a whole and which were seen to be binding upon the church catholic. Hence, confessional and creedal statements do not form a Christian Talmud of sorts but instead establishes ecclesiastical law.

but a few. The creeds⁴⁵ that we universally affirm as Christians also came from these seven councils.⁴⁶ As previously noted, the Synod of Dordt not only rejected the heretical teachings of Arminius, but also affirmed the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism as symbols of orthodoxy, continuing the conciliar tradition within the protestant church. Later, Westminster would build upon the same.

Religious Subscription not Religious Individualism

As John Leith clearly states in the introduction to his book on Confessions, “Christianity has always been a ‘creedal’ religion.”⁴⁷ Within Reformed circles, it is common to speak of Creeds and Confessions as documents that contain a summary of the doctrines taught in Scripture. Yet, there seems to be little agreement as to how much of or as to how strictly a given tenet was to be held or how it was to be enforced.⁴⁸ In some denominations individuals are asked to list the points of variance they have with the confessions, with presbyteries then debating as to whether said variants compromise the overall theology of the Confession. Other denominations omit sections of the confessional statement because they are disliked or are frankly seen as distasteful. Others still will publish denominational versions of the creed to suit their liking.

It can be sure, that those involved in drafting the conciliar documents recognized the lasting value of their work. They did not see themselves as creating a statement to be held just by a few churches, nor did they see their work as something that could be held in a piecemeal fashion. Instead, they saw themselves

45 In particular, the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athenasian Creed, and the Definition of Chalcedon are nearly universally recognized as being authoritative documents defining Christian doctrine. Because these documents were issued out of the Councils of the Early church, we already have an established principle by which we find the Canons of the early Councils as binding on the thought and practice of the Christian.

46 It should also be noted that the Reformers appealed to the Canons established within these councils as one means by which to judge the heresy of the Roman and Orthodox churches, pointing out that they had departed from orthodoxy while the protestants were remaining true to the teachings of the early church.

47 John Leith. *Creeds of the Christian Churches*. (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1963), 1.

48 It should be noted, though, that many parts of these Canons and Confessions are not being subscribed to by the church bodies. Examples of this from the Westminster Assembly are “The Sum of Saving Knowledge”, “The Directory for Public Worship”, and “The Presbyterial Form of Government.”

as contending for the “purity of our religion”⁴⁹ and against “those multitudes of errors, blasphemies, and all kinds of profaneness, which have in this last age, like a mighty deluge, overflowed this nation...”⁵⁰ They also did not see their work as something exclusively for theologically-educated clergymen⁵¹ or the university. In Manton’s introduction to the Westminster Confession, he includes a lengthy quote from “a very learned and godly divine” enjoining Manton to commend the Confession to fathers and families that children may be taught and families sanctified.⁵² Indeed, it is described as a “most sovereign antidote against all kinds of errors.”⁵³

It should be plainly reasoned that the Divines who penned the Westminster Standards would be horrified by the way churches have amended and revised the document. That is not to say that they would object to corrections in areas that are not aligned with the Scriptures, for indeed, Scripture is the “supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are

49 From the first line of the ordinance drafted by the assembly of the Lords and Commons in Parliament, June 12, 1643: “Whereas, amongst the infinite blessings of Almighty God upon this nation, none is, nor can be more dear unto us than the purity of our religion; and for that, as yet, many things remain in the liturgy, discipline, and government of the Church, which do necessarily require a further and more perfect reformation than as yet hath been attained...” McPherson, Alexander, ed. *Westminster Confession of Faith*. Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1994. Pg 15.

50 From the introduction to the Westminster Confession. McPherson, Alexander, ed. *Westminster Confession of Faith*. Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1994. Pg 5.

51 Still, note that clergymen are the foundational subscribers to these confessions as they will teach the church. As Samuel Miller points out: “It is plain that unless Confessions of Faith contain articles, not, strictly speaking, fundamental, they cannot possibly answer one principle purpose for which they are formed, viz. guarding churches which receive the pure order and discipline, as well as truth, of Scripture, from the intrusion of teachers, who, though they may be pious, yet could not fail to disturb the peace, and mar the edification of the more correct and sound part of the body.” Miller, Samuel. *The Utility and Importance of Creeds and Confessions*. Originally published: 1839. Charleston, SC: BiblioLife, 2010. Pg 94.

52 From Thomas Manton’s introduction to the Westminster Confession, “Epistle to the Reader.” McPherson, Alexander, ed. *Westminster Confession of Faith*. Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1994. Pg 10.

53 From the introduction to the Westminster Confession. McPherson, Alexander, ed. *Westminster Confession of Faith*. Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1994. Pg 6.

to be examined; and in whose sentence we are to rest.”⁵⁴ Nevertheless, unless a teaching or doctrine be proved to be not in accordance to the teaching of Scripture as a whole⁵⁵, it was expected to stand and remain standing until the parousia.

The presence of such councils and confessions and the diligence that they took to craft statements that could be embraced by the church utterly obliterates the notion of religious individualism, for if the individual is the sole arbiter of Truth and faithful exegesis, the confession becomes immaterial and utterly irrelevant. Yet, if the councils are God’s means by which disagreements in theology are to be resolved, then individualism is schismatic. There is no rational middle-ground, and strict-subscription⁵⁶ to the confessions is the only logical response.

Pastoral Benefits of Strict-Subscriptionism

- 1) *It provides a means by which cults and false religions can be refuted.* If all Councils and Creeds are seen to be on equal footing, and multiple expressions of primary Christian truths are seen as equally valid, then how can one refute Mormonism or Roman Catholicism? Their creeds become equally valid symbols of the faith. Their claims to be members of the Kingdom of Christ becomes a matter of their preferential expression versus another’s preferential expression. Yet, if the Councils are seen as articulating the language of the faith “once and for all time delivered to the saints,” then

54 Westminster Confession of Faith I.10.

55 Courthial points out that the Conciliar documents are not satisfied with *sola scriptura*, but embraced the theology of *tota scriptura* as well. They did not want to go outside of Scripture (*sola scriptura*) but were satisfied with nothing less than that which is taught in the whole of Scripture (*tota scriptura*), not a few measly proof-texts as is commonly practiced today. Courthial, Pierre. *A New Day for Small Beginnings*. Matthew Miller, Trans. Tallahassee, FL: Zurich Publishing, 2018. Pg164.

56 “Strict-subscription” is defined as embracing not just the whole of a confessional document but all of its constituent parts, claiming no exceptions to the theology and teachings of the document. It should also be noted here that, though not developed within this paper, it is the author’s assumption that subscription is not limited to the classic Reformed confessions but also includes the standards set within the documents of what is known as “The Seven Ecumenical Councils.” The author is currently collaborating on a project designed to trace a harmony through these ecumenical councils through the Reformed confessions, the purpose of which is not just to show a unity of theological thought but also to demonstrate that these Reformed documents are the ecclesiastical heirs of said councils. As stated by Morton Smith, “The spirit of our subscription is one of submission to the brethren, but even more, it is one of submission to the Word of God. This has historically been the spirit expressed in Reformed and Presbyterian Confessions.” Smith, Morton. *A Brief History of Subscription to the Creeds and Confessions with Particular Reference to Presbyterian Churches*. Greenville, SC: Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, 2002. Pg 63.

it becomes very clear whose expression aligns with the catholic faith as opposed to that which is heretical.

- 2) *It unifies the Christian church.* One of the major criticisms made by Roman Catholics and Eastern Rite Orthodox bodies is that the protestant movement has made nonsense of the notion of one universal church. If all ideas and theologies are treated equally, then they are right in their critique. Today, there are thousands of denominations that claim to be “Christian,” many of which are espousing theologies that have been proven heretical for hundreds of years. Yet, if the church were to accept these conciliar documents as the ecclesiastical canon law that they were meant to be, then there would truly be one church, unified in doctrine and not “tossed to and fro by the waves”⁵⁷ and not preaching “another Gospel that is not the Gospel.”⁵⁸
- 3) *Questions of what constitutes an essential doctrine would be resolved.* There is certainly room for debate in many areas of church life and yet not break fellowship. For instance, does one preach a 30-minute sermon or a 50-minute sermon? Does the church gather twice on Sunday and then again on Wednesday evening or just once on Sunday morning? Yet, if the Councils speak to these doctrines, they are to be considered essential for the catholic faith.
- 4) *Apologetics becomes clearer.* One of the challenges that this author has found is that when doing apologetics, all sorts of false claims are made against the Christian faith. While many of these challenges originate with the secularists and atheists, many come from ill-informed but professing Christians who have been taught all sorts of errors. If the confessions are subscribed to, the church becomes unified in that which it teaches, eliminating many of these erroneous ideas.
- 5) *They provide useful summaries for the purpose of teaching Christian doctrine.* Students need a textbook, and while Scripture is the ultimate text that binds our lives and consciences, it can be an intimidating book for youth and new Christians to study. The confessions, thus, provide a framework by which Christian study can be effectively guided.
- 6) *They impress upon the Christian the importance of the idea that they are part of a larger body with one head, that is, Christ.* Miller will argue that the reason for so many universalistic and latitudinarian pulpits in the United States is largely because doctrine is seen to be “matters of opinion... between God and a man’s own conscience.”⁵⁹ A body of doctrine, affirmed by the church as a whole, conveys the unity of the body much more clearly and is

57 Ephesians 4:14.

58 Galatians 1:6-9.

59 Samuel Miller. *The Utility and Importance of Creeds and Confessions*. Originally published: 1839. Charleston, SC: BiblioLife, 2010. Pg 29.

more consistent with the other illustrations of the church, like that of Christ being the vine and the church being the branches.⁶⁰

Conclusion

We close with the words of Vincent of Lerins⁶¹ regarding the relationship of the church to Scripture and to the Council:

*“I have often then inquired earnestly and attentively of the very many men eminent for sanctity and learning, how and by what sure and so to speak universal rule I may be able to distinguish the truth of catholic faith from the falsehood of heretical pravity; and I have always, and in almost every instance, received an answer to this effect: That whether I or anyone else should wish to detect the frauds and avoid the snares of heretics as they rise, and to continue sound and complete in the Catholic faith, we must, the Lord helping, fortify our own belief in two ways: first, by the authority of the Divine Law, and then, by the tradition [Councils] of the catholic church. But here someone perhaps will ask, since the canon of Scripture is complete, and sufficient of itself for everything, and more than sufficient, what need is there to join with it the authority of the church’s interpretation? For this reason, —because owing to the depth of Holy Scripture, all do not accept it in one and the same sense, but one understands its words in one way, another in another; so that it seems to be capable of as many interpretations as there are interpreters. For Novatian expounds it one way, Sabellius another, Donatus another; Arius, Eunomius, Macedonius, another; Photinus, Apollinarius, Priscillian, another; Iovinian, Pelagius, Celestius, another; lastly, Nestorius another. Therefore, it is very necessary, on account of so great intricacies of such various error, that the rule for right understanding of the prophets and apostles should be framed in accordance with the standard of ecclesiastical and catholic interpretation.”*⁶²

Vincent continued:

60 John 15:1-11. Please note Jesus’ own words here: “If you keep my command, you will abide in my love...” How may we keep the commands of Christ (and thus abide in his love) if we are not guided by the church as to what those commands happen to be.

61 Vincent’s dates are uncertain apart from the fact that we know him to have lived in the early 5th century and that he was a contemporary of the Council of Ephesus and a strong opponent of the Nestorianism which the council deposed. He is best known for the phrase: *quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est*, found in his work, *Commonitorium*, 2.6.

62 Vincent of Lerins. *Commonitorium*, 2.4-5. NPNF Translation. Published by www.earlychurchtexts.com.

“If any part of the catholic truth be given up, another, and another, and another will thenceforward be given up as a matter of course, and the several portions having been rejected, what will follow in the end but the rejection of the whole?”⁶³

This author contends that what Vincent warns us about is what we are seeing in the church in America, if not across the globe as well. Furthermore, if the church is going to embrace the “unity of the faith,” it must be found in direct connection with the “knowledge of the Son of God”⁶⁴ which is summarized and clarified in the Councils of the church and the Confessional statements they produced. Without subscribing strictly to these documents, religious individualism will continue to run rampant.

*“Therefore, brothers, stand firm and uphold the traditions which you were taught, either by word or by our epistle.”
(2 Thessalonians 2:15)⁶⁵*

63 Vincent of Lerins. *Commonitorium*, 2.58. NPNF Translation. Published by www.earlychurchtexts.com.

64 Ephesians 4:13.

65 Please note that παράδοσις, as Paul uses it here, refers to those instructions that have been handed down which are designed to keep a body orthodox in its theology and practice. If these “traditions” are compromised, so will the entire body; if these traditions are lost, the body the traditions uphold is also lost.

A PURITAN PRIMER (PART 1)

TIMOTHY GOAD, D.D.¹

Introduction

In this series of articles, I hope to shed some much-needed light on the faith and practice of the Puritans, a people who, largely due to various historical inaccuracies and ignorance, not only have been greatly misunderstood but held in derision by many. These God-fearing, hard-working men are often unfairly characterized as prudish, narrow-minded, miserable, and unbending legalists. However, a purely factual history of these godly men reveals them to be something of a far more positive than negative significance in the formation of America as a country and in the development of her deep religious roots.

Providing an exact date for the beginning of Puritanism is not easy. The difficulty of this task is compounded significantly when one considers the sheer number of works that have been made available over the years, each one varying considerably on the issue of Puritan beginnings. Hall, for example, points out that the term “Puritan” was not used until 1567². Collinson supports this assertion, writing:

In the year 1567, the Londoner John Stow, a man of conservative religious opinions, referred to “many congregations of the Anabaptists in London, who cawlyd (sic) themselves Puritans or Unspottyd (sic) Lambs of the Lord.” Thomas Harding, in one of his books against Bishop Jewel, printed at Louvain a year later, seems to have picked up on the news of these people. After Cook’s tour of Europe, a gazetteer of heretics all claiming to be the best thing since sliced bread, he concludes: ‘Now last of all crepeth (sic) me forth one Browne at London with his vnspotted (sic) Congregation, otherwise called Puritanes (sic). As we come laste

1 Dr. Tim Goad has been serving as Pastor of Grace Baptist Church in San Antonio, Texas since 1996. A 21 year veteran and retiree from the United States Air Force. He got his start in pastoral ministry while stationed at Sembach AB, Germany. He and his wife, Dana, have three children: Amy Bennett of Denver, Colorado, Chris Goad of McGuire AFB, New Jersey, and Nathalie Goad of Universal City, Texas. Tim and Dana have also been blessed with three grandchildren: Cassidy, Kinslee, and Theodore.

Pastor Tim has two Associate’s Degrees from the Community College of the Air Force, a Bachelor’s Degree in Christian Theology from Liberty University, a Master of Education Degree, also from Liberty University, and a Doctor of Divinity degree in Puritan Studies from The North American Reformed Seminary. Dr. Goad currently serves both a mentor and Oversight Board member for The Log College and Seminary.

2 B. Hall, *Puritanism: The problem of Definition* (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson, 1965), 1.

(sic), say they, so we are purest, and cleanest of al others'.³

Other historians, however, insist that Puritanism actually began much earlier, perhaps as early as 1524, with the ministry of William Tyndale. Lloyd-Jones agreed with this assessment, arguing:

It is clear that two of the great characteristics of Puritanism began to show themselves in Tyndale. He had a burning desire that the common people would be able to read the Scriptures, but there were great obstacles in his way. How he met and overcame the obstacles shows that Tyndale was a Puritan. He issued a translation of the Bible without the endorsement and sanction of the bishops. That was the first shot fired by Puritanism....Another action on his part, which was again most characteristic of the Puritans, was that he left this country without royal assent and went to Germany, and there, helped by Luther and others, he completed his great work.⁴

It was this attitude, Lloyd-Jones argues, that set the stage for others, leading them to take even bolder steps towards reform in the established church. While the eminent Dr. Lloyd-Jones is undoubtedly deserving of the highest esteem, this writer would be inclined to disagree with him on a purely semantical basis. Lloyd-Jones' impeccable logic notwithstanding, to refer to Tyndale as a Puritan is a bit anachronistic given that the Puritans were reacting, not necessarily to the issues they had with the teaching and practices within the Roman Catholic Church but with those within Henry VIII's newly formed Anglican Church. Thus, while Tyndale may have indeed been a "proto-Puritan" figure, he was not a Puritan according to the most widely accepted definition of the term. The consensus among most church historians today is that Puritanism began approximately 25 years after the commencement of Tyndale's ministry.

Bremer provides one of the best explanations concerning the difficulty of establishing Puritan origins, writing:

Part of the difficulty comes from the fact that there was no institutional identity that defined Puritanism for most of the movement's history. Whereas other religious movements of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – Lutheranism, Catholicism, Calvinism, and others – were of became institutionalized, producing official statements of faith and formal membership in churches, Puritanism never achieved that type of clear identity. It was a movement defined in part by the self-identification of men and women who referred to themselves as "godly" or "professors," and partly by their enemies, who scorned them as

3 P. Collinson, *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 20.

4 D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 23.

“precisians,” “puritans,” and “hypocrites.”⁵

John Knox: The Father of Puritanism?

In the minds of many, Scottish preacher and theologian John Knox is considered the founding father of Puritanism. According to Lloyd-Jones:

Most people think of John Knox solely in terms of Scotland and feel that it is for the Scots people only to commemorate him and his work. The answer to that can be put in this way. All who have visited Geneva and have seen the famous plaque or memorial to the great Reformers will have noticed that John Knox is included among them. He is in that august company with Calvin and Farel, which should be sufficient to make us realize not only that John Knox did great and marvelous things in Scotland, but also as to the international character of his work.⁶

Noted historian Thomas Carlyle wrote of Knox: “He was the chief priest and founder of the faith that became Scotland’s, New England’s, and Oliver Cromwell’s – that is of Puritanism”⁷

John Knox’s story is both fascinating and enlightening. Born in Haddington, Scotland, about 17 miles outside of Edinburgh and educated at St. Andrews, Knox’s initial exposure to religion was to Roman Catholicism. While the exact date of his conversion is not known, many historians believe that he came to know the Lord sometime around 1543, presumably under the preaching of Thomas Guillaume.

According to Wilson⁸, in 1546, following an assassination attempt on Pastor George Wishart (believed to be the most influential man in Knox’s life), Knox was appointed to serve as Wishart’s bodyguard. This duty would be short-lived as, not long after, authorities arrested Wishart for the capital crime of having taught his students to read the Bible in its original languages. Shortly after his arrest, Wishart was tried, found guilty, and subsequently both hanged and burned at the stake. This event was not only tragic for Knox but also meant that having served as Wishart’s bodyguard, he, too, was a wanted man. For protection, Knox found refuge in St. Andrews, which was under the control of his co-conspirators, the Castilians. While in residence there, he instructed many of the young men in the castle (as well as from the nearby village) in the things of the Lord.

5 F. J. Bremer, *The Puritan Experiment* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 1995), 3.

6 Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans*, 260.

7 T. Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-worship, and the Heroic in History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), 166.

8 D. Wilson, *For Kirk and Covenant: The Stalwart Courage of John Knox* (Nashville, TN: Highland Books, 2000), 14.

Wilson⁹ also related that the preacher of the group of men occupying the castle, John Rough, was reportedly so impressed with John Knox's teaching skills that he asked him to begin preaching to the men. Knox initially refused, arguing that "he would not run where God had not called him. By this, he meant that he would do nothing without a lawful calling." Soon thereafter, a council was convened for the sole purpose of providing Knox with that lawful calling. John Rough then took it upon himself to preach a sermon in which he argued:

A congregation – and a congregation consisted of any which passed the number of two or three – had authority over a man in whom they perceived the gifts of God. And when they called such a one, it was dangerous to refuse to hear the voice of those who desired to be instructed.

Having made his case, Rough then made direct application of his sermon to John Knox, extending to him the following public call to the ministry:

Brother, ye shall not be offended, albeit that I speak unto you that which I have in charge, even from all those that are here present, which is this: In the name of God, and of His Son Jesus Christ, and in the name of these that presently calls (sic) you by my mouth, I charge you, that ye refuse not this holy vocation, but that as ye tender the glory of God, the increase of Christ His kingdom, the edification of your brethren, and the comfort of me, whom ye understand well enough to be oppressed by the multitude of labours, that ye take upon you the public office and charge of preaching, even as ye look to avoid God's heavy displeasure, and desire that He shall multiply His graces with you.¹⁰

Although Knox was not initially pleased with what seemed to be a "forced call" into the ministry, it was not long before he was preaching with reckless abandon throughout Scotland. His main emphasis, historians suggest, was on proving that the Roman church was to be considered the "synagogue of Satan." Knox pulled no punches when expressing such sentiments.

Given his previous involvement in activities that had greatly upset the Roman church (e.g., his prior association with Wishart and his living with the murderers of Cardinal Beaton), Knox's preaching ministry merely served to add insult to injury. When the French captured St. Andrews, Knox was also captured and forced to work as a slave on a French galley for nearly two years. As Lloyd-Jones writes:

This was a most exhausting experience in which [Knox] suffered, not only the rigours of such a life, but intense cruelty also. This undoubtedly left its mark on the whole of his life because it undermined his health; and he had a constant struggle against

9 Wilson, *For Kirk and Covenant*, 28.

10 Wilson, *For Kirk and Covenant*, 29.

*ill health.*¹¹

Warren Lewis, brother of C. S. Lewis, described rowing in the galley as one of the most unimaginable horrors ever known to man:

*From below came the constant clank of chains, the crack of whips on bare flesh, screams of pain, and savage growls. At each oar, all five men must rise as one at each stroke, push the eighteen-foot oar forward, dip it into the water, and pull with all their force, dropping into a sitting position at the end of each stroke. "One would think," says a Huguenot convict, "that it was possible to keep it up for half an hour; and yet I have rowed full out for twenty-four hours without pausing for a single moment." On these occasions the rowers were fed on biscuits soaked in wine, thrust into their mouths by the Comites as they rowed. Those who died, or even who fainted at their posts, were cut adrift from the bench and flung overboard without further ceremony.*¹²

Eventually, Knox was freed and returned to Scotland. When his situation there became too difficult, he settled in New England where church authorities appointed him as minister of the church in Berwick-on-Tweed. He remained at this post until 1551. Knox also served as one of the court chaplains and preachers during the reign of Edward VI. This position placed him at the epicenter of affairs of the state and afforded him the opportunity to preach on several occasions to Edward VI and his court. However, this period of relative ease was suddenly disrupted when the king died at the age of sixteen and "Bloody Mary" assumed the throne.

With the coronation of Roman Catholic devotee, Mary, Knox and many others among the Protestants were forced to flee for their lives. Knox eventually ended up in Geneva where, for a brief period, he studied under John Calvin. Calvin described Knox as a "brother...laboring energetically for the faith." Knox was so impressed with Calvin's Geneva that, according to Spielvogel, he would later write:

*It is the most perfect school of Christ that was ever on earth since the days of the apostles. In other places I confess Christ to be truly preached; but manners and religion to be so seriously reformed, I have not yet seen in any place besides.*¹³

Knox's studies with Calvin were soon interrupted, however, as he accepted a call to help pastor a church of English refugees in Frankfurt, Germany. Contrary to what both Knox and Calvin had hoped, things did not go well in Frankfurt, so

11 Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans*, 261.

12 W. H. Lewis, *The Splendid Century: Life in the France of Louis XIV* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1957), 219.

13 J. Spielvogel, *Western Civilization: Volume II: Since 1500* (Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning, 2014), 387.

Knox returned to Geneva, where he served as pastor of an English church from 1556-1559.

In April 1559, following the death of Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth's assumption to the throne a year earlier, Knox was able to return to Scotland. In 1560, as a result of Knox's incredible influence, the Scottish Parliament passed laws prohibiting any further celebration of the mass as well as nullifying the Pope's power in Scotland. According to Dickinson:

The years from 1560 onwards saw worship simplified, evangelism, care of the poor, and emphasis on education so the ordinary people could read the Bible. Instead of the outward forms of Roman Catholicism, public worship was now based around reading, preaching, and singing from God's word.¹⁴

John Knox continued preaching in Scotland until his death in 1572. According to Galli and Olsen, one man standing over Knox's open grave is reported to have said, "Here lies a man who neither flattered nor feared any flesh."¹⁵

So, in what sense can John Knox be considered the founding father of Puritanism? In the first place, it is simply undeniable that Knox's close association with John Calvin, including Calvin's invaluable tutelage, led to the introduction of Calvinistic theology in both Scotland and England. With this Calvinism, Knox was able to steer the church in England away from the Roman Catholic idea that placed the Church, its traditions, and its own interpretations of Scripture as primary by teaching them the supreme authority of the Scriptures as the word of God. In addition to introducing this new understanding of Scripture, Knox believed very strongly in what he termed a "root and branch" reformation, which indicates that he was not content with merely reforming the doctrine of the church but saw the need to reform the practice of the church as well. As Lloyd-Jones observed:

To the Puritan, reformation not only meant a modification or a slight improvement; it meant a "new formation" or the church – not a mere modification of what has already been – governed by the New Testament and its teaching. This was a historic guiding principle.¹⁶

As Galli and Olsen further remarked, "John Knox was indeed a man of many paradoxes, a Hebrew Jeremiah set down on Scottish soil. In a relentless campaign of fiery oratory, he sought to destroy what he felt was

14 W. C. Dickinson, *History of the Reformation in Scotland* (New York, NY: Thomas Nelson, 1949), 1.

15 M. Galli & T. Olsen, *131 Christians Everyone Should Know* (Nashville, TN: Christianity Today, Inc., 2000), 171.

16 Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans*, 268.

idolatry and to purify Scotland's religion."¹⁷ Knox's influence in Scotland had an undeniably dramatic effect on changing religion in England and empowering other faithful men to seek the same success. Among these faithful men were many who will forever be remembered collectively as the Puritans.

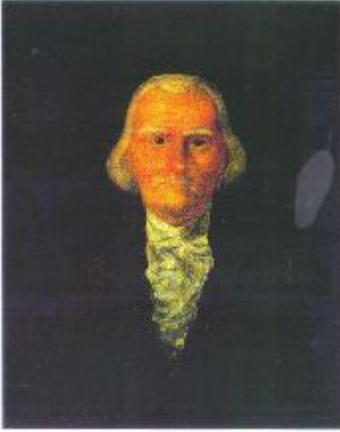
No meaningful discussion of the Puritans can commence without at least a cursory examination of the church from which they emerged: the Anglican Church. In my next article, Lord willing, I will be writing on that particular subject.

17 Galli & Olsen, *131 Christians*, 169.

THE LOG COLLEGE: YESTERDAY AND TODAY

JOHN H. McDONALD, TH.D.¹

The Log College was the first seminary established in the American colonies and the Presbyterian Church's first seminary in Colonial America.



The story of the Log College begins with William Tennent, Sr. (1673-1746). Historians/genealogists differ as to Tennent's birthplace, some stating Ireland and others Scotland. His relation to the Logan, Hume, and Greenshields families (all Scottish families who later moved to Ireland) lends credibility to a Scottish nationality. Little is known about his early years. He graduated from the University of Edinburgh with a Master of Arts degree July 11th, 1695. There are indications that he was joined to the Presbyterian Church during this time.² He married Katharine Kennedy, the daughter of Gilbert Kennedy, a

notable minister of the Church of Scotland, on May 15th, 1702. The marriage was officiated by Thomas Orr, Presbyterian minister at Comber (North Ireland). His first son, Gilbert, was baptized in 1703 by Alexander Bruce, Presbyterian minister at Vinnecash (North Ireland). Curiously, Tennent was ordained as a deacon in the Church of Ireland in 1704 and a presbyter in 1706 by the Bishop of Down but appears to have grown increasingly dissatisfied with the Established Church.³ It is related that Rev. Kennedy suffered some persecution as a non-conformist, and the

1 Dr. John McDonald currently serves as President of the Log College & Seminary. A direct descendant of Scotch Presbyterians from Argyllshire, Scotland, Dr. McDonald has served churches in Mississippi and Florida. Aside from his normal administrative duties with LCS, Dr. McDonald also serves as a LCS mentor and remains actively engaged in research, writing, counseling, and pulpit supply. Dr. McDonald is available for speaking engagements and as a conference speaker by request.

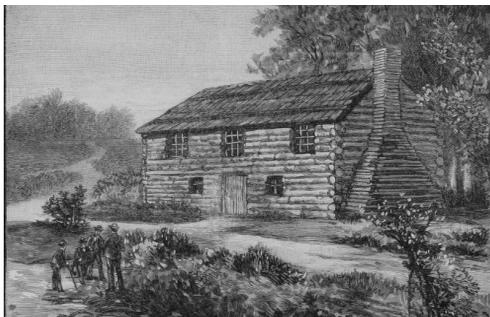
2 Probationer from Scotland to General Synod of Ulster. According to Whitefield, Tennent was also good friends with Ebenezer Erskine (1680-1754) who graduated from Edinburgh just a few years after Tennent. Erskine was the founder of the Secession Church.

3 Tennent's transition may have been influenced by family. Tennent had an uncle and cousin who were both Anglican clergymen. A letter written by James Logan (a cousin to Tennent on his wife's side) seems to infer family pressure.

story of his hardships may have played a role in Tennent's later total renunciation of the Church of Ireland.

Tennent sailed to America with his wife and children and arrived in Philadelphia on September 6th, 1718. On September 16th he made application before the Synod of Philadelphia (the highest court of the Presbyterian Church in the colonies) to be received into the Presbyterian Church and was approved by the Synod the following day. The reasons for his dissent from the Established Church were recorded by the Synod and show that Tennent firmly renounced the Episcopal system and its ceremonies, including its drift toward Arminian doctrine. Later, Tennent and the other ministers in the Synod signed the Adopting Act of 1729, indicating that Tennent was in support of the developing distinction between church and state, which would become the definitive characteristic of American Presbyterianism. Tennent would be elected moderator of the Synod in 1730.

Between 1720 and 1726, he served churches in New York. His celebrated scholarship and cordial relations with fellow New England ministers made him a prime candidate for the rectorship of Yale; however, God had a vastly different plan for this pastor-scholar. In 1726, he became pastor of Neshaminy Presbyterian Church in Bucks County, Pennsylvania (about 20 miles north of Philadelphia). Here, Tennent resolved to establish a school to educate his four sons for the ministry. At the time, educational opportunities were extremely limited. Harvard (Congregationalist and liberal), William and Mary (Anglican), and Yale (Congregationalist) were the only options within the colonies. The Presbyterian Church, continuing its strong academic tradition, expected a classical education followed by specialized theological and pastoral study under a mentor's oversight.⁴ Prospective ministers had to travel to New England or Europe for such education at great personal expense. During this time, there was also an increasing need for preachers to supply the multiplying churches within the colonies. Tennent sought to address these challenges by forming his own theological academy. In doing so, he was simply following a well-established tradition of local academies in both Ireland and Scotland. It should be noted that the first two presidents of the College of New Jersey (later to become Princeton), Jonathan Dickinson of Elizabethtown and Aaron Burr of Newark, also later established private schools in their homes.



4 The general preferred ministerial curriculum consisted of competency in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, philosophy, knowledge of Scripture, and church history. Additional stress was placed upon subsequent theological reading.

Tennent built a simple 20 x 18 feet log building near his parsonage along the old York Road, which for many years was the main route between Philadelphia and New York.⁵ The building is said to have faced the road and stood about forty feet back on a gentle rise.⁶ The building was almost two stories high.⁷ In addition to his sons, no less than fifteen young men would come to study under Tennent. Some of the students slept in the attic and cooked their meals in the open fireplace. Others stayed with the Tennents or with families in the vicinity. Students attended the Neshaminy Presbyterian Church on Sundays. The celebrated George Whitefield visited the school in 1739 and remarked that the Log College resembled the “School of the Old Prophets.”

As a pastor-scholar, Tennent was well read, proficient in Greek and Hebrew, and fluent in Latin. Webster remarks, “Tennent had the rare gift of attracting to him youth of worth and genius, imbuing them with his healthful spirit and sending them forth sound in the faith, blameless in life, burning with zeal, and unsurpassed as instructive, impressive and successful leaders.”⁸ While Tennent gave no name to his log school, it is said that his neighbors called it “the Log College.” Old Side critics may have also contributed to the use of the name using it in a more derisive manner as they questioned the “narrowness” of the school’s training. In truth, this concern was more likely a facade for their real prejudice against the College

5 Some sources specify that the building was across the (old York) road from Tennent’s parsonage, and Turner adds that it was just a few “rods” (1 rod = 16.5 feet) directly across the road from Tennent’s house. Murphy, 508. The old York Road should not be confused with the current York Road/PA 263. It should be noted that the 1927 Log College monument was originally placed along the old York Road and oriented facing west toward the Tennent house. After the “new” York Road (PA 263) was constructed, which ran to the east side of the monument, the monument was then turned to face the new road. Paul C. Bailey, *A History of Warminster Township* (Warminster, PA: Neibauer Press, 1986), 19. The most precise information pertaining to its location was given by George G. Maris who stated, “It was situated on the Old York road one-half mile below Hartsville. Part of the foundation was standing in 1832. It was about 30 feet to the north of Moses Cooper’s shop.” *A Collection of Papers Read Before the Bucks County Historical Society* (Easton PA: Chemical Publishing Company, 1917), 4:208. Regrettably, there is no known historical data to indicate the location of Moses Cooper’s shop.

6 “A Week in the Log College Country,” *The Nassau Literary Magazine* (April, 1903): 384-385.

7 Thomas Murphy, *The Presbytery of the Log College: The Cradle of the Presbyterian Church in America* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1889), 508.

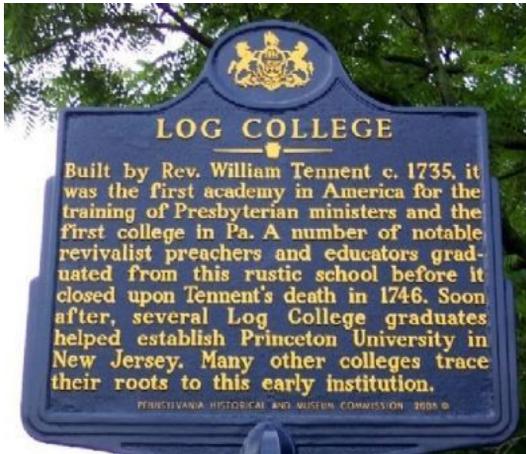
8 Henry H. Sweets, “The Log College – A Significant Celebration,” *Christian Education* 11, no. 2 (November 1927): 135.

– its pro-revival affirmations and associated practices such as “incursions.”⁹ It should be noted, however, that the theology of the Log College was never an issue or even questioned – all of its men were staunch adherents of the Westminster Standards.¹⁰ Yet, the Old Side party feared that if left unchecked, the Log College would in time flood the Synod with New Side advocates. So opposed was the Old Side party, that in 1738, being in the majority, they were able to pass a motion requiring ministerial candidates without a diploma from New England or Europe to be examined before a special committee of Synod. The recently formed New Brunswick Presbytery, which consisted mainly of Log College men, defiantly ignored the Synod’s ruling. They felt that the rule interfered with the right of the presbytery to examine and ordain. They also felt that the rule was a slight intended against the Log College itself. The defiance of the presbytery and its involvement with Whitefield’s preaching tour was very grievous to the Old Side party within the Synod. As a result, the Synod of Philadelphia dismissed the New Brunswick Presbytery in 1741. This same year the Presbytery of New Brunswick

9 Whitefield records in his journal that Tennant and his sons were “...secretly despised by the generality of the synod...”, and that the Academy operated by Tennant was “...in contempt call’d the Colledge....” He adds, “From this despised Place Seven or Eight worthy ministers of Jesus have lately been sent forth; more are almost ready to be sent, and a Foundation is now laying for the Instruction of many others. The Devil will certainly rage against them, but the Work, I am persuaded, is of God, and therefore will not come to naught. Carnal ministers oppose them strongly; and because People, when awaken’d by Mr. Tennent, or his Brethren, see through, and therefore leave their Ministry, the poor Gentlemen are loaded with Contempt, and look’d upon (as all faithful Preachers will be) as Persons that turn the World upside down.” George Whitefield, *A Continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield’s Journal, from his Embarking after the Embargo, to his Arrival at Savannah in Georgia*, 2nd ed. (London: W. Strahan, 1740), 31, 44-45.

10 Both Old and New Side parties fully affirmed the Westminster Standards. Both parties also supported missionary endeavor. Both parties stressed the importance of proper ministerial training although there was some variance as to what was essential in ministerial education. Both parties recognized the need for both knowledge and piety. Both parties sought to counter the increasing influence of Enlightenment thought. The two parties differed on the nature of ecclesiastical boundaries, the Old Side taking a more geographical approach and the New Side operating from a perspective of voluntary association. The New Side party also favored a more grass-roots approach to ecclesiastical government stressing the primacy of the presbytery in contrast to the Old Side’s more hierarchical view. However, the most distinctive and polarizing difference between the two parties was how each party viewed the role of revival in the life of the church.

proposed a contribution for the Log College.¹¹ It should be noted that in 1739, during this period of growing tension, an overture calling for the establishment of a seminary was presented to the Synod of Philadelphia. The overture was approved by the Synod and a committee appointed to travel to Europe for counsel. However, with war breaking out between England and Spain, the plan was set aside. In the following years, the Synod again took steps to establish a school and was eventually able to begin a school in New London, PA in 1743 when it took under its care the recently established school of Dr. Francis Alison. The school was known as the “Synodical Academy.” Despite Dr. Alison’s celebrated scholarship, this school, although consistent, was never successful in superseding the influence of the Log College and was later reorganized at a more promising location in Newark, Delaware forming the foundation of what would eventually become the University of Delaware.



By William Fischer, Jr., HMdb.org

11 This was not the first proposed contribution for the Log College. In 1740, the session of Fagg’s Manor (New Londonderry) proposed contributions be made to the school. Pears Jr., Thomas C. Pears Jr. and Guy S. Klett, “Documentary History of William Tennent and the Log College,” *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society* 28, no. 3 (September 1950): 189. Whitefield also presented a contribution when he made a second visit to the Log College on April 23, 1740. Thomas Clinton Pears, Jr., “Colonial Education Among Presbyterians,” *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society* 30, no. 2 (June 1952): 22.

No less than nineteen men graduated from the Log College (a complete list has never been discovered).¹² Dr. Archibald Alexander remarked, "These men may be said to have lived fast. They did much for their Lord, in a short time. Being burning as well as shining lights, they were themselves consumed, while they gave light to others. Oh, that a race of ministers, like-minded, burning with a consuming zeal, might be raised up among us!"¹³ Alexander later observed that a major advantage that the Log College students possessed was that "...the spirit of piety seems to have been nourished in that institution.... They had, we have reason to believe, the teaching of the Holy Spirit...."¹⁴

Tennent retired from pastoral ministry in 1742 due to age yet continued to teach in his log school. The school closed shortly after his death in 1746, and Tennent's property was sold to John and Elizabeth Baldwin the following year.¹⁵

12 1. Gilbert Tennent (1725; leader of the Brunswick Brethren; followed up Whitefield's ministry; mentored John Rodgers); 2. John Tennent (1728); 3. William Tennent II (1732); 4. Samuel Blair (1733; established the Londonderry School/Fagg's Manor in 1739; instructed Samuel Davies, Robert Smith, Alexander Cummings, and began the instruction of John Rodgers); 5. Charles Tennent (1736); 6. David Alexander (1737); 7. John Rowland (1738); 8. Hamilton Bell (1739); 9. James McCrea (1739); 10. John Redman (ca. 1740; physician); 11. Samuel Finley (1740; established Nottingham Academy in 1744 where he instructed James Waddel, Benjamin Rush, and Alexander McWhorter; served as 5th President of the College of New Jersey); 12. William Robinson (1740); 13. Charles McKnight (1741; trustee of College of New Jersey and American patriot); 14. Charles Beatty (1742; succeeded Tennent Sr. as pastor at Neshaminy); 15. John Blair (1742; succeeded his brother Samuel Blair at Fagg's Manor Academy; professor of divinity at College of New Jersey and vice-president); 16. William Dean (1742); 17. Daniel Lawrence (1744); 18. John Roan (1744; briefly instructed John Rodgers); 19. John Campbell (1747).

13 A. Alexander, *Biographical Sketches of the Founder, and Principal Alumni, of the Log College* (Princeton: J.T. Robinson, 1845), 355-356.

14 *Ibid.*, 69.

15 Turner notes that the date of death written on William Tennent's tombstone was incorrect and should have read May 6, 1745 and not 1746. He supports this correction from information contained in the deed conveying the Tennent property to the Baldwin family. However, Turner may have been confused at the time over old style and new style dates. During the 1889 Celebration, he stated Tennent's death to have occurred in 1746. D.K. Turner, *History of Neshaminy Presbyterian Church*, (Philadelphia: Culbertson and Bache, 1876), 65-66. Alexander notes that Tennent died at his residence. A. Alexander, 31.

Reportedly, the old log building was subsequently torn down.¹⁶ Some logs were used by the new owner to construct a hog-pen, and some were carried across the road by the Carrell family and used in the construction of a house (or, more probable, structural updates to the Tennent house).¹⁷ A large wooden crane (or “fire-crane”) in this house, said to hold the pots and kettles used for cooking meals for Log College students, was once in the possession of a Mrs. Guyon of Philadelphia who lived on the property in the late 1800’s.¹⁸ Rev. Robert B. Bellville, a Presbyterian pastor in the area, managed to carve a cane from some of the log remnants and presented it to Dr. Samuel Miller at Princeton.¹⁹ The Presbyterian Historical Society Museum in Philadelphia lists possession of the following remarkable artifacts: a piece of wood from the Log College, a lock and key from the Log College, a shingle from Tennent’s parsonage, and William Tennent’s wooden cane. Today most of the land once owned by William Tennent belongs to Christ’s Home, a ministry for children and senior citizens.

As the Log College witnessed its final days, several schools had already been established, inspired by, and patterned after this great original (Londonderry or Faggs’ Manor, Pequea, and



By William Fischer, Jr., HMdb.org

16 George G. Maris stated that part of the foundation was still extant in 1832. A Collection of Papers, 208.

17 “A Week in the Log College Country,” 384-385. It appears that some of the Log College wood may have actually been used to update the original Tennent house by the Carrell family. Turner mentions during the celebration of 1889 that the Tennent house then standing was a “rebuilt” house although the west end with its large stone chimney was essentially the same as when Tennent occupied the home. Murphy, 508. A recent inspection of the present building confirmed that, with the exception of some of the stone walls, the Tennent house as it stands today is a reconstructed building using material from other structures. Interestingly, the basement ceiling has logs which resemble those used for a log cabin structure. “Restoration of the William Tennent House,” The Log College Press Blog, entry posted February 4, 2020, <https://www.logcollegepress.com/blog/2020/2/2/restoration-of-the-william-tennent-house> (accessed June 29, 2020).

18 “A Week in the Log College Country,” 384.

19 Murphy, 508.

West Nottingham).²⁰ Even subsequent to the establishment of the College of New Jersey, schools modeled after the old Log College continued to propagate in Pennsylvania. For example, in the 1780s, Dr. John McMillan established his log college school near Canonsburg, PA, almost 300 miles west of the old Log College. A 1927 monument placed near the Log College site lists sixty-three colleges that trace their origin to the school.²¹ Douglas Sloan lists sixty-five Presbyterian academies established between the founding of the Log College and the end of the eighteenth century noting, "Much of the formal higher education available in the southern and western settlements of the eighteenth century took place in academies founded by Presbyterian ministers."²²

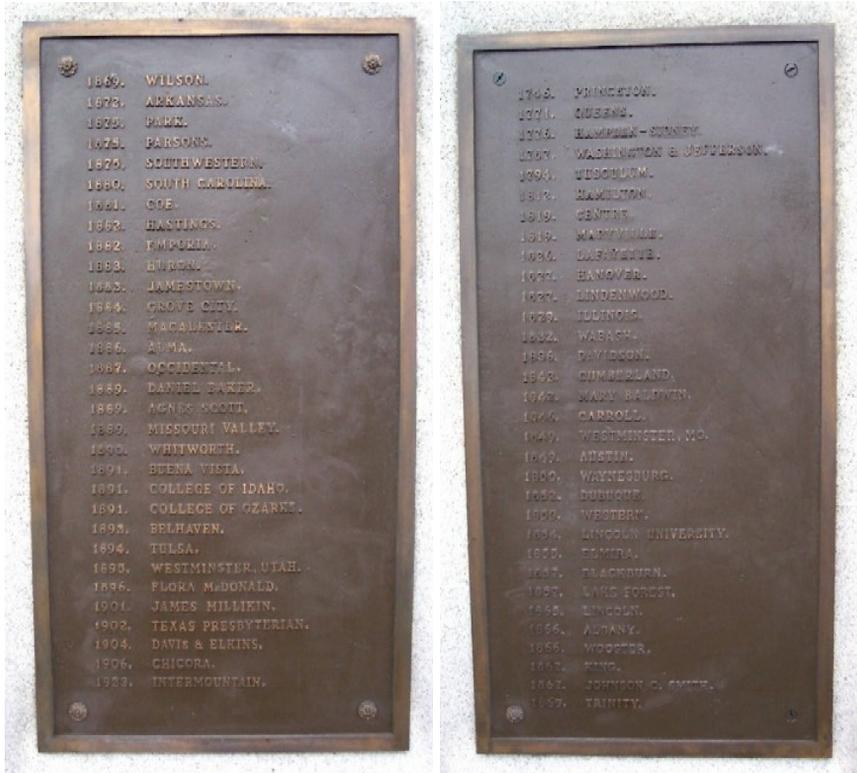
Many have contemplated whether a connection might be maintained between the Log College and the establishment of the College of New Jersey (later renamed Princeton University in 1896). Alexander stated that "...the Log College was the germ from which proceeded the flourishing College of New Jersey."²³ Referring to Princeton University, Craven remarked, "...the head and main spring was the Log

20 These rural academies, and others like them, had as their objective to teach as many as possible, as much as possible, in the shortest amount of time as possible, and for the lowest amount possible. The number, influence, and esteem of these local/rural academies should not be underestimated. When the College of New Jersey adopted a new policy in 1768 requiring all students to enter as a freshman, the public response was so overwhelming that the college rescinded the requirement the following year. The rapid establishment of colleges after the American Revolution and the increasing preference for formal degrees among the various professions signaled the end of these schools, but what they accomplished in their zenith as manifestly demonstrated in the caliber and success of their graduates is truly monumental.

21 List of Schools and dates of establishment: Princeton 1746; Queens 1771; Hampden-Sidney 1776; Washington & Jefferson 1787; Tusculum 1794; Hamilton 1812; Centre 1819; Maryville 1819; Lafayette 1826; Hanover 1827; Lindenwood 1827; Illinois 1829; Wabash 1832; Davidson 1836; Cumberland 1842; Mary Baldwin 1842; Carroll 1846; Westminster, Mo. 1849; Austin 1849; Waynesburg 1850; Dubuque 1852; Western 1853; Lincoln University 1854; Elmira 1855; Blackburn 1857; Lake Forest 1857; Lincoln 1865; Albany 1866; Wooster 1866; King 1867; Johnson C. Smith 1867; Trinity 1869; Wilson 1869; Arkansas 1872; Park 1875; Parsons 1875; Southwestern 1875; South Carolina 1880; Coe 1881; Hastings 1882; Emporia 1882; Huron 1883; Jamestown 1883; Grove City 1884; Macalester 1885; Alma 1886; Occidental 1887; Daniel Baker 1889; Agnes Scott 1889; Missouri Valley 1889; Whitworth 1890; Buena Vista 1891; College of Idaho 1891; College of Ozarks 1891; Belhaven 1893; Tulsa 1894; Westminster, Utah 1895; Flora McDonald 1896; James Millikin 1901; Texas Presbyterian 1902; Davis & Elkins 1904; Chicora 1906; Intermountain 1923.

22 Douglas Sloan, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the American College Ideal* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1971), 38.

23 A. Alexander, 125.



By William Fischer, Jr., HMdb.org

College of Neshaminy.”²⁴ The plan for a new college was devised by four New Side Presbyterian pastors from the Presbytery of New York (not the Presbytery of New Brunswick composed mainly of Log College men). As New Side advocates, these pastors could not support the Old Side Synod of Philadelphia’s continuing efforts in their attempt to establish a college at New London, yet they were also concerned with William Tennent’s failing health, which jeopardized the continued operation of the Log College. These pastors were all educated at Yale (Jonathan Dickinson, Aaron Burr, and John Pierson) except one who had graduated from Harvard (Ebenezer Pemberton). They were disappointed with the opposition to revival at Harvard and Yale, the doctrinal decline of the schools, and Yale’s treatment of David Brainerd. At the same time, they were not entirely satisfied with the Log College’s location nor its limited course of instruction. In fact, the newly proposed institution had a markedly different purpose than that of the old Log College. It is clear from its original 1746 charter that the focus of the College of New Jersey was upon liberal arts and science - not preparation for

24 Elijah Craven, “The Log College of Neshaminy and Princeton University,” *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society* 1, no. 4 (June 1902): 314.

the ministry. In fact, during its first eighteen years less than half of its graduates entered the ministry. Furthermore, it seemed that the plan for the new college sought to avoid any official ecclesiastical supervision or control. Naturally, the college would provide the classical education needed for ministerial candidates, and this important end was greatly anticipated by its founders. The Log College men, zealous for learning and scholarship, certainly recognized the benefits that a more permanent institution might provide and were therefore supportive of the new college (although it should be noted that Gilbert Tennent in general preferred private and local schools and Samuel Blair had already established and was conducting a very successful academy at Fagg's Manor).²⁵ Yet in the growing middle colonies, there was an increasing awareness of the great need for both educated clergy and educated leaders, an awareness which led to the gradual conviction that only a college established for the middle colonies could answer such important needs. It should be noted that the support of the Log College men for the new institution did not indicate any change in their views pertaining to the model for ministerial training. They remained fully committed to the pastoral-apprenticeship model - a model that continued in practice until replaced by the rise of seminaries in the early 1800s. Interestingly, four Log College graduates were appointed to serve on the original Board of Trustees for the new college. This was probably due more to their ardent New Side leanings rather than their Log College affiliation. The new college opened in May 1747 in Jonathan Dickinson's parsonage. It was essentially a New Side college modeled in the spirit of Yale. All facts considered, it may be said that the connection of the College of New Jersey to the Log College was not one of *assent* but rather a mere *assimilation* of its role, students, and graduates - but not a true continuation. Interestingly, Princeton University officials today differ as to whether any real connection exists.

But what about Princeton Seminary? Does a connection exist here? Princeton Seminary was established in 1812, over half a century after the closing of the Log College. The school was the first seminary founded by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. In 1805, Ashbel Green was the first to formally urge the General Assembly to establish a seminary. In 1810, the need for the seminary was made overwhelmingly clear by a General Assembly report stating that no less than 400 congregations had the need for pastors. The College of New Jersey welcomed the General Assembly's plan for a cooperative relationship. However, the two institutions would remain essentially separate. The seminary would provide a "post-graduate" specialized/professional school of theology designed to supplement a classical education. The purpose of the seminary was to "to unite... piety of the heart...with solid learning: believing that religion without learning,

25 "The most likely method to stock the church with a faithful ministry, in the present situation of things, the public academies being so much corrupted and abused generally, is to encourage private schools, or seminaries of learning, which are under the care of skillful and experienced Christians...." Gilbert Tennent, "The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry" (sermon, Nottingham, PA, March 8th, 1739).

or learning without religion, in the minister of the Gospel, must ultimately prove injurious to the Church."²⁶ These principles certainly recall those of the old Log College with its emphasis on personal piety and Christian experience. The seminary began on August 12th, 1812, with three students and one professor, Dr. Archibald Alexander. Thus, while Princeton Seminary's connection with the College of New Jersey was essentially the strategic location, based upon Presbyterian concentration and presence, any direct connection with the Log College is even further removed. However, it can be said that Princeton Seminary did incorporate the emphasis on personal piety that was an integral part of a Log College education, as well as its strong confessional commitment. In other words, while there was no direct connection, we can see the Log College reflected in the foundational principles of the new seminary. Regrettably, Princeton Seminary as it exists today, has wholly forsaken these ancient paths.²⁷

The Log College & Seminary



The Log College & Seminary

Originally established as The North American Reformed Seminary in 2008, The Log College & Seminary seeks to continue the mission, vision, and values of the original Log College and expand its reach as the twenty-first-century continuation of the Log College and true spiritual heir. After much research, reflection, and prayer, the Oversight Board of TNARS increasingly realized the historical, methodological, pedagogical, and spiritual connections existing between the seminary and the

original Log College. It seemed only fitting that the seminary should honor the connections in a more substantial way. After further reflection and prayer, the Oversight Board humbly determined that the seminary should be renamed

26 The Princeton Seminary Bulletin 1, no. 4 (January 1908): 36.

27 The seminary model of education received criticism as early as 1843 when Gardiner Spring published his book, *The Power of the Pulpit*. Spring considered the seminary graduates of his day to be ill-prepared for pastoral work excelling only as academicians. He lamented the lack of pastoral mentorship and suggested that all ministerial candidates should, in addition to their academic training, be required to complete an apprenticeship under a mature pastor. Spring's book shows that after only 30 years of operation, the seminary model was already being questioned as the best way to prepare ministerial candidates. For Princeton, this was only the beginning of its gradual decline. In later years Princeton would go on to allow professors who had no pastoral experience whatsoever to instruct students.

to substantiate the vital connection and continue the legacy of extraordinary education, experientialism, and evangelism so wonderfully exhibited first in the old Log College of Neshaminy.

Does a legitimate connection between the schools truly exist? Is the change in name warranted and justifiable? The following five points of connection are offered to establish the link. The first point of connection is *historical*. Just as the Log College was the first *free* Presbyterian seminary, TNARS was the first *free online* Presbyterian seminary. Like its predecessor, TNARS/LCS is committed to providing an accessible theological education, ensuring that those who pursue God's call may do so completely unhindered by financial concern or burden. There was no commercializing of knowledge at the old Log College. The labors conducted there were motivated out of love for the gospel, the church, and the Kingdom. The Log College was donation-based, operating on the gracious contributions of able students, friends, local churches, and even the presbytery. In the same way, TNARS/LCS operates solely upon the generous contributions of students, churches, and friends of the seminary. There is no tuition, no need for room and board, and even textbooks are provided. The only costs for students are time and hard work.

The second point of connection is *methodological/pedagogical*. Like the original Log College, TNARS/LCS is based upon a pastoral apprenticeship model. Students study theology under a qualified and experienced pastor within the ministry context of their own local church. This is the model of pastoral discipleship Paul impresses upon Timothy.²⁸ Church history provides ample testimony of the effectiveness of this Biblical model. This particular approach not only prioritizes the role of the local church but also allows for theological training to be conducted without financial burden.

The third point of connection is *missional*. The desire to produce pastors with a passion for knowledge, piety, preaching, and evangelism is likewise identical, as well as the deep-seated conviction of the absolute need for the Holy Spirit's regenerating and sanctifying power. In fact, the seminary offers a complete course focusing on revival and church revitalization.

The fourth point of connection is *doctrinal*. Like the original Log College, TNARS/LCS adopts the Westminster Standards as its official statement of faith, specifically the *1788 American Revision*, the culmination of the developing ideas of early American Presbyterians surrounding the relationship between church and state. An unwavering love for the Standards and unreserved commitment to them is the desired outcome for every student. All courses are conscientiously and carefully composed to ensure conformity with the Standards. An entire course is dedicated to studying the Standards, and students are even required to memorize the Shorter Catechism for the course examination. Log College men were, and always will be, Westminster men.

The fifth point of connection is *attestation*. Despite all of the great advantages offered by the Log College model and its Biblical precedent, the school was not

28 2 Timothy 2:1-2; cf. 2 Tim. 1:13; 3:10, 14; Titus 1:9; 2:7; Phil. 3:17; 4:9.

without its detractors and critics. While much of the disdain stemmed more from a contempt of its position on revival, the school still battled a continual eye of scrutiny by many throughout its existence. This scrutiny was answered in large part by the caliber and success of its graduates.²⁹ In the same way, LCS rests upon the caliber and success of its graduates as the final and ultimate attestation of its model and programs.

No other institution can claim all five of these important parallels besides TNARS/LCS. There is clearly a vital connection between these two institutions that should be duly acknowledged. TNARS/LCS is the true spiritual heir of the old Log College, the twenty-first-century continuation of the Log College, and the present embodiment of all that was essential to the old Log College.

Interestingly, just a few miles from the seminary's headquarters in Sumter, SC, is the grave of William Tennent III (1740-1777). Tennent, a Presbyterian pastor and a patriot, had traveled to New Jersey to bring his recently widowed mother back with him to South Carolina. During this journey, Tennent was overcome by fever and died near Stateburg, or the "High Hills of Santee". He was buried nearby in the Singleton family cemetery. Tennent was only six years old when the Log College ceased but may well have remembered the old log building standing in the field across the road from his grandfather's house. While Tennent has joined the *church triumphant*, here the *church militant* continues its glorious work, and by God's grace, Log College men remain present yet to lend their aid and faithfully adorn the gospel of their Lord.

"Peddler in Divinity"

Charles Beatty, Irish peddler, attempts to sell his wares to the Log College men while conversing in Latin. Beatty would later study under Tennent and succeed him as Pastor of the Neshaminy Church.



29 "The surest criterion, by which to judge of the character of any school, is to observe the attainments and habits of those educated in it. And judging by this rule, a very high place must be assigned to the Log College, notwithstanding its diminutive and mean external appearance." A. Alexander, 33.



Location of the Log College (photo taken in 1914)



Whitefield's Log College.

The above image is an engraving produced ca. 1889 by Synder, and commonly assumed to be an original sketch of the Log College. However, the engraving is actually an artist's rendition produced according to the second-hand testimony of a witness (Dr. W.S. Steen) to the only known original sketch. Regretfully, the original sketch is now lost to antiquity. Whitefield's description, as limited as it may be, remains therefore as the most accurate representation available to historians.

TO KNOW AS WE ARE KNOWN: A LESSON ON LIFE AND LEARNING

JOHN S. KNOX, PH.D.¹

Life has many commonalities that transcend culture and time. One customary facet of human development that most people have experienced throughout history involves the educational process (both for the secular and the sacred). Sadly, over the past several decades, too many students have entered into educational environments that were academically superficial (or skewed) and came out of the journey missing the very aspects that their schooling was designed for—the acquisition of a thorough consideration of valuable knowledge for productive personal and public use. Thus, the importance of proper educational presuppositions—especially concerning seminary goals and methods—has never been so evident as when considering the radical personal approach that postmodernity currently offers to twenty-first century seekers.

For decades, a populist movement has grown within Western society, with frustrated individualists actively working to throw off the modernist cloak of scholarly tradition that vexes them and hampers their proclivities (because of traditions' embrace of archetypes, evidence, and restricted social avenues). Rather, they seek educational institutions with “fresh” conceptions of schooling. In Christian circles, this overlaps with people's religious edification at church and in seminaries. One could consider this new postmodern perspective to be a hybrid of Christian existentialism and practical theology.

Many scholars would agree that for most progressives, traditional Protestantism carries with it a stereotype of vaulted religion that is all talk and no action (or too much talk and too much action). In the seeker's mind, the sterile, stifling, and rigid environments that surround traditional seminaries can hamper and hinder their personally prescribed walk(s) with God. They often feel frustrated and frenzied because of their loss of self-control and self-direction.²

In rebellion and opposition to their perceived outdated academies, these postmodern “splitters” have broken off from traditional orthodoxy to find

1 John S. Knox has taught Bible, Sociology, history, and religion for nearly two decades at several Christian universities in the Pacific Northwest and the East Coast, utilizing his PhD in Theology & Religion (Sociology), a MATS in Christian History & Thought, and a BA in History and English to help his students more fully understand what it meant to be a Christian in the past—and why it is still relevant in the present. He currently lives in Virginia with his wife and two sons. Dr. Knox currently serves as Associate Professor of Psychology and Sociology for Liberty University and is in the midst of completing his M.Div. with the Log College & Seminary.

2 John S. Knox, *Sacro-Egoism: The Rise of Religious Individualism in the West* (Wipf and Stock, 2016), 55.

(or form) their own viable centers of theological reflection. These new learning bodies tend to sponsor apologetical flexibility, alternative spirituality toleration, heterodox beliefs regarding biblical interpretations, and unfettered theological acceptance of all recruits.³

With this new progressive attitude, they attract and increase enrollment (at least, initially) by providing more of a relational than an overarching doctrinal approach to theological studies, offering students degree programs that are ostensibly more individualistic and personally pleasing than rigorous and thorough, scholastically. As Schaeffer puts it, “Sadly enough, there is a kind of an anti-intellectualism among many Christians: spirituality is falsely pitted against intellectual comprehension as though they stood in a dichotomy. Such anti-intellectualism cuts away at the very heart of the Christian message.”⁴

As with any movement, though, there are problems associated with this new direction of religious learning. Specifically, whenever one moves away from the right, there is the danger of landing too far to the left. Supporting this, toleration and acceptance done in love and with biblical understanding are required in traditional Christian praxis but taken too far (2 John 1:9), they can be harmful if not even heretical. As C. S. Lewis wrote, “The heart never takes the place of the head: but it can, and should, obey it.”⁵ A church full of emotion and compassion is a good thing, but when accommodation and hysteria overtake reason, it can lead to a shallow, imbalanced understanding that only tickles the ear (2 Timothy 4:3).

To counter this, Parker Palmer’s book, *To Know As We Are Known*, addresses these issues by offering academic understanding and commonsense guidance over what good teachers—and good educational institutions—embrace and exhibit. He begins his exploration by focusing on the archetypal foundations of learning and the dangers of the hyper-personalized ones.

The old adage suggests that knowledge is power, and Palmer recognizes this axiom. Many students work to increase their academic understanding only to increase their personal empowerment at work, at church, or in general society. Unfortunately, this political self-promotion can occur because of more than just the student’s selfish wants and demands. Often, the students become the product of the learning environment that has been designed to program them to think with a myopic agenda in mind (either of the institution or the student him/herself).

For the sake of clarity (and one quite relevant to seminary life), Palmer defines the beneficial teacher-student experience as “the study of sacred texts, the practice of prayer and contemplation, and the gathered life of the community

3 Paul Heelas, Linda Woodhead, Benjamin Seel, Bronislaw Szerszynski, and Karin Tusting, *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality* (Blackwell, 2005), 68–74.

4 Francis Schaeffer, *A Christian View of the Church* (Crossway, 1994), 261.

5 C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (Macmillan, 1978), 29–30.

itself.”⁶ Thus, the student will be sitting on a three-legged stool, but if one of the legs is too long or too short, it can divert the student’s attention away from important facets of education.

Palmer goes on to expand upon these important truths of education and brings up the issue of objectivism versus subjectivism. He deliberates on the attributes and impossibility of being objective but also on the biased dangers of being too subjective. He offers, “The teacher is a mediator between the knower and the known, between the learner and the subject to be learned.”⁷ With this in mind, it becomes a challenge to be completely objective, for the teachers cannot divorce themselves from the knowledge, but neither should they approach the matter solely focused upon themselves. This could lead to egotism and abuse. Palmer’s final advice is to embrace the knowledge—and to let it sink in deep and to engage it, personally and reasonably.

There are many different ways of acquiring knowledge and Palmer warns against taking the safe, secure road of theoretical conventionality alone. Instead, he suggests making the knowledge matter in the heart for, truly, “to learn is to face transformation.”⁸ If students are to grow in knowledge, their learning should make a difference in their own lives—and others’ lives, too. If nothing happens, then the information passed on has been pointless and just a vain pursuit.

If transmitting and receiving knowledge is so important, then, Palmer suggests various techniques for encouraging good teaching and good learning. He states, “Both obedience and understanding imply submitting ourselves to something larger than any one of us, something on which we all depend.”⁹ A proper humble attitude is crucial to making the educational process a success. The teacher and the student must be self-aware enough to not let their egos get in the way of discovering truth. Neither should the teacher or student allow their fears to determine the limits of their educational involvement.

Academic or scholarly equilibrium seems to be the key. This balance is not just to be in the teacher’s approach to the student but even more so in the whole educational environment that the student steps into. Palmer proclaims, “I am calling for teachers who bring the audience into the play, who create the space that draws students, teacher, and subject alike into truth’s own drama.”¹⁰ Seminary

6 Parker Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known: A Spirituality of Education* (HarperOne, 2010), 17.

7 *Ibid.*, 29.

8 *Ibid.*, 29.

9 *Ibid.*, 40.

10 *Ibid.*, 67.

students need to be made aware that learned truths and fallacies daily affect their lives. They need not fear truth; rather, they need to embrace truth and trust in it (John 14:6).

Finally, Palmer sums up this powerful pedagogy when he says, “The true professor is not one who controls facts and theories and techniques. The true professor is one who affirms a transcendent center of truth, a center that lies beyond our contriving, that enters history through the lives of those who profess it and brings us into community with each other and the world.”¹¹ These ideas are quite astute and yet so many professors are oblivious of their significance and requirements. Lectures are often given to promote personal agendas. Professing often becomes pontification solely to boost their egos. Personal partisanship often replaces proper education with proselytizing within the classroom. Tragically, professors such as these ignore the responsibilities of their position and abuse it (and their students).

Fortunately, books like Palmer’s (from authors such as C. S. Lewis, Oswald Chambers, Bruce Wilkinson, Nancy Pearcey, and the like) offer a lens of sensible guidance for being a good teacher (and a good student). The suggestions in *To Know As We Are Known* are powerful; a teacher or student who follows Parker’s admonitions will surely experience greater, more productive opportunities and an insurance of a full and meaningful educational experience—if they take the chance. Of course, which is riskier—to call oneself a teacher and yet not to actually teach truths, or to call oneself a teacher and to try to make a difference in a student’s educational life? Similarly, which is riskier—to call oneself a student and yet not be opened to fully learning, or to call oneself a student and humbly try to expand the understanding of oneself, God, and how the world operates (and why)?

Seeking truth (especially biblical truth) can be a scary pursuit that demands bravery but being courageous is not just being unafraid. Being a courageous teacher, then, is purposely teaching in ways that challenge students’ childish presuppositions, even when that pedagogy might evoke political or emotional responses. Likewise, being a courageous student, then, is being willing to hear new (and old) concepts that push back against any comfortable, deeply entrenched personal understandings of Christianity and human existence.

Finally, it probably goes without saying that any good teaching or learning in a seminary rests, relies, and submits to the time-honored and proven divine resource of spiritual authority and proper praxis—the Bible. As Solomon wrote long ago, “Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance—for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Proverbs 1:5–7, New American Standard Bible). Still, this is an excellent ongoing challenge for all teachers and seekers in the postmodern age. Even further, it embodies the spirit of a seminary after God’s own heart and His mission on earth.

11 Ibid., 79.

DIVINE MEDIATION IN PAUL'S FINANCIAL POLICY CONLEY OWENS¹

Replete with examples and exhortations on the matter, the writings of the apostle Paul typically form the locus of discussions on biblical ministry fundraising. However, despite the quantity of relevant pericopae provided by his epistles, widespread consensus pinpointing his policy remains elusive. Proposed solutions frequently employ a patronage model, where Paul resists certain donors who aim to become his patrons.² In this model, Paul's willingness to receive or reject offers of support function primarily as a pragmatic judgment on whether doing so will permit him to maintain his independence.

David E. Briones has contested the typical patronage model and challenged its unchecked assumptions.³ In Briones's view, the notion that Paul seeks to avoid debt or obligation is unsubstantiated, motivated by "modern ideals of autonomy and self-sufficiency."⁴ The apostle never suggests that he refuses money to give himself any sort of freedom. Briones likewise labels an "assumption" the idea that the Corinthian offer represents an attempt at patronage.⁵ Other forms of monetary exchange and gift-giving exist that fall outside of the patron-client relationship. Contrary to perhaps the most problematic assumption of the patronage model, the Corinthian epistles do not indicate that the Achaian congregation seeks to hold status *over* Paul, but that they seek to hold status *under* him.⁶ The Corinthians have a "propensity to be under influential figures,"⁷ and it makes sense that they would seek to be Paul's clients rather than his patrons. Furthermore, if they seek

1 Conley Owens is bivocational pastor at Silicon Valley Reformed Baptist Church. He is the husband of one wife and the father of seven children. He enjoys cooperative games, couch surfing, casual skateboarding, and other peculiar activities. Conley holds a Master of Divinity from The Log College & Seminary and is currently pursuing a doctorate through Forge Theological Seminary.

2 For an overview of approaches, see David E Briones. *Paul's Financial Policy: A Socio-Theological Approach*. Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013, 1–19.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., 17.

5 Ibid., 17.

6 Ibid., 17–18.

7 Ibid., 181.

to be patrons of Paul, the same would have to be said of the false apostles, but the Corinthians do not lord themselves over the false apostles by means of patronage. Rather, Paul sees the Corinthians as “being exploited by these perpetrators.”⁸

Examining contemporary literature on financial exchange and making special appeal to Seneca,⁹ Briones employs a “patron-broker-client” model to formalize Paul’s financial policy. In this model, the apostle does not regard obligations of support as primarily existing between man and minister, but between man and God.¹⁰ Human agents mediate God’s grace. For example, Paul brokers the gospel that God delivers to the Philippians. Correspondingly, as God funds Paul’s ministry, the Philippians function as the broker, offering God’s grace in the form of financial resources. In Briones’s model of Paul’s policy, the recognition of that three-way relationship determines the propriety of a particular fundraising exchange in the context of ministry. Specifically, the apostle refuses offers when the giver lacks any such acknowledgment of God as the source of all gifts.¹¹

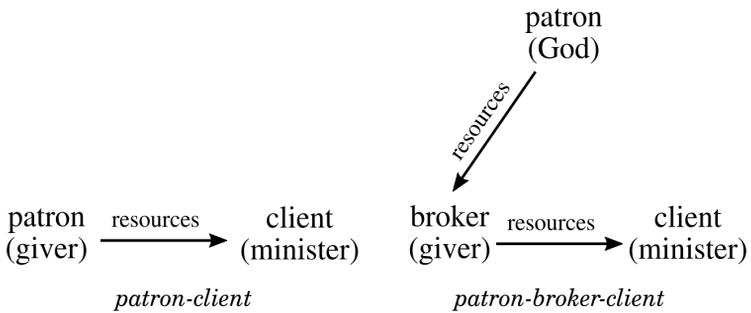


Figure 1: The Patron-Broker-Client model

Briones’s unparalleled investigation offers a key insight into Paul’s financial policy: God’s participation in the mutual exchange between man and minister must be fully embraced. However, I believe we should question whether the patron-broker-client model positions God correctly for the intended purpose of understanding Paul’s ministry. The recognition of divine providence resounds

8 Ibid., 189.

9 References to Seneca’s *On Benefits* abound in this area of Pauline studies. For a particularly apt passage, see Seneca, *On Benefits*, § 5.11.

10 See Briones, 120.

11 See Ibid., 218.

in the apostle's writings, but is it his driving concern behind his rejection of Corinthian funds? The exegetical evidence for this is limited—or at the very least, indirect. No doubt, Paul considers God the source of all good things (1 Cor. 4:7), but more steps are required to connect this observation to his refusal of payment. In considering Paul's delivery of the gospel, it makes sense to demand that any true recipient recognize that this grace of salvation comes from God. However, in considering Corinthian giving, it remains unclear why their failure to recognize God as the source of their wealth would invalidate their gift. Of course, Briones does not leave this unaddressed; he argues that it gives “divine momentum” to “human agency” in a “divine economy” in order to establish a proper *κοινωνία* where gift-giving can take place.¹² Regardless, he provides no account of why Paul does not consider this Corinthian immaturity to delegitimize their financial *κοινωνία* with others, such as the Jerusalem church (1 Cor. 16:1–2; 2 Cor. 9:5). Are we to presume that he enforces a higher standard of fellowship for himself than he does on behalf of other saints?

I propose an alternative three-way relationship that replaces *human brokerage* with *divine mediation*. In the reception of the gospel, God must be recognized as its source. However, this focus does not shift in measuring the human response to the gospel. God must still be recognized as the source of the obligation, and therefore the immediate source of obligation, the target of any financial sacrifice rendered in return. The recognition of God as the divine enabler of the giver, while important, must take a back seat in assessing the validity of the human response.

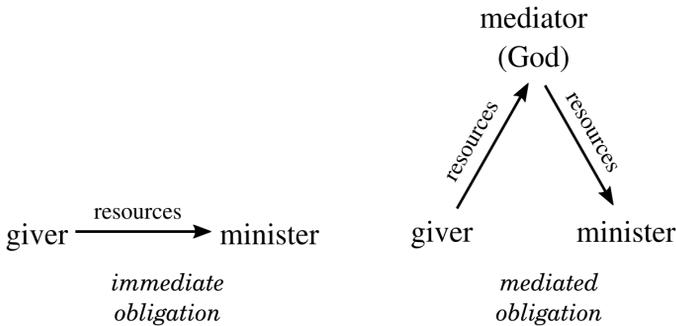


Figure 2: The Divine Mediation Model

While Briones's model emphasizes God as the ultimate source of all good things, this proposed alternative emphasizes God as the immediate object of all legitimate giving. Though it retains a three-way structure, the divine mediation model abandons notions of patronage. While I have no intention to discredit a socio-economic approach, I would hope that any extra-biblical framework would corroborate these conclusions rather than induce them. I leave it to one more

12 See Briones, 128–129.

versed in the relevant literature to attempt to reconstruct this proposal in terms of contemporary sociology.

This notion of divine mediation provides an exegetically direct approach to the matter of Paul's financial policy. The apostle plainly repudiates the sale of the gospel (2 Cor. 2:17), repeatedly asserting his determination to preach "freely" (*ἀδύπανος, δωρεάν*), without pay (1 Cor. 9:18; 2 Cor. 11:7). In other words, he refuses any arrangement where ties of obligation lie directly between himself and those to whom he ministers. He will not receive repayment as though he is the source of the gospel. At the same time, Paul states his willingness to receive on God's behalf (1 Cor. 16:5–6; 2 Cor. 1:16) and the right of ministers to be honored for their service to God (1 Tim. 5:17). Only the notion of mediated obligation perfectly explains these polar concerns. When an individual or church financially honors a minister for his service to God or offers material support in the course of his mission, the giving party recognizes its immediate obligation to God. They give in order to further the Lord's agenda. However, when an individual or church gives to a minister in direct exchange for religious instruction, they fail to recognize this divine mediation. In cutting God out of the equation, they count the minister as the source of the gospel, a free agent rather than a servant under a charge (cf. 1 Cor. 9:17).

Put simply, Paul forcefully rejects ministerial reciprocity, direct repayment for his gospel labors. However, he willingly receives ministerial co-labor, the material support of fellow servants attempting to further God's agenda. As a servant of God, he does not receive commission directly from men, but from God who supplies him at the hands of men. This divine mediation model not only arises from Paul's explicit intentions of *gratis* proclamation, but is illustrated in his exposition of his policy and confirmed elsewhere in his practice.

Levitical Tithes and Sacrifices

We especially see this notion of divine mediation in 1 Corinthians 9, perhaps most clearly in Paul's appeal to the pattern set by the Levitical priesthood. According to the apostle, the general principles of ministerial maintenance in Old Testament Israel must carry over into the New Testament church.¹³

Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel. (1 Cor. 9:13–14, ESV)

The Law of Moses specifies that the Levites receive the food from the Lord's food offering (Num. 18:8–20; Deut. 18:1–5); everything contributed but not burned becomes the possession of the sons of Aaron (Lev. 2:1–3; 7:33–35). Similar to the contributions of food offerings, this same book of law records the

13 Note that the *Didache* independently establishes this connection. See *Didache*, 13.3.

right of the Levites to the tithes, composed of money and valuable materials (Num. 18:21–24). While the tribe as a whole only nominally inherits the food offerings, the tithes are in fact shared this broadly. On one hand, it appears that this transaction between the citizens at large and the priestly tribe constitutes an expression of obligation of the people of Israel to the Levites. It is repeatedly termed a “perpetual due” to the latter party (Num. 18:8, 11, 19) and in practical terms, the people render this due directly (Deut. 18:3).

However, this transaction is not primarily horizontal, as may be easily recognized from its designation as an offering to the Lord. The passages cited above describe the sacrifices as “contributions made to me [the Lord]” (Num. 18:8) and “the Lord’s food offerings” (Deut. 18:1). The inspired author likewise labels the tithes “a contribution to the Lord” (Num. 18:24). While the tithes and offerings are given to the Lord, the book of Numbers also says they are given by the Lord (Num. 18:8, 12, 19, 21, 24). These two vertical movements must control our understanding of the horizontal movement. The Israelites may give to the Levites in a secondary sense, but primarily, the Israelites give to God who in turn gives to the Levites. After all, we would not imagine the people of Israel making their sacrifices to mere men. To speak of resources passing from man to man simply abbreviates the larger transaction. As the Lord says to the Levites in Numbers 18:12, “the firstfruits of what they give to the Lord, I give to you.” Note that the express significance of the phrase “the Lord is their inheritance”—while potentially indicating more profound truths—resides in this arrangement between the Levites and their Israelite brothers (Num. 18:20; cf. Deut. 18:1). On one hand, this simply acknowledges what we have already identified: the Lord provides for the Levites. On another hand, it shows the exclusivity of this mode of support. It is not merely that the Levites are to have the Lord as an inheritance, receiving from the contributions, but they are to have no other inheritance. The law of Moses permits the priests to receive that which is offered to the Lord, but forbids reciprocity. Consequently, in Israel’s times of faithlessness—i.e., when they do not offer to the Lord—the Levites languish (cf. Deut. 14:27; Neh. 13:10). Perhaps the Levites may find other means of sustaining themselves, but in the context of their ministry, for the sake of this blessing, the Levites forfeit the typical reciprocal modes of sustenance and property accrual enjoyed by the other tribes.

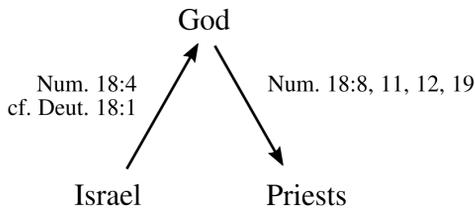


Figure 3: Divine Mediation in Numbers 18

When a priest violates this model and accepts offerings directly, he essentially inserts himself in the place of God. As a divinely appointed broker, he disseminates the Lord's blessings through the work of ministry, but then robs from the Lord what is owed in return. Such was the sin of Hophni and Phinehas, the corrupt sons of Samuel who took raw meat before it had been offered to the Lord (1 Sam. 2:12–17).

Analogies From Nature

In addition to his reference to the Levitical priesthood, Paul makes several other analogies that exhibit the same pattern of mediated obligation. These analogies arise from nature and find confirmation in the Torah.

Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk? Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same? For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not certainly speak for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. (1 Cor. 9:7–10, ESV)

While an initial reading may lead one to imagine Paul describing a direct obligation between man and minister, a brief contemplation of his various metaphors reveal that, in each case, the obligation is mediated. In each, the giving entity is not the employer who contractually pays, but simply the source of material provision used by the employer to supply the laborer. In each, the one who gives is not primarily obligated to the laborer, but to the laborer's employer.

The vine does not supply out of obligation to the vinedresser, and the citizen does not supply out of obligation to the soldier. The former supplies out of obligation to the owner and the latter out of obligation to the king. The owner and

the king, metaphorically representing the Lord, ultimately reward the laborer by assorted means of provision. Likewise, the laborer commissioned by God does not ultimately receive his pay from those to whom he ministers, even if he receives it at their hands. His just reward is granted by God through human means—the offering of a fellow servant, not reciprocity.

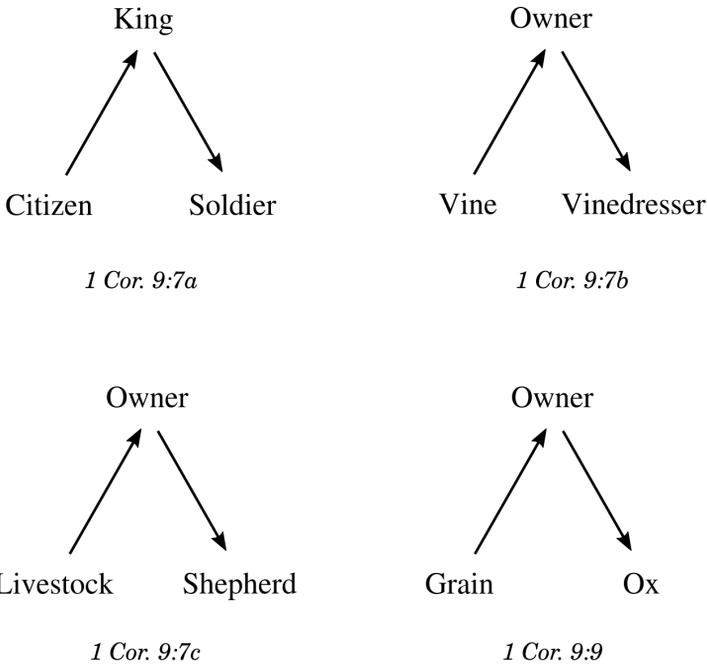


Figure 4: Mediated Obligation in 1 Corinthians 9:7–10

Directly corresponding to the example of the Levitical priesthood, this sweep of Pauline natural theology showcases the divine mediation model. While Paul does not explicitly mention the third party in any of the examples, in each, its presence is required in order to account for the obligation from the giving entity to the recipient.

Pauline Practice

The task of discerning Paul’s financial policy is essentially an exercise in resolving apparent discrepancies in the apostle’s ministry fundraising practices. There are four in particular, though few proposals actually address each one. The notion of divine mediation sufficiently explains all four.

First, why does Paul refuse material support from the Corinthians (1 Cor. 9:15–18; 2 Cor. 11:7), Thessalonians (1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 7–8), and Ephesians

(Acts 20:34), yet receives the same from the Philippians (Phil. 4:15; 2 Cor. 11:8)? In Briones's patron-broker-client model, Paul rejects Corinthian funds because they have yet to recognize God as the source of their value.¹⁴ Paul's interactions with the Thessalonians occur in missionary contexts where the nascency of the faith leads to the same failure of recognition.¹⁵ Briones never addresses the Ephesian situation, but presumably his reasoning concerning Thessalonica would apply similarly to Ephesus. Briones provides a sufficient argument for the immaturity of these churches, but the divine mediation model offers a simpler solution. The problem is not that the Corinthians fail to recognize God as the source of their wealth, but that they fail to recognize him as the aim of their gift. They do not seek to give to God by supporting Paul's ministry; they seek to repay the apostle for the gospel apart from any divine mediation.

Second, why does Paul claim he will never receive the Corinthians' funds (2 Cor. 11:9), but expresses willingness to receive material assistance from them as he goes to Macedonia and Judea (1 Cor. 16:6; 2 Cor 1:16)?¹⁶ Briones offers substantial consideration of this question, but only to arrive at the vague conclusion that Paul considered there to be "a qualitative difference" between direct financial support and monetary travel assistance.¹⁷ While this general direction of reasoning is unobjectionable, more must be said at this point. In the divine mediation model, material support that aids mission work is ultimately offered heavenward. According to God's design, churches wishing to give to him may do so by supporting the proclamation of his gospel by funding the travel of his missionaries. While Paul adamantly refuses payment that bypasses the Lord, he will gladly receive on the Lord's behalf.

Third, why does Paul condone other apostles who accept support from Corinth while he so adamantly refuses? That is, neither he nor his associates receive from the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 9:6; 2 Cor. 12:17; 2 Cor. 12:18), yet he mentions that others have rightfully done so (1 Cor. 9:12). In speaking of Peter taking along a wife (1 Cor. 9:5), Paul intimates that the Jerusalem apostle may incur additional financial expenses and guiltlessly receive from Corinth. The use of *περιάγω* (to take along) indicates a marital companionship that would extend

14 See Briones, 218.

15 See Briones, 220.

16 In each of these verses, the word for "to send" (*προπέμπω*) implies material support. Walter Bauer. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Edited by Frederick William Danker, Third Edition ed., The University of Chicago Press, 2000, 837.

17 Briones, 199.

to apostolic journeys¹⁸ “at the church’s expense.”¹⁹ Briones regards Cephas and others as free from the jurisdiction of Paul’s policy. Instead, the apostle to the Gentiles distinguishes himself by opting out of a “pay economy” in order to “highlight the three-way relational pattern in 9.16–18.”²⁰ If, however, we were to judge all apostles by the same standard, the patron-broker-client model would be insufficient to provide an answer. In the divine mediation model, this discrepancy may be accounted for by Peter’s differing status from Paul and his associates. Peter did not found the Corinthian church, and as such, he would not be in danger of receiving funds as one who initially delivered the gospel to them. In the scenario Paul suggests, any funds received by Peter would not be repayment for the gospel, but offerings mediated by the Lord.

Fourth, if Paul condones the Jerusalem apostles’ reception of Corinthian funds, why does he implicitly condemn the false apostles for similar activity (2 Cor. 2:17)? Briones regards these intruders’ behavior as financially exploitative,²¹ but does not explain why exactly it should be condemned. Perhaps it was too aggressive, attended with too much greed, or perhaps he would appeal to the common assumption that Paul simply objects to their fundraising on the grounds of their false gospel. However, in condemning the “peddling” (καπηλεύοντες) of the word as an affront to “sincerity” (εὐλικρινείας), Paul proscribes *all* commercialization of the gospel. A consideration of 1 Corinthians 10:13–17, with its language of “limits,” “area,” “overextending,” “reach,” etc., reveals that the false apostles have laid claim to Paul’s domain,²² tampering with his concern for missional comity (cf. Rom. 15:20). Perhaps it is too incredible to suggest that these imposters have explicitly claimed to have planted the church or have explicitly labeled themselves the spiritual fathers of Corinth,²³ but at minimum, Paul charges them with having set themselves up as such. The apostles’ opponents have encroached on the achievements of Paul’s ministry, taking evangelical

18 See Anthony C. Thiselton. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000, 680–681.

19 Leon Morris. *1 Corinthians*. William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985, 131.

20 See Briones 169–171.

21 See Briones 189.

22 See Murray J. Harris. *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005, 711–713.

23 Some, in identifying the “super-apostles” as the Jerusalem apostles have conjectured that these were gaining recognition as the true fathers of Corinth. For example, see Ralph P. Martin. *2 Corinthians*. Zondervan, 2014, 506–507.

credit for the spiritual prosperity of Corinth. In this scheme, they receive funds earmarked exactly the same as the funds he previously refused. The Corinthians pay them for the gospel, bypassing any notion of divine mediation.

Each one of these four questions deserves a deep exegetical treatment that extends beyond the scope of this article. Furthermore, many of their premises remain matters of debate among commentators. Regardless, this brief survey should make it apparent that any formulation of Paul's financial policy must adequately account for a number of features in his practice. An attempt to solve the mystery that shrouds Paul's financial policy must resolve all apparent discrepancies; partial solutions will be inherently deficient. The divine mediation model of Paul's financial policy adequately accounts for each.

New Testament Corroboration

In reading works on Paul's financial policy, one cannot help but get the impression that few consider Paul's policy to be more than a personal ethic, a quirk that other missionaries need not adopt. As he explicitly exempts other apostles from following the same ethic,²⁴ Briones's work is no exception in this regard. Furthermore, his foundational appeal to contemporary sociology effectively limits the potential scope of application. That is, within the framework of *Sola Scriptura*, a conclusion that relies on extra-biblical resources cannot bind the conscience.

However, this essay has argued that the scriptural text articulates Paul's policy sufficiently for the careful reader to discern. Furthermore, non-Pauline texts likewise present this framework.

The gospel of Matthew contains the most notable example of this divine mediation.

Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay. Acquire no gold or silver or copper for your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics or sandals or a staff, for the laborer deserves his food. (Matt. 10:8–10; cf. Luke 10:7, ESV)

Using the same word as Paul in 2 Corinthians 11:7, Jesus instructs the disciples to minister “without pay” (δωρεάν). Simultaneously, Jesus asserts that they are laborers who deserve wages, and they ought to receive from people in the villages to which they are sent. These statements would contradict, but the context supplies the distinguishing factor of divine mediation. That is, it reveals the disciples do not work in the employ of those to whom they are sent, but in the employ of God, the Lord of the harvest (Matt. 9:37–38; cf. Luke 10:2). They ought not to receive reciprocal pay directly from men, but they are to receive from God as he supports their labor through their fellow servants. Note that these servants are called “worthy” (Matt. 10:11) and “son[s] of peace” (Luke 10:6). Correspondingly, as the disciples are sent into the more hostile context of

24 Briones, 169–170.

Gentile regions, lacking fellow servants, Jesus renders the opposite instruction, commanding them to take a money bag (Luke 22:36). This dominical injunction perfectly matches Paul's financial policy.²⁵

The apostle John records a similar dichotomy in his letter to Gaius. Speaking of missionaries, he writes,

For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.
(3 John 7–8, ESV)

The appositional placement of “going out for the sake of the name” and “accepting nothing from the Gentiles” identifies the missionaries’ refusal of repayment as the sum proof of their sincerity, a lack of ulterior motives. John implicitly condemns as duplicitous the reciprocity that would necessarily characterize a financial gift from the mission field, but commends their financial support insofar as it comes from fellow servants. Once again, this is precisely Paul’s financial policy. Notice that in v. 6, the instruction “to send” (προπέμπω) employs the same word Paul uses to describe the financial support he anticipates willingly receiving from the Corinthians.

Conclusion

In examining Paul’s financial policy, the traditional patron-client model and Briones’s patron-broker-client model have their own merits, but cannot fully explain his practice. While we must concur that the apostle’s financial policy demands a three-way relationship involving God, contrary to Briones’s thesis, God is not the source of wealth in this triangle. Instead, he is the mediator of obligation, the direct aim of financial sacrifice.

Moreover, Paul’s policy should not be relegated to a personal idiosyncrasy. Rather, his ministry fundraising ethic follows the teaching of Christ and is echoed elsewhere in the New Testament. As such, Paul’s policy does not represent a highly-contextualized application of biblical principles, but a biblical principle that must be applied to many contexts. Of course, we have not begun to explore these far-reaching applications in this brief article; we have only opened the proverbial can of worms.

The Lord offers salvation “without money and without price” (Isa 55:1; cf. Rev 21:6; 22:17). Accordingly, ethical ministry fundraising does not exchange the gospel for material support, but receives from the Lord that which has been offered to him. Gospel ministry should be shaped by co-labor among fellow

25 Popular theologian D. A. Carson notes a similar scheme in Matthew 10:8–10, remarking that while “the service rendered must not be bought or sold,” a church has the duty to provide for its ministers. He concurs, “This particular arrangement continues, I would be prepared to argue, in the letters of Paul [...]” Carson, D. A. *When Jesus Confronts the World*. Authentic Media, 1987, 142.

servants, not reciprocity from the customer of a service. It should be funded by partnerships, not purchases. It should be supported, not sold.

AUTHORITY AND APPLICATION: AN INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL COUNSELING

REAGAN MARSH¹

My hand shot up as the professor scrawled names and dates on the chalkboard that chilly Mississippi afternoon. After speaking at length of Watson's (1878-1958) behaviorism, Skinner's (1904-1990) operant conditioning, Freud's (1856-1939) personality theory, and Rogers' (1902-1987) autonomous nondirectionalism, he began applying these concepts to the care of souls in the congregation. But my notes only increased my confusion; a nagging question kept surfacing as he addressed man's inner conflicts, compulsions, drives, and behaviors. 'Sir, this is fascinating material, and probably very useful to pastors. But may I ask: where does the Bible fit into this approach of helping people?' Ours was a Christian college, the class that day largely seated young ministers like me, and our instructor was also on staff at a prominent local church.

He immediately replied, 'Young man, your Bible is for the pulpit and doctrine; but nobody ever helped anyone with anything of consequence from the Bible. You must master psychology if you want to do your church any good. If you master it, it will shape your preaching and doctrine so that you benefit people, not burden them with useless theological arguments.' Chastened, I picked up my pencil again.

Ours is a therapeutic age. Albert Mohler names moralistic therapeutic deism as the default American religious worldview: the concept that God wants people to be basically good and he helps us when we get down.² This mindset ascended through the proliferation of Christian self-help gurus and books regurgitating some variation of Harry Emerson Fosdick's (1878-1969) dictum that preaching merely provided therapy on a group level.³ The most popular church growth experts advise clergymen to be intentional in employing psychological categories and strategies in their talks (no more preaching!)

1 Reagan Marsh, MATS, MDiv (equ.) is husband to Kara, daddy to RG and AG, and founding pastor-teacher to Reformation Baptist Church of Dalton, GA. He contributed to *The Jonathan Edwards Encyclopedia*, writes regularly for *The Founders Journal*, and edited for Banner of Truth. An SBTS graduate, certified biblical counselor, and Th.D student in Puritan studies at the Log College & Seminary, he has served in gospel ministry since 1998.

2 Albert Mohler. 'Moralistic Therapeutic Deism—The New American Religion.' Posted online at <https://www.christianpost.com/news/moralistic-therapeutic-deism-the-new-american-religion.html>, 4/18/05.

3 'Preaching can be personal consultation on a group scale.' Fosdick, 'Personal Counseling and Preaching,' in *Pastoral Psychology* 3.2 (1952), 12.

while adopting recovery language. The need of the modern hour, the argument goes, is not theology, but therapy; neither creed nor exegesis, but rehabilitation and treatment. If the Bible is employed, it must be only sparingly referenced, minimally explained, and tolerantly applied.

The reason, per the explanation, is that man has wounded himself and needs help in the healing process. In his perpetual lust for autonomy, he wishes to feel himself whole, emotionally and relationally healthy – but on his own terms. His struggle to set things right (or even get them right in the first place) reflects his true ruin and brokenness by sin, according to Scripture; but this inconvenient perspective he sets aside. He exudes confidence that by carefully observing his world and properly applying what he learns, healing will happen, guilt will dissipate, and all that has shattered will mend. His assurance lies in his powers of observation and ability to assimilate his findings into a coherent answer to life's problems; and this process he terms counseling or therapy. He coordinates with other practitioners to classify, codify, and cogitate on collective further insights and discoveries, canonizing conclusions which then control his counsel. His light is his own learning, and whatever light he may offer others is drawn strictly from 'the light of nature,'⁴ or general revelation.

A Different Authority

With significant contrast, biblical counseling defines itself as helping people find God's answers to life's problems in God's word. The conversation shifts dramatically here because the Bible constitutes a fundamentally different basis of authority: what God has said, not what man has seen. While secularists rely on their reason, knowledge, and observations, and integrationists attempt to blend solutions drawn from wells of both human and divine wisdom, the Bible declares that God has hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in Christ alone (Col 2:3), that he makes them known solely by his Spirit's grace (1 Cor 2:10), and that he has preserved them forever in his written word (2 Tim 3:16f).

God is the sole authority in his world over his sinful, finite creatures, and his word exposes the inadequacy and insufficiency of human wisdom (1 Cor 1:20-25). Man, the Bible explains, is not wounded, but dead in his sins. He is not basically good, but wickedly depraved (Isa 1:6; Jer 17:9); not objectively evaluating, but actively rebelling against God (Rom 3:23); not pliable before compelling contrasting evidence, but stiff-necked and hardhearted (Rom 8:5-8). Small wonder, then, when 'the way of the transgressor is hard' (Pro 13:15). Authority in God's world is not rooted in autonomous analysis or groupthink conclusions, but in God's revealed will as recorded in his inspired word. Therefore biblical counseling begins and ends here: 'what saith the Scriptures?' (Rom 4:3) 'To the law and the testimony! If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them' (Isa 8:20).

4 William Collins(d. 1702), ed. *The Baptist Catechism* (1693/95), Q&A 3.

One couple I counseled previously saw a secular marriage therapist who had been divorced three times. It was unsurprising when the husband mentioned many sessions essentially berating and blaming the wife. A second family sought help from a psychologist twenty years younger than them. He had not married, and spent most of their time speculating and giving abstractions about relational theory, rather than concretely and coherently addressing their issues. Yet a third husband and wife's Christian integrationist counselor attempted to address their conflicts strictly from the categories of their families of origin, and she mocked or dismissed their questions about the sinfulness of communication and behavior patterns they had developed. Anecdotal accounts are easily multiplied or contested, but they beg the question: on what authority will the counsel be based? Which canon will be consulted? Who has the final say? How are problems addressed, change assisted, and accountability achieved?

A Sufficient Authority

The consequence of a different authority is that it possesses a different character. Scripture declares that man's wisdom pales compared to God's wisdom (1 Cor 1:20). While men may learn much of the natural world by common grace, God alone can teach us of spiritual matters; and he does so by his word. In other words, the Bible alone is able to explain rightly how man finds himself in the awful mess of this world, how to understand the mess he has made of his own soul, how those parallel realities continually infect his every situation and relationship, and what God has done to rectify the whole situation. Theologians refer to this as the 'sufficiency' of Scripture, meaning that God has given to us 'everything needful for life and godliness' (2 Pet 1:3; 2 Tim 3:16f) in giving his Son and his word.⁵ As William Perkins (1558-1602) wrote, 'The body of Scripture is a doctrine sufficient to live well.'⁶

Affirming Scripture's authority and sufficiency in no way denies common grace; it is still real grace, and may provide helpful insights when employed as an organizing tool.⁷ The Lord's mercy is over all his works (Ps 145:9). For example,

5 See Lambert, Mack, Bookman, and Powlison's *Sufficiency: Historic Essays on the Sufficiency of Scripture* (Association of Certified Biblical Counselors, 2016), an excellent treatment of this subject.

6 William Perkins. *A Golden Chain, or, The Description of Theology*, in *The Works of William Perkins* (RHB, 2018), VI:11.

7 For helpful discussion and evaluation, see David Powlison's dissertation, published as *Competent to Counsel? The History of a Conservative Protestant Biblical Counseling Movement* (New Growth, 2008), 256-97.

the DSM's⁸ observations of common behavioral patterns or responses to varied stressors and situations can prove useful as biblical counselors categorize specific presenting issues or determine points requiring medical attention, particularly when one is unfamiliar or inexperienced with a particular presenting issue. Utilizing practicalities constitutes neither pragmatism nor syncretism; they represent applying godly wisdom to the care of souls. Biblical counselors neither dabble as doctors nor treat as therapists; they engage people's problems at the heart and life level with the written word of God, and trust his wise providence in the physician's care for the body.

This being said, counseling students should note and consider carefully that psychology, psychiatry, and the DSM frequently apply 'disorder' nomenclature to things which Scripture flatly calls sin. Biblical counselors are not anti-medicine or anti-medical, but we object when the diagnosis is preferred to the Decalogue. For example, a man comes to you carrying the psychologist's conclusion of kleptomania. The biblical counselor notes that he has practiced envy, deceit, theft, belittling and using others, despising God's image and their labor, and idolatrous self-worship to the point that he is now both habituated to and known for his ongoing disregard for the 1st, 3rd, 5th, 8th, 9th, and 10th commandments. Applying God's word to the diagnosis shifts the conversation entirely; now the discussion has moved to the nature of handling besetting sins, repentance, restitution, and living to please God rather than self (2 Cor 5:9). Suddenly, the Bible speaks very plainly to this 'disorder' – and multiple others.

The question must be asked at this point: did God only allow 'real' answers for life's problems to arise when Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920) and William James (1842-1910) began to formalize psychology as a discipline in the late 19th century? If so, what does that say about his providential care for the wellbeing of men's souls? Did he really leave his people without wisdom, hope, or help until the last 130 years? Are modern problems actually so much more significant than the ancient concerns?

The logical answer to these questions is a resounding no! God cares for his people, and has always done so tangibly and practically by giving them his word. It is ultimately Scripture which shines light into darkness and makes wise men from the simple (Ps 119:130). It is God's word which brings healing for the soul's troubles (Ps 107:20) and peace to conflicted situations. God's word evaluates the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Jer 17:9; Heb 4:12), diagnoses sinful patterns (Ps 119:9), and offers true hope for godly change (Isa 55:10-11). Since creation, God has never left his people unaided or dependent upon their own strength and wisdom. His Spirit applies his word, which is sufficient for everything life in his world requires. As John Murray (1898-1975) emphasized,

8 *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* is the defining volume for the psychological and psychiatric industries. It carefully describes various presenting troubles, categorizes them helpfully, offers comparisons to similar maladies, notes proper coding for billing, and provides points for further research. Currently in its fifth edition, it is revised and updated regularly.

‘Our dependence upon Scripture is total.’⁹ Biblical counselors remember this core conviction at all times in their work.

A Theological Authority

As we realize that God’s word has always guided God’s people under all his providences, we discover that every problem faced in counseling is ultimately theological in nature. It may be a point of theodicy or discernment, of dying to self or preferring others, of obeying God’s moral law or leading the processes of forgiveness and reconciliation – but it is theological. Every situation anyone faces is one brought about by God’s sovereignly ordained plan for their lives (Ps 139:16; Heb 12:1). ‘There is nothing new under the sun,’ Solomon wrote (Eccl 1:9), and the biblical counselor operates from that foundational reality.

In incurable medical conditions, we call the sufferer to rest in God’s sovereignty and trust his wise providence (Eph 1:11). In the loss of a child, we remind of God’s nearness (Ps 38:12) and the Spirit’s merciful comfort (Jn 14:26f; 2 Cor 1:3-6). In struggles of habitual sin, we at times confront them with the holiness without which no one will see the Lord (Heb 12:14) and disciple them in the Christian’s work of daily battle against indwelling sin (Rom 7; Eph 4:22-24). In marital conflict, we instruct them regarding the roles in and nature of Christian marriage (Eph 5:22ff), help them exercise biblical love as husband and wife (Eph 5:25f; 1 Cor 13) and encourage them concerning the powerful grace of a humble Christian witness therein (1 Cor 7:10-16; 1 Pet 3:1-7).

The struggles, sorrows, and sins marking life in a fallen world make plain that the business of life is ultimately a dealing with God. Our responses reflect our heart’s state before God and reveal our operative view of God. We now see that common, everyday concerns are actually profoundly theological issues. Biblical counseling is therefore theology at work for the soul’s good: biblically faithful, exegetically sound, positionally plain, personally accountable, ecclesiastically rooted, and at every point practically applied, with the goal that the Christian may be ‘mature and complete, lacking nothing’ (Jas 1:4).

In his classic book *The Reformed Pastor*, Richard Baxter (1615-1691) spoke repeatedly of the pastor’s duty of bringing the Scriptures to bear on the person sitting in front of him. He was addressing an elder’s practice of regular home visitation and catechesis, but his point directly applies here: ‘We shall have the best opportunity to impress the truth upon their hearts, when we can speak to each individual’s particular necessity [=troubles/problems], and say to the sinner, ‘Thou art the man;’ and plainly mention his particular case; and set home the truth with familiar importunity.’¹⁰ ‘I have found by experience, that some ignorant persons, who have been so long unprofitable hearers, have got more knowledge

9 John Murray. ‘The Finality and Sufficiency of Scripture,’ in *Collected Writings of John Murray* (Banner of Truth, 1976), I:20.

10 Richard Baxter. *The Reformed Pastor* (Banner of Truth, 1974), 175.

and remorse of conscience in half an hour's close discourse, than they did from ten years [hearing] public preaching.¹¹

The biblical counselor gently encourages, corrects, instructs, and guides from God's word, prayerfully striving 'to present every man complete in Christ' (Col 1:28). Because the work of biblical counseling is inescapably theological, we labor to explain Bible texts so that the counselee understands, believes, and obeys them as 'his very life' (Dt 32:47).

Biblical Counseling or Therapy?

Broadly conceived, both biblical counseling and therapy have similar aims: both desire to help the struggler, offer encouragement where possible, and find workable solutions so he may move forward with his life. But considered at a closer level – particularly given the differing foundational authority recognized by each approach – significant disparity is naturally expected in their respective views and methods. Biblical counseling helps people find God's answers to life's problems in God's word. As such, its theological and directive nature contrasts sharply with therapeutic approaches at least four key points.¹²

First, therapeutic approaches generally view themselves as an ongoing support mechanism to help the struggler cope, and thus condition him early to depend on the therapist and the treatment. Biblical counseling, while recognizing some overlap in the NT's command to 'bear one another's burdens' (Gal 6:1-2), notes that the NT also requires 'restoration' of the one being supported in this manner (Gal 6:1). The sense of that 'restoration' is to mend or repair what has been broken by sin,¹³ and bring him back into the normal life of the Christian: loving Christ, serving others, walking in godliness, participating in the public and private means of grace, and being strengthened in the communion of the

11 Ibid, 196.

12 Please note: I paint this contrast with broad strokes to help point out the distinctions more clearly, not to polarize or vilify. The differences were not so readily apparent to me until placed in this light through an extended series of conversations with several mentors over a decade ago. Nothing in this article is intended as a jab at godly Christian psychologists or psychiatrists; it is rather a plea to the godly to consider our theological heritage and the overwhelmingly robust fullness of the Bible to address the needs and cares of the soul.

13 Richard Longnecker. *Word Biblical Commentary: Galatians* (Word, 1990), 273; and William Henriksen's *NT Commentary: Galatians and Ephesians* (Baker, 1968), 232. R. Schippers observes that *katartizo* has 'not so much a qualitative meaning as a functional one...standard, hortatory use of *artios* and its derivatives arises from the fact that all imperatives are founded on the one indicative, i.e. the firm promise of salvation. The life of the saints is to correspond to the grace given, and this itself is the standard to which they are to aspire. It is on this ground that in Gal 6:1 and 2 Cor 13:11 *katartizo* can mean to restore.' *NIDNTT* (Zondervan, 1971), III:350. So too, *TDNT* (Eerdmans, 2006), I:476.

saints. The critical work of initial support must lead to the commanded work of strengthening ongoing sanctification. For the biblical counselor, it becomes a question of open-ended support, or solution-oriented, restorative work of pursuing and maturing in Christ.

Second, therapies tend to favor the diagnosis over discipleship. While rarely articulated as such, diagnosis labels are typically *treated* as definitive, and often become fairly permanent descriptors. The thinking goes, one may adjust to and deal with the disorder, but probably will not get past it: ‘I have ADD, PTSD, or OCD.’ The label makes its way into the schoolboy’s IEP, the employee’s HR file, the background check; it comes to be a defining category, the constant which colors all of life. Biblical counseling – while certainly recognizing the reality of organic issues, and promptly ensuring appropriate medical care – also realizes the pull of besetting sin, or the struggles in deeply-engrained, longstanding patterns of ungodliness which often get justified due to the diagnosis. It therefore points the Christian to how the NT characterizes his identity as a ‘new creation’ in Christ (2 Cor 5:17), while calling the counselee to grow in the Lord (2 Pet 3:18). Jesus characterized discipleship as denying oneself, taking up the cross daily, and following him (Mt 16:24; Lk 9:23) and being taught or trained to observe increasingly all that he required (Mt 28:19). It becomes an issue of whether Scripture’s counsel or the therapist’s label will be chief in the struggler’s life.

Third is the question of an anthropocentric or a theocentric emphasis. Interpersonal work is necessarily people-focused to some degree; the presenting problem causes pain or conflict which must be addressed, so needful questions are asked, emotional difficulties acknowledged, complications and circumstances accounted for, and data assessed in order to move toward a solution. While again we find cases of common ground here for therapy and biblical counseling, the weight of emphasis is our present consideration. Therapy tends to focus almost exclusively on the person as wounded, victimized, wronged, and thus validated in their feelings, and attempts to restore self-esteem, empowerment, and courage through various means. Talk therapy, CBT, and venting emotions in a safe space are often key components of such an approach. Biblical counseling agrees that there are often instances of severe sin against individuals which have deeply influenced their lives and frequently resulted in great pain, hardship, and suffering. These symptoms and more may present in varying degrees across a spectrum of circumstances. But while the sufferer receives support and Christian sympathy, he is also encouraged to consider Christ himself (Heb 12:1-3). He is directed to Scripture’s specific counsel in his circumstances (Ps 119:24), and God’s promises in the covenant of grace for his soul’s peace with God. He is asked to view his troubles in light of eternity (2 Cor 4:17f) and reminded that he is in the hands of the Eternal One (Dt 33:27). He is pointed to the benefits of the gospel (Ps 103) and encouraged in his duties to God and man (Mt 22:36-40).¹⁴ No moralistic

14 As *The Baptist Catechism* (Q&A 47) puts it, ‘The sum of the Ten Commandments is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.’

niceties will do here (Jer 6:14, 8:11); he receives specific counsel on matters of self-control, repentance, mortification, obedience, renewing the mind, and faith as critical applications of the theological truth and practical direction God provides in the Bible precisely for his difficulties.

Fourth, therapists often position themselves as the professionals, as contrasted with the biblical counselor who is typically a normal pastor. At first, it seems a clear instance of *nolo contendere*; but upon further review, the divergence becomes clearer. One answers to the guild for maintaining professionalism, standardized care, and approved methodology; the other will account to the Judge of all the earth for his care of your soul (Heb 13:17; Rom 15:14). One gives careful consideration to proper billing codes for the insurance company and board-certified expertise in a discipline; the other is given to the Scriptures, their specific application to your life, the holistic ministry of the elders for your upbuilding, the regular means of grace for your blessing, the backing of church discipline for your good, and the labor of weeping,¹⁵ fasting, and intercessory prayer for your spiritual wellbeing (Ac 20:31). The one adorns itself with all the gathered wisdom of common grace; the other submits itself finally to the wisdom of the Cross (1 Cor 1:18-25). It is the pastor, as Jay Adams stressed, who is God's professional¹⁶ – bringing God's perspective from God's word to bear on God's people in the ministry of biblical counseling.

Who, Me?

While the academy often teaches prospective ministers simply to 'refer and defer' to the professionals, the Scriptures are plain that the care of souls is entrusted to the church (Mt 18:15-20; Gal 6:1f; Eph 4:12, Col 3:16, *et al.*)¹⁷ Pastors

15 John Piper. *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals: A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry* (B&H, 2002), 2.

16 Jay Adams. *What About Nouthetic Counseling?* (Baker, 1977), 45: 'By making pastors fully aware of the property given to them in a clear deed from God, I have been trying to persuade pastors to so utilize and cultivate their own backyards that such encroachments [that is, from psychology/psychiatry] would become unnecessary and, indeed, highly embarrassing to those who make them. This approach I believe is succeeding. The self-styled 'professionals' (I say *self-styled* because I believe that the Bible teaches that God has called the pastor to be the professional counselor) have felt the impact of thousands of pastors who have themselves begun to take seriously the work to which God called them and for which they are well equipped by their knowledge of the Scriptures.' Cf. his *Competent to Counsel* (Zondervan, 1970), 42f.

17 Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 41f.

and elders certainly lead the way, as those given gifts for the oversight of souls¹⁸ and the handling of the word (Eph 4:11; 1 Tim 3:2), both publicly and privately (Ac 20:20). Given that reality, it is both stunning and significant to note that Paul could write to a church he'd never visited that he was confident of their ability and competence to counsel¹⁹ one another (Rom 15:14)! In the context of Rom 15, the people he addresses are normal Christians simply striving for faithfulness to God. How could this be? Only because the word of God is powerful and effective, sufficient and authoritative, light amidst darkness and clarity in confusion. Any Christian who depends on the Spirit, knows his Bible, and aims to live according to it will lack no wisdom for helping others from the word of God. Much like Peter and John, an ordinary, untrained man who has been with Jesus (Ac 4:13) can become a highly useful tool in God's hands.

The saints comprehend Christ together (Eph 3:18), are taught in Christ concerning godliness (Eph 4:21), and receive comfort from his Spirit for ministering that very comfort to others in their troubles (2 Cor 1:3-6). They depend on him as their very life (Col 3:4), kill sin and pursue obedience (Col 3:1-15), discipline themselves for godliness (1 Tim 4:7f), and teach and admonish²⁰ one another in all wisdom from God's word dwelling within them (Col 3:16). This is the fruit of the people of God meditating in the law of God day and night (Ps 1:2), and it doing its work in them (Isa 55:10-11; 1 Th 2:13). This is the work of biblical counseling: normal Christians helping others find God's answers to life's problems in his word.

Who, me? Yes, you. Depending on his word, not your own wisdom (Pro 3:5), you are called to this work. It may involve pursuing some formalized training²¹, or the Lord may lead you to a point of simply aiming to know Scripture as best you can in order to provide biblical guidance. Whether at a coffee shop or

18 NT verbiage for the shepherds speaks to this plainly. See James Stizinger's excellent essay 'Pastoral Ministry in History,' esp. p. 30, in John MacArthur's *Pastoral Ministry: How to Shepherd Biblically* (Nelson, 2005).

19 'Paul recognized that any Christian may engage in the work of nouthetic counseling, so long as he possesses the qualities of goodness and knowledge.' Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 60. Note, however, his careful qualification (268): 'Every counselor will encounter difficult cases and special problems which go beyond his present competency and which therefore indicate the need for referral to some other Christian counselor.' The wise biblical counselor will know his limits and bring in additional help as needed.

20 Gk. *nouthetountes*, 'counsel.' This is the same word (*nouthetein*) Paul uses in Rom 15:14.

21 The Log College and Seminary offers online courses and degrees in biblical counseling with no fees or tuition at logcollege.net. Further training (general and specialized) may also be found at ibcd.org and biblicalcounseling.com.

in a counseling room, applying God's word to people's lives is an assignment for every faithful Christian.

So How Do We Do This?

Though there is a spectrum of practice among biblical counselors, and certain points or sessions in the counseling process may require greater emphasis on particular areas than others, biblical counselors generally agree on six main steps of the work.²²

1. *Investigation: Gather Data.*

Scripture explains that if one speaks to a matter before having all the facts in-hand, it is foolish and shameful (Pro 18:13). The point of biblical counseling is to glorify God in all things. Thus, as he is the God of truth (Jn 14:6; Rev 19:11), we begin with listening and verifying our understanding. Doing this well requires taking good notes, preparing searching questions (Pro 21:5), not jumping to conclusions (Pro 18:13; Pro 14:15), conscientiously listening, clarifying, and discerning (Pro 20:5; Jas 1:19), and ensuring profitable communication with all involved parties whenever possible (Pro 18:17). Nonverbal communication such as body language should be observed carefully, as well as how something is said in its tone, manner, volume, or emphasis (often referred to as 'halo data'²³).

2. *Interpretation: Grasp Problems.*

Here the biblical counselor purposes to discern the problems and patterns in a manner which is decent and in order (1 Cor 14:40), so he places the data under Scripture's light for evaluation. Because renewal of the counselee's mind by the word of God (Rom 12:2) is his aim, he works to understand the problems concretely, continues to clarify uncertainties, and categorizes the issues. A jumbled, tangled pile of information has just been dumped out on the desk, so to speak; the focus of this process is to organize it so that the relationships between issues are properly realized, and troubles may be addressed in a biblical, logical, and effective manner.

It is of critical importance that the spiritual condition of the counselee be discerned and evaluated accurately (1 Cor 3:1), that biblical categories and nomenclature be applied (Ps 19:7-11), and that the issues be weighed and prioritized in accordance with Scripture's view of them. The counselor will sort through presenting problems (frequently emotional in nature), performance problems (which tend to be factual), preconditioning problems (usually patterns

22 Randy Patten. 'Key Elements in the Process of Counseling,' in *The NANC Fundamentals Conference Notebook* (Sherwood Baptist Church, 2011), 1-8.

23 Jay Adams. *The Christian Counselor's Manual* (Baker, 1975), 257-59; Wayne Mack, 'Taking Counselee Inventory: Gathering Data' in John MacArthur, ed. *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically* (Nelson, 2005), 144f.

of behavior which have developed into habits, often life-dominating), and heart-level problems (exposing what he craves), while making decisions as to where best to begin.

3. *Involvement: Gain Traction.*

At this point, the counselee must buy-in and commit to the biblical process of intensive, focused discipleship and receiving specific help with sanctification, because the hard work of godly change and growth lies before them (1 Cor 10:31; 2 Cor 5:9). Without manipulation or salesmanship, the biblical counselor must demonstrate genuine concern and love for him (Col 3:14). Relationally-driven service expresses such love through prayer (Eph 1:15-17), pursuit (Mt 18:15f), sacrificially sharing your own life (1 Th 2:8; 1 Jn 3:16), bearing with his struggles, sorrows, and sins (Eph 4:1-3; Rom 14:1-4), and being quick to extend and encourage forgiveness (Col 3:12f). In other words, building involvement is a matter of showing your commitment to him and his wellbeing, such that he recognizes and responds to God's care for him through yours.

4. *Inspire: Give Hope.*

By now, many counselees express doubts: 'I hear you saying that I can change, that I can glorify God here amidst all this mess; but I'm just not seeing it as possible.' His discouragement reveals itself. He needs to be given the hope which cannot disappoint (Rom 5:1-5), rooted in God's past grace toward him (Rom 8:1-4; Eph 1:3-14), present grace in him (Josh 4:1-7), and future grace for him (Rom 8:28; 1 Th 4:15-18). Sustaining hope is not simply a future promise, though those promises are precious, life-giving, and should be brought into counseling frequently (2 Cor 4:16-18; 1 Pet 4:19). Nor is it strictly focused on the past work of Christ at the Cross, though he must be directed there over and over.

His hope often wavers because God's grace goes unnoticed 'right now.' The biblical counselor will point out evidences of God's grace and have him write them down. He should rehearse gains made in his knowledge of God's word, progress in obedience, growth in godliness, or improved relationships; these proofs of God's help often become powerful motivators and encouragements. God not only will finally work out all things for the good of those he has called in his love, he actively does so now (Rom 8:28). Christ's people are never abandoned or forsaken (Heb 13:6), and always have their God near (Ps 34:18) as a refuge, strength, and present help in trouble (Ps 46:1-2).

5. *Instruct: God's Word.*

In this dimension of the process, biblical counseling distances itself from most integrationist and nearly all secularist approaches in that it is didactic and directive. 2 Tim 3:16f speaks not only of the nature of all Scripture as God-breathed, but its usefulness for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness. Consider the ministry of counseling the word, then: it directs and instructs. Scripture teaches us how God would have life to go, reproves us when we wander from his word and will, corrects us by showing us plainly

where we went astray, and trains us in godliness going forward. The counselor's demonstrable submission to the Bible's plain sense reaches a point of critically importance here; the counselee needs to see faithful handling of the word in order to reproduce it in his own life.

A clear distinction must be made in this stage between the counselor's suggestion and the Bible's command. Scripture is his need, not self-reliance or self-wisdom; it points him to his Saviour, and the Spirit who works holiness in him by that word. He needs instruction in mortification, vivification, and sanctification; he needs to learn godly communication; he needs to hear both the indicatives of the gospel and the imperatives of the law; he needs the gracious accountability of loving application, and the safeguard of church discipline when necessary.

6. *Implement: Give Homework.*

Php 2:12f aims at a holy fear working itself out in grateful obedience to God. Homework for schoolchildren helps them improve their grasp of concepts and implement them in various contexts; so too for counselees. Homework is the process where he will learn to exercise practical obedience, faith, and dependence on the Lord by his word and Spirit. Randy Patten, the first president of NANC/ACBC, often remarked to his classes that 'people don't change in fuzzy-land.' Thus, homework assignments must be concrete, practically oriented, and personally appropriate to the counselee to help bring about godly change and growth. The Bible is directive; so too is biblical counsel.

He will have behaviors to start or stop, actions to avoid, specific points and places of temptation to flee. Assigned Bible readings, Bible meditation, and Bible memorization should carry a significant weight in his exercises. He may read and explain a chapter in a book, download a lecture or sermon to take notes on, study and write an application response to a booklet or pamphlet, have a specific conversation with particular guidelines, or keep a journal of his time, conversations, upsets, or temptation and obedience. Church attendance and notes on how the sermon's teaching applies to his situation are vital aspects of weekly homework (Rom 10:17; 1 Th 2:13; Heb 10:24f). Weekly homework forms much of the structure of the next counseling session. Assignments may vary as widely as the counselee's circumstances, but they should be always directive in nature, demonstrably Scripturally rooted, and carefully reinforce the instruction, comfort, and counsel given from God's word.

Where Can I Learn More?

In the early days of the 'biblical counseling movement,' shelves of books written by Jay Adams dwarfed the combined output of other biblical counselors.²⁴ Such is no longer the case; the amount of biblical counseling literature has exploded over the last 40 years. That being said, Adams is an excellent place to begin. His *Competent to Counsel, A Theology of Christian Counseling, The Christian*

24 David Powlison. *Competent to Counsel? The History of a Conservative Protestant Biblical Counseling Movement* (New Growth, 2008), 116-17.

Counselor's Manual, and *How to Help People Change* should be required reading for every Christian pastor, seminarian, elder, deacon, and teacher. Stuart Scott and Heath Lambert edited *Counseling the Hard Cases*, a valuable work documenting specific work with 'problem people.' It is worthy of regular consultation. John MacArthur's *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically* is the most biblically robust modern introductory volume, and *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling* by MacDonald, Kellemen, and Viars will also reward your time and attention.

Other contemporary writers whose faithful, practical work will prove instructive for you and helpful for your counselees include Wayne Mack, Elyse Fitzpatrick, David Powlison, Ed Welch, Jeremy Pierre, Paul Tripp, Ken Sande, Stuart Scott, Martha Peace, Jerry Bridges, Paul Tautges, Deepak Reju, and Jim Newheiser. Adams also wrote an insightful book entitled *The Biblical View of Self-Esteem, Self-Love, and Self-Image*²⁵ and an outstanding series of short brochures entitled *What Do You Do When*²⁶ addressing the six most common problems people face with the Bible's wisdom; they should be acquired, studied, and used.

But be warned: do not commit the serious error of consulting only modern books! We considered earlier that God has never left his people without his help by his word, and nobody knew that better than the Puritans.²⁷ Modern folk often consider them solely by believing Nathaniel Hawthorne's (1804-1864) scandalous caricature in *The Scarlet Letter*, or through misreading – sometimes intentionally²⁸ – Jonathan Edwards' (1703-1758) famous sermon *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*; but there are more speeds on this bike. And very broadly stated, the Puritans might fall into two camps. First could be the 'culture warriors' who emphasized the here and now, rebuked kings, and went to war, and are rightly critiqued for being too much at home in this world; representative examples of this first camp were men such as John Winthrop (1587/88-1649), Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658), Samuel Rutherford (c. 1600-1661), and John

25 Jay Adams. *The Biblical View of Self-Esteem, Self-Love, and Self-Image* (Harvest House, 1986). Chapel Library publishes chapters 6, 7, and 10 as a free booklet or download in their 'Reformation Today' series, available here: <https://www.chapellibrary.org/book/bvos/biblical-view-of-selfesteem-the-adamsjay>.

26 Jay Adams. *What Do You Do When: Your Marriage Goes Sour, You Know That You're Hooked, You Worry All the Time, You Become Depressed, Anger Gets the Upper Hand* (P&R, 1975).

27 I generally favor J.I. Packer's (1926-2020) dating of English Puritanism as 1550-1700 in *A Quest for Godliness* (Crossway, 1990), 11; but here use the term *very* broadly to include American, Dutch, French, Scottish, and Swiss expressions of Post-Reformation, Reformed, confessional, Puritan-minded/influenced piety across Protestant denominational lines into the 18th century.

28 William Haller, here's looking at you.

Witherspoon (1723-1794). These men are often contrasted with the ‘pietists’ who emphasized personal conversion and holiness, exemplified by John Flavel (1627-1691), Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680), William Perkins (1558-1602), Thomas Manton (1620-1677), William Gurnall (1616-1679), and Thomas Watson (1620-1686). While positioning the ‘culture warriors’ vs. the ‘pietists’ is indeed an extremely broad understanding in terms of the *content* of their writing, in terms of their respective *emphases* it is not far off-base.

But their work is both valuable and accessible for biblical counselors to read, in particular those writings from the more ‘pietistic’ camp. Robert Bolton (1572-1631) wrote *A Treatise on Comforting Afflicted Consciences*, an overview volume on biblical counseling (they termed it ‘casuistry’ or dealing with ‘cases of conscience’²⁹). Timothy Rogers (1658-1728) penned *Trouble of Mind and the Disease of Melancholy*, a manual on walking with Christ through depression. William Bates (1625-1699) wrote on *Divine Meditation*. Classic works by Jeremiah Burroughs (1599-1646) include his *A Treatise of Earthly-Mindedness* and *Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*; Watson covered this subject as well in *The Art of Divine Contentment* and added *The Doctrine of Repentance*, a treatment of the grace of godly sorrow (2 Cor 7:8-10) with specific biblical tests of whether repentance is genuine or false. John Owen (1616-1683) left a trilogy on killing sin biblically which is breathtakingly practical and comprehensive, yet shockingly contemporary.³⁰ Richard Sibbes (1577-1635) wrote *The Bruised Reed*, a lovely exposition of Isa 42:3. Samuel Rutherford’s (c.1600-1661) collected *Letters* are literally a compilation of his mail, but it has rich, godly, wise counsel for a variety of situations; so too with John Newton’s (1725-1807) letters in his 4-volume *Works*. Richard Baxter (1615-1691) – unsound on justification, unmatched on pastoral theology – left his massive *Christian Directory*, providing biblical direction for almost any biblical counseling situation imaginable. Their work is valuable because, as they commonly affirmed, all the Bible’s doctrine was for life, and no doctrine was understood rightly which was not applied practically to the

29 ‘The effectiveness of his [William Perkins] preaching was due in large part to his penchant for casuistry – the art of dealing with ‘cases of conscience’ through self-examination and scriptural application. Each of his sermons ‘seemed all law and all gospel, all cordials and all corrosives, as the different necessities of the people apprehended.’ Andrew Ballitch and J. Stephen Yuille, eds. *The Wholesome Doctrine of the Gospel: Faith and Love in the Writings of William Perkins* (RHB, 2020), xviii.

30 Republished in one volume by Crossway (2006) as *Overcoming Sin and Temptation*, Owen’s three short works include *Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers*, *Of Temptation: The Nature and Power of It*, and *Indwelling Sin*.

understanding and practiced consistently in the life.³¹

Hundreds of their other books and sermons, rich in counsel from God's word, remain for our benefit today. Consider a few selections drawn from the writing of one representative Puritan as an example of how widely their focus and effectiveness ranged. John Flavel (1627-1691) lost his parents at an early age, buried three wives, lost his pulpit in the Great Ejection of 1662, and suffered heavy persecution for his ministry.³² He wrote *A Token for Mourners* (on sorrow); *Preparation for Suffering* (on the Christian's attitude toward pain and loss); *The Balm of the Covenant Applied to the Bleeding Wounds of Afflicted Saints: 2 Sam 23:5* (addressing the mercy of God for the pains of life); *A Practical Treatise on Fear: Its Varieties, Uses, Causes, Effects, and Remedies* (how the Christian should view and deal with fear); *The Touchstone of Sincerity, or The Signs of Grace and the Symptoms of Hypocrisy* (what it is to be saved); *The Mystery of Providence* (an exposition of Ps 57:2, dealing with when life has not gone as hoped), and many more such works.³³ Most of these titles began as sermons preached to his congregation in a season where the counsel of God's word was critical for survival! To read the Puritans is to learn how to grasp, teach, apply, and counsel

31 So Petrus van Mastricht (1630-1706), Jonathan Edwards' favorite theologian: 'Christian theology is best defined as the doctrine of living for God through Christ...Christian theology unites theory with practice, and is 'a knowledge of truth that is according to godliness, Tit 1:1...Indeed, the study of theology, to the extent that it is true theology, is not sufficient, unless...it is earnestly devoted to practical theology and to practice.' (*Theoretical-Practical Theology* [RHB, 2019], I:66, 79, 95). William Ames (1576-1633) agreed: 'Theology is the doctrine or teaching [*doctrina*] of living to God' (*The Marrow of Theology* [Baker, 1997], 77). So did William Perkins (*Works* [RHB, 2018], VI:11): 'Theology is the science of living blessedly forever.'

32 Flavel's life and theology is comprehensively covered in Brian Cosby's engaging *John Flavel: Puritan Life and Thought in Stuart England* (Lexington, 2013).

33 *The Works of John Flavel* are published in 6 volumes by the Banner of Truth.

the Bible from men who were masters of the Bible; and we have much to learn.³⁴

Conclusion

Biblical counseling is the work of helping people find God's answers to life's problems in God's word. It has specific convictions and practices drawn from the word of God to lead people to deal with the Lord on his own terms. And it devotes itself to this process of change because God's word lays it out for us. I will never have that moment in my professor's classroom back again, but by God's grace, I will help people from God's word – because it alone is sufficient for life and godliness through knowing Jesus Christ. The Bible does have the answers we need; and the One whose wisdom they are speaks therein. Brethren, let us counsel the word.

34 Consult Mark Deckard's *Helpful Truth in Past Places: The Puritan Practice of Biblical Counseling* (Mentor, 2010) for a guided tour of the Puritans giving their biblical counsel. J.I. Packer's 'The Practical Writings of the English Puritans' in *A Quest for Godliness* (Crossway, 1990), 49-80, provides a solid and engaging overview, as does Mark Jones and Joel Beeke's 'Puritan Casuistry' in *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* (RHB, 2012), 927-946. James La Belle has also authored three valuable volumes with Beeke through Reformation Heritage, which compile and synthesize Puritan biblical counsel on Christian living in more topical fashion: *Living by God's Promises* (2010), *Living Zealously* (2012), and *Living in a Godly Marriage* (2016). Another useful topical resource is David Herding's MAR thesis *Counseling the Depressed Person: The Puritan Alternative to Secular Psychology* (RTS-Charlotte, 2010). Tim Keller's 2010 essay *Puritan Resources for Biblical Counseling* is valuable, and Erroll Hulse's (1931-2017) article *The Puritans and Counseling Troubled Souls* (*Foundations* #8 [May 1982], 6-28) is worthy of being written in gold. Interested viewers should also consult the bonus DVD teaching sessions on the documentary *Puritan: All of Life to the Glory of God* (Media Gratiae, 2020), as it contains helpful summaries of the counsel given from several writers and works mentioned above.

THE PROGRESSIVE MINDSET
2020 SONS OF ISSACHAR WORLDVIEW LECTURE
ANDREW UNDERHILE, PH.D.¹

“The assault on long-established and universally-received truths has generally this advantage, in free countries at least, that it is allowed to proceed far before the friends of truth take the alarm...Few men live by faith. They can only see the danger of bad principles when fully developed in their pernicious effects. It seems as if the social or corporate evils induced on fallen humanity by its own depravity, could be remedied only when they come to such a height as to subvert society, excite great revolutions, or draw down the manifest judgments of God. Social evils are not developed in a day; and even long after they have taken root, and budded, and blossomed, will the world refuse to believe that they can ever ripen into their poisonous and destructive fruit.”²

1. Philosophical Roots of Secular Humanism

Tracing philosophical movements is always difficult because they seldom, if ever, follow straight lines. No philosophy develops in a vacuum, and so the same basic system may have distinct faces unique to its various proponents. As they trickle down from academia into society, they blend with other influences, thus blurring the lines.

Having said that, I regard the works of Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) to be the most recognizable wellspring of today’s social, moral, and political evils. We will limit our treatment of Hobbes to a very brief survey of his philosophy and the social theory built on it.

For Hobbes, true philosophy is Physics. Since God is a Spirit, His existence and attributes are unknowable to philosophy. This definition of philosophy drives a wedge into reality. Everything immaterial has no meaningful bearing on “real life.” This dichotomy is the heart of the secular humanist worldview with which the Church must do battle.

Because Hobbes’ society was predominantly Christian he could not openly disavow the existence of God. His system does the next best thing. It says

1 Pastor Underhile is affiliated with the Evangelical Association of Reformed and Congregational Churches and serves as a mentor for the Log College and Seminary. He has served as a missionary in the Philippines, a translator, a pastor, and a seminary professor as well as being the author of two books. Currently, he serves as pastor of Friedens Reformed Church in South Dakota. He is a passionate defender of the confessions and of the family as the building blocks of the church.

2 James Gibson, *The Marriage Affinity Question*, Edinburgh, 1854, page 1

that what can be known comes only through the senses. God is relegated to the unknowable. Granted, Hobbes frequently speaks of God. But this is either a massive blind spot in his system or a shield to protect himself from charges of atheism and the harm this would bring to his reputation.

Hobbes says that conceptions are only movements excited in a substance in the head. The movement is broadcast to the heart, which either concurs or opposes the movement. Concurrence is what we call “pleasure.” Dislike of the movement is what we call “pain,” or “evil.” Concurrence attracts us to the cause. This attraction we call “desire.” Aversion to the movement repels us from the cause. This we call “fear.”

You can just imagine the system of morality this scheme will produce. Hobbes spares us the trouble of working it out. He writes, “Every man calls that good which is agreeable to himself, and that evil which displeases him. Thus, since each man differs from others by his temperament or his mode of being, he differs from them in his distinction between the good and the evil; and there exists no goodness absolutely considered without relation; for the goodness which we attribute to God, even, is only His goodness relatively to us. As we call the things which please or displease us good or evil, we call the properties by which these things produce these effects, goodness or wickedness.”³

Again, he writes, “All the real good, which we call honest and morally virtuous, is that which is not repugnant to the law, civil or natural; for the law is all the right reason we have, and... is the infallible rule of moral goodness. The reason whereof is this, that because neither mine nor the Bishop’s reason is right reason fit to be a rule of our moral actions, we have therefore set up over ourselves a sovereign governor, and agreed that his laws shall be unto us, whatsoever they be, in the place of right reason, to dictate to us what is really good.”⁴

This brief look at Hobbes’ philosophy helps us understand his political theory expounded in Leviathan.

In the introduction to Leviathan, Hobbes describes the commonwealth as an “artificial person,”⁵ that is, a body politic that mimics the human body. The frontispiece of the first edition, which Hobbes help design, depicted the commonwealth in human form built out of the bodies of its citizen with the ruler as the head. This sovereign head is what Hobbes calls the Leviathan. The ideal commonwealth is ruled by an absolute sovereign who possesses absolute authority in order to ensure the common defense.

We critique Hobbes upon Scriptural principles. Hobbes may implode un-

3 English Works 5:210

4 Ibid 5:194

5 Hobbes, Leviathan, Introduction (<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/3207/3207-h/3207-h.htm>)

der a strict philosophical examination, but we will hold him to a higher standard.

Hobbes takes the wrong starting point. He begins with man, rather than God. Hobbes' system is built on Satan's lie.⁶ Hobbes asserts that mankind's native bent is toward war and violence, yet simultaneously asserts that mankind desires peace! Does he believe that men's violence and warmongering is itself a seeking after peace? Or is he saying that mankind has corporate desires diametrically opposite of the desires of the individuals which make up mankind? Scripture declares that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."⁷ In absolute defiance of God's Word, Hobbes asserts that men naturally seek peace!⁸

Hobbes ideal commonwealth is a perversion of the Biblical doctrine of the Church. Scripture teaches that Christ is the Head of the Church.⁹ Christ's government is described in Isaiah 33:22: "For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us." All three "branches" of the government collapse into the person of Christ. He is the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial rolled into one.

2. Biblical Criticism of the basis of Secular Humanism.

This is a theological paper, so we will not answer the fool according to his folly,¹⁰ but I find it interesting that sometimes the ludicrousness of sinful men becomes so obvious that even they are forced to recalibrate in order to forestall self-destruction.

A good example of this is the article by Dale Riepe, published in the Spring 1969 issue of *Telos*. The article was entitled, "The Collapse of Philosophical Naturalism." Riepe presented four criticisms fatal flaws in philosophical naturalism. We will look at the first two.

His first criticism was the circularity of it methodology. In fact, Riepe called it "a game of ring-around-the-rosie in which the scientific method is constantly applied to itself."¹¹

There is no doubt that the scientific method is unparalleled in its ability to unlock the secrets of nature. However, a philosophical orientation that weds

6 Genesis 3:5

7 Genesis 6:5

8 Romans 1:22

9 Ephesians 5:23; 1:24

10 Proverbs 26:4

11 Dale Riepe, "The Collapse of Philosophical Naturalism." *Telos*, Spring 1969.

itself to the scientific method loses its epistemic means to criticize the method.

Riepe, anticipating the collapse of naturalism, says, “Scientific method does not interpret; only those who use it do. Yet socially speaking the interpretation is as important as the method itself.”¹²

Here we find a relation to Hobbes’ conception of philosophy, and here is where both Hobbes and Naturalism break down: Philosophy deals with ideas, but ideas are not material objects. Yet both systems behave as if they were, blindly overlooking their own presuppositions. The precept, “Everything must be proven by the scientific method,” cannot itself be proven by the scientific method. Data does not speak for itself; it is interpreted. And interpretation presupposes a worldview.

The second fatal flaw in naturalism, according to Riepe, is an ontological shortcoming. Naturalism, he says, “has failed to give an account of the nature of reality, but instead has said ‘let science, the Almighty New God, do it.’ Science of course cannot do it since this is the job of philosophy.”¹³ Riepe says, “[b]y his stubborn refusal to do philosophy instead of attitudinizing about scientific method he gives evaluative philosophy by default to the supernaturalists (whom he abhors), to the idealist (whom he claims to have replaced), to the subjectivists (who daily get less impressed with scientific method), and to the materialists who are trying to undermine the establishment he endeavors to protect.”¹⁴

Naturalism draws a line between fact and value. Then it stands the philosopher up as a cheerleader to the scientists, merely clearing the path for the advance of science. Riepe says, “Somewhere along the line, as Schopenhauer has said, the methodological knife must be used for cutting something since it cannot cut itself.”¹⁵ Fetishizing the scientific method leaves the naturalist with progressively less interesting work to do.

Now to draw the line between Hobbes and Darwin, and thus Marx.

In Hobbes’ view, human society evolves from the “state of nature” to civil society. When men decide to elect a sovereign, they are no longer primitive beings, but citizens of a civil society.

Darwin’s theory claimed that this is exactly the way nature develops. There is an evolution to higher and higher development. Thus Darwin gave a veneer of scientific respectability to Hobbes’ theory of societal evolution. Societies evolve because evolution is the way of nature. The importance of Darwin to our

12 Ibid, pg. 83

13 Ibid. Page 86

14 Ibid. Page 87

15 Ibid. Page 88

society cannot be exaggerated. Everything we have ever been taught, whether in physics, chemistry, biology, psychology, or morality, has been filtered through Darwinism. Since this is the case in which we find ourselves, it is here that our voices must be heard.

Karl Marx (1818-1883), asserted that human societies evolve through class struggle. This struggle is a conflict between the ownership class who control the means of production and the dispossessed laboring class who provide labor for production. He believed that capitalism carried within itself the seeds of its own downfall and would be replaced by a new system. This new system – an evolution to a higher state of societal existence was socialism.

Marx himself said, “Nothing ever gives me greater pleasure than to have my name linked onto Darwin’s. His wonderful work make my own absolutely impregnable. Darwin may not know it, but he belongs to the social revolution.”¹⁶

The new Liberalism with which we are faced is a direct result of the combined forces of Darwinism and Marxism.

We leave philosophy and proceed on the solid ground of God’s Word. A system of thought that does not begin with God, can never lead to truth. A world-view that starts with man, starts in depravity. Nothing can be expected from it but evil. It is inherently illogical and self-destructive. No Christian minister should have to be told this.

Scripture’s first declaration about mankind after the Fall, is that, “every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”¹⁷ Mankind is said to love evil,¹⁸ because he is sinful from conception.¹⁹ Scripture describes mankind separated from God as, “without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good.”²⁰ God declares man to be “filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful.”²¹ And if that weren’t bad enough, God declares that all men know that these are violations of God’s Law, they know that God’s Law

16 Quoted in J. Spargo, *Karl Marx: His Life and Work* (New York, 1910)

17 Genesis 6:5

18 Psalm 52:3

19 Psalm 51:5

20 2 Timothy 3:3

21 Romans 1:29-31

binds them morally, yet they “suppress the truth in unrighteousness,”²² and the spurn the judgment of God and take pleasure in committing of acts that deserve death, and celebrate others committing these acts.²³

Question 5 of my beloved Heidelberg Catechism wrings from me the admission that I am prone by nature to hate God and my neighbor²⁴. This is the uniform testimony of Scripture.

We see the depravity everywhere. Every nation on earth makes laws to guard against it. Every prison cell, every electric chair, every lock on our doors testifies to the fact that we are by nature prone to hate God and our neighbor. The most profound indicator of the depths of the depravity is the fact that in the face of thousands of years of treason, plunder, adultery, murder, and genocide, mankind still sees himself as basically good!

Since we are sinners, is it easy – indeed natural – to be deceived by sin. Sin is deceptive because of its noetic effects. Sin has so corrupted our minds that they are utterly unable to form correct views of anything apart from the direction of God’s Word. This has huge implications for us as Christians when it comes to assessing science, politics, justice, and morality. We must always take into account the noetic effects of sin. No study of human nature can be theologically accurate if it fails to take into account sin and its effects.

Let me illustrate: There is a qualitative difference between someone who was born blind and someone who lost their sight at the age of 10. This person will retain many visual memories. Although they will no longer be able to see a sunset or a prairie, they can still picture one in their mind – provided they had seen one before. But one blind from birth will not only have no visual memories, neither will he be able to form mental images of anything. You will not be able to explain color, shade, proportion, or any other visual data which must be seen to be understood, because this person possesses neither the organ of sight, nor the capacity to process this data. The person who was born blind may be able to amass a great deal of theoretical knowledge about the world. Nonetheless, he will still have not actually seen the world, and for that reason, he will not be the best source of information about it.

Because of sin’s damaging effects on the mind, the unregenerate, being as Scripture says “blind,”²⁵ “having their understanding darkened,” “alienated from the life of God,” they have never rightly seen the world in which they live. And this is where the analogy of the person who was born blind falls short. The

22 Romans 1:18

23 Romans 1:32

24 Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, Volume 3, pg. 309

25 Ephesians 4:18

one fact which gives meaning to everything, which explains the existence of everything, and against which everything must be understood, i.e., the existence of God – this is the very thing our sinful nature obscures. It is not an exaggeration to say that the unregenerate person has never seen the world rightly.

A Biblically-informed mind will recognize that everything mankind creates apart from God, be it science, philosophy, government, the arts, or entertainment is vanity, vexation of spirit, and labor for the wind.²⁶ All products of the unbelieving world, since they begin with autonomous, fallen man must end in self-destruction. Sow the wind, you reap the whirlwind.²⁷ Christians exhibit the height of folly when they imagine they can appropriate anything profitable from the world's "culture."

3. The relationship between the contemporary social evils and secular humanism.

We must put one principle in place right here. The sin we have repeatedly pointed out, that of staring with man rather than God, is idolatry. Avowing any authority other than God is idolatry. One of the straightest lines Scripture draws is between idolatry and sexual immorality.

A few examples will suffice:

Sodom and Gomorrah:

Idolatry was the defining feature of Canaan.²⁸ Though the iniquity of the Amorites was not full,²⁹ Sodom and Gomorrah's iniquity was full. God destroyed them for their gross sexual perversion. Scripture makes no bones about saying that. What I hope you see is that Scripture also tells us that Canaan was exceptionally idolatrous. Ergo, the wickedness of Sodom was the natural outgrowth of its idolatry.

Laban and his daughters:

How perverse if Laban's view of marriage? He dresses up one of his daughters in a wedding gown, covers her face with a veil, and marches her into a man's bedroom under the cover of night to make sure that he has sex with her in order to consummate a marriage to which he has not agreed. After being exposed, his solution is to give his other daughter to the same man. Nothing about the narrative gives the impression that Laban was uncharacteristic in Padan-aram. Even

26 Ecclesiastes 1:17; 2:17, 26; 4:4, 6

27 Hosea 8:7

28 Joshua 24:15

29 Genesis 15:16

in the Old Testament, Padan-aram is described as a place of rampant idolatry.³⁰

The Bible abounds with passages that link these two sins together. Often the link is by way of analogy, but analogies work because there is a recognizable link between the thing depicted and the image used to depict it. Israel's frequent falls into idolatry are described by God with such terms as "play the harlot,"³¹ "go a whoring"³² "adultery,"³³ and "lewd whoredom."³⁴

Within these passages, Israel is rebuked, not only for committing spiritual adultery by the sin of idolatry, she is also rebuked for engaging in actual sexual immorality. "Thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no gods... every one neighed after his neighbour's wife."³⁵ "Because they have committed villany in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbours' wives, and have spoken lying words in my name, which I have not commanded them; even I know, and am a witness, saith the LORD."³⁶ "Israel's unfaithfulness to God was not only a form of spiritual prostitution or adultery, it led to the physical acts themselves."³⁷ The entire book of Hosea is a real life depiction of this reality.³⁸

The classic passage is Romans 1. Here Paul details the descent into the vilest of immorality, which is sodomy, to use the Biblical term. Paul describes it as the natural fruit of idolatry.

Paul writes, "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God...they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and

30 Joshua 24:2

31 Jeremiah 2:20

32 Exodus 34:15; Leviticus 20:5, 6; Deuteronomy 31:16; 2 Chronicles 21:13; Ezekiel 6:9

33 Jeremiah 9:2

34 Jeremiah 13:27

35 Jeremiah 5:7-8

36 Jeremiah 29:23

37 Dennis P. Hollinger, *The Meaning of Sex: Christian Ethics and the Moral Life*

38 Hosea 1:2

creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves... For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another..."³⁹

Scripture declares that men become like the gods they worship.⁴⁰ History bears this out. In the first four chapters of his "Exhortation to the Greeks," Clement of Alexandria provides a side-by-side comparison of the perversely immoral Greco-Roman society and the behavior of their gods as recorded in their mythology. The "gods" in these myths were guilty of treason, adultery, murder, rape, incest, sodomy, orgies, and bestiality. These gods were worshipped. Clement says that no one should be surprised at the immorality of society when their gods behave like this.⁴¹

Augustine wrote, "Thus doth the soul commit fornication when she turns away from Thee, and seeks without Thee what she cannot find pure and untainted until she returns to Thee. Thus all pervertedly imitate Thee who separate themselves far from Thee⁴² and raise themselves up against Thee. But even by thus imitating Thee they acknowledge Thee to be the Creator of all nature, and so that there is no place whither they can altogether retire from Thee."^{43,44}

*"The Old Testament says that if God's people turn away in spiritual adultery, it will not be long until the following generations are engaged in physical adultery, for the two things go hand in hand...In the 1930s liberalism took over almost all the churches in the United States, and in the 1960s our generation is sick with promiscuous sex. It is the same in Britain and other countries. These things are not unrelated; they are cause and effect."*⁴⁵

It is not hard to see how our society, which worships wealth, power, sex,

39 Romans 1:21-28

40 Psalm 115:8; Psalm 135:18; Hosea 9:10

41 Clement of Alexandria, Exhortation to the Greeks, Chapter IV. ANF Volume 2, page 189

42 Psalm 7:15

43 Psalm 139:7-8

44 Augustine, Confessions 2.6.14

45 Francis A. Schaeffer, The Church at the End of the Twentieth Century, pp. 123-124

entertainment – everyone doing what is right in his own eyes⁴⁶ – should fail to behave like the gods it worships.

Darwinism reduces man, created in the image of God,⁴⁷ to a mere animal – advanced perhaps, but still an animal. Darwinism eradicates the creature/Creator distinction and is therefore a form of pantheism. Religious pantheist says that everything is god and god is everything. Darwinism says that Nature is everything and everything is Nature. This removal of the creature/Creator distinction is an open door to sodomy. Without the distinction between creature and Creator, all is one. And it is on the grounds of such an orientation that people are making ridiculous, unscientific statements like “Gender is a social construct.”

The self-destructive nature of secular humanism is nowhere more evident than in the issue of sex and gender. The same experts who have ridiculed Creationists as “anti-science,” are now forced by their politicizing of “science” into maintaining that 250 million years of binary sexual reproduction is merely a social construct and not a biological fact.⁴⁸ This is exactly what Riepe predicted.

Abortion is linked to sex and idolatry because child-bearing is the natural result, indeed the purpose, of sex. But when sex becomes an act of idolatry, the offspring must be sacrificed to the god. These babies are not mere unwanted by-products. No one is so ignorant as to not know that sex produces babies. But when the act is idolatrous worship, the baby must be sacrificed to the god, and it makes no difference whether the god be Molech, freedom of expression, or “it’s my body.”

The callousness produced by this view of sex is staggering. We have all have noticed our society’s obsession with the well-being of animals. Our society sees nothing logically inconsistent with “saving the whales,” while murdering unborn human beings. If they really believed in survival of the fittest, they wouldn’t feel even the slightest remorse at the wholesale slaughter of an entire species in the interest of our own. If human survival endangers other creatures, why should anyone be bothered by this? Survival of the fittest is what is supposed to happen. Why aren’t they rather celebrating the fact that Nature, red in tooth and claw, has done her dirty work and that the fittest have survived?

4. How must the Church respond?

I will lay out three things the Church must do to combat the evil of our day. They are things that should be done in every generation.

A. The first is to reaffirm the doctrine of the Antithesis.

46 Judges 17:16

47 Genesis 1:26-27

48 I reject age of their age of the universe, of course. I only use this number to show their own self-refutation.

The fact that countless professing Christians have never so much as heard the term “the Antithesis” is indicative of the depths of our condition.

The Antithesis is the doctrine of the God-built wall between the seed of serpent and the Seed of the woman. The worldviews of the regenerate and the unregenerate cannot be identical. The two lines start from completely different presuppositions, so the conclusions they come to about everything will be different.

This is not a call to monasticism. Scripture nowhere forbids us from commerce with unbelievers. The separation is spiritual. The antithesis does not mean that we separate ourselves physically from the world around us or from the things of this world. Scripture does not envision God’s people living in isolation from the normal life of our respective nations. But He strictly forbids alliances which require us to compromise our spiritual principles.

There is an amazing illustration of the Antithesis woven into Israel’s history. It begins with the prohibition of Exodus 23 against making treaties with any Canaanites. But two battles into the Conquest of Canaan under Joshua, things go wrong. The people of Gibeon trick Israel into making a treaty with them. When the ruse is discovered, Israel makes them slaves – which the Gibeonites obviously prefer to being executed.⁴⁹ But this sets a dangerous precedent. Multiple times throughout the books of Joshua and Judges we find Israel deciding to let live cities God had consigned to death and to make them servants like they had done with the Gibeonites.⁵⁰

In 1 Kings 9, we read that Solomon took the descendants of these Canaanites whom Israel failed to destroy and made them forced labor. No Israelite was made forced labor. Israelites were given prominent military positions and such.⁵¹

When Solomon died, his son Rehoboam went to Shechem for his coronation. At Shechem an underground rebellion surfaces against the dynasty of David. Inside the visible church there was a movement, well underway by the death of Solomon, to reject Christ as the King of His Church. Jeroboam, the ringleader, incites the people to say, “Your father made our yoke heavy...lighten the...heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you.”⁵² Solomon had not placed a heavy burden on any Israelite. This complaint comes from the descendants of the Canaanites. Do you see it? People outside the church were complaining about the burdens of the church.

49 Joshua 9:20-27

50 Cf. Joshua 16:10; 17:12-13; Judges 1:30

51 1 Kings 9:20-23

52 1 Kings 12:4

The people leading the movement to reject God's promised Savior through the dynasty of David were the children of the people with whom Israel violated the Antithesis. The visible church was overthrown from within by people who had no business being associated with it in first place. Israel had so compromised with the wicked people of Canaan, that these very Canaanites were directing church policy! The people who could legitimately cry, "What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse"⁵³ weren't members of the Church anyway.

Judah still continued to nominally worship God, but she was afflicted multiple times with sinful kings who institutionalized violations of the Antithesis. 344 years after Solomon's death Judah fell and went into Babylonian exile for 70 years, according to the word of the Lord.

While Judah was in exile, Babylon had brought people from various parts of her Empire and dumped them in Judah. As a result, when the people of Judah returned, the land was much like it was when they first conquered it. Slowly the compromise began. Israelites began marrying the unbelievers around them.

At the end of Nehemiah, the magnitude of the tragedy is revealed. The children born of these illicit marriages, Scripture says, "spoke the language of Ashdod,"⁵⁴ that is the language of their unbelieving parent. They could not speak Hebrew at all. This cut them out of God's covenant because it denied them access to Scripture, since the Scriptures were in Hebrew. Through violating the Antithesis, these people, while not sacrificing their babies to the fires of Moloch like their ancestors did, were still sacrificing their babies to hell.

This is not just weird Old Testament behavior. Recall the warning, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."⁵⁵ Violating the Antithesis in Corinth had the same result it did in Padan-aram: professing believers engaged in unspeakably perverse sexual behavior. It is no different today.

We idealize the 1940's and 1950's because the Christian morality was the societal norm – at least publicly. This was not because the world was more wholesome, but because the church was still keeping herself relatively separate, and thus still had a real voice.

What do we have today? We have staggering numbers of professing Christians who view pornography on a regular basis, staggering numbers of our

53 1 Kings 12:16

54 Nehemiah 13:24

55 2 Corinthians 6:14-16

youth casually engaging in premarital sex, staggering numbers of divorces, and ostensibly conservative denominations promoting Marxism and sodomy.

The mainline denominations surrendered decades ago. But today the denominations that were established as a reaction to the decay, are treading the same path. They have so imbibed the values of the world: social doctrines, politics, entertainment and ethics, that they – the original opponents of the downgrade – are its loudest proponents. Compromise between the church and the world is always on the world's terms.

B. Return to doctrinal preaching.

Nothing but doctrinal preaching is real preaching because doctrine is the content of Scripture. Anyone who cannot see that has no business in the pulpit.

It seems odd that we should have international Bible societies, countless parachurch organizations, and countless more versions of the Bible, yet also have such a widespread dearth of Biblical knowledge. George Junkin mourned this reality in 1849. He wrote:

“That an age, claiming distinction above most which have preceded it, for benevolent enterprise in disseminating the Bible and Christianity, should, notwithstanding, be characterized by indistinct views of the great doctrines of religion, may at first seem contradictory. Such, however, it appears to me, is the true state of the Christian world at present. A general laxness prevails as to doctrinal opinions. Indeed, not unfrequently, indifference is deemed a virtue; and a man felicitates himself upon his liberality, because he feels no peculiar attachment to any particular religious creed. Opinions in politics are of great consequence—opinions in law, in medicine, in science, in the arts; everywhere but in religion, to be without any fixed opinions, is deemed dishonourable and unworthy of a noble and generous spirit. There is no illiberality in every other department of thought and enterprise, in a man's holding and defending a series of fixed doctrines; but by a strange inconsistency, this age denounces as bigotry and narrowness of spirit, the steadfast maintenance of the revealed system of religious truth. This feature of the age—which may be correctly designated the bigotry of liberalism—may be traced in indistinct lines on the fair countenance of the daughter of Zion, and rudely defines the measure of her conformity to this world. Hence the diminished attention to doctrines. Hence the singular fact, that in a land teeming with Bibles, and Bible Societies, and Bible classes, and helps to Bible interpretation, Bible exposition is nearly banished from all their pulpits. What pastor ever thinks of expounding the sacred books in any continuous series of exercises! What congregation would endure an uninterrupted course of lectures on any portion of Scripture? What preacher would venture to suspend his reputation on the delivery of fifty-two lectures in the year on the Epistle to the Romans, or that to the Hebrews? My field of observation is very limited; but my impression is, that this most profitable description of pulpit labour has sunk into general neglect: and hence the deficiency of doctrinal knowledge: and hence the laxness of opinion: and

hence the distractions and disputations in the church."⁵⁶

While other men may have plausible excuses for their ineptitude in the pulpit, graduates of LCS most certainly do not! Let me encourage you to understand that all the systematic theology you are learning is meant to be taught to all the people of God, and it is your job as a pastor to teach it. There is no growth in the Christian faith without growth in the knowledge of the doctrines of the faith. To those interested in pursuing this idea, I highly recommend an essay written by Benjamin Morgan Palmer, entitled, "A Plea for Doctrine as the Instrument of Sanctification."⁵⁷

All doctrines of the Christian faith are important, and therefore should be taught to our churches, but certain doctrines must be more vigorously defended at some times over others because of the exigencies of our situation.

I suggest that we need rigorous preaching on the Doctrine of the Trinity. The god of the American pulpit is, in very few instances, the God of the Bible. It is easy to mourn the low view of God that abounds in and out of the Church, but few men seem to see this as a call to preach the doctrine of God. No doctrine is more likely to raise our view of God than the Trinity because it makes clear to us that God is not at all like us. Mankind's primal sin is to make God in his own image.⁵⁸

Another key doctrine that needs to be preached with renewed vigor is the Infallibility of Scripture. Every aberrant practice that slithers its way into the Church does so by denying the infallibility of Scripture, either implicitly or explicitly.

The Church cannot be built on any other foundation than the divinely appointed and constructed foundation of the infallible Scriptures. That is why the truth of the infallibility of Scripture is so serious: it concerns the foundation of the Church.

Today attacks are being made on that foundation. This has been done in the past, and it is being done today in many ways. Many are chipping away at the foundation.

"There is the totally inconsistent idea of thought inspiration in distinction from word inspiration. According to this conception there are parts of Scripture that are not the word of God, or there are parts that are erroneously, inaccurately, or imperfectly recorded and presented.

"There is also the conception of two factors in the Bible: a divine factor and

56 George Junkin, *A Treatise on Justification*, Preface

57 The essay can be found here: http://www.the-highway.com/doctrine-as-sanctification_Palmer.html

58 Psalm 50:

a human factor. I think that this expression of two factors is sometimes used with good intentions, but it is a dangerous expression. The Bible is the word of God, produced by one factor: divine inspiration. To the extent that you speak of a human factor; you must also speak of a human word.

“The same is true of another distinction that is sometimes used with good intentions: a primary author (God) and secondary authors (men). The trouble with this distinction is that no matter how mightily you strive to distinguish between the primary and the secondary authors, you are still saying men are authors. They are not. The author of the scriptures is God. It is his word. It came not by the will of man, but by the will of God.”⁵⁹

Thirdly, you should come as no surprise that as a Reformed theologian, I would insist that we need to preach the Doctrines of Grace. We should preach them with fervor and rigor. This is indeed the heart of the aforementioned essay by B.M. Palmer. Nothing is more suited to promote godliness than the Reformed doctrines of Grace. There is no Christian growth without humility, and nothing instills humility like the knowledge of one’s own depravity. As one who subscribes to the Three Forms of Unity, I frequently have recourse to the famous Three G’s of the Heidelberg Catechism: Guilt, Grace, and Gratitude.

Finally, the Church must make her voice heard in defense of the Biblical doctrine of Creation. And here the preacher must be prepared to bleed. The Biblical doctrine of Creation must be a hill we are prepared to die upon. The pressure to compromise with the Darwinist spirit of the age is strong, and only an unshakable conviction in the infallibility of Scripture can resist it. W.G.T. Shedd wrote:

“I purpose to direct your attention to the proper attitude of the theologian and preacher toward the secular spirit; that is, toward the intellectual movements and products of the time in which he lives. The proper attitude is that of independence, because Christian theology is derived from an infallible source...The Darwinian theory of evolution can have as much infallibility as Darwin had, but no more. The Spencerian ethics can be as free from all error as the intellect that made it, but no more. The demand, therefore, that Christianity submit to be judged and criticized by human science and philosophy requires, in order to be consistent, that these latter claim infallibility. This is what Christianity does, when it subjects human science and philosophy to its criticism. The conflict between the Christian religion and science, if there be one, is ultimately a question as to which of the two is inerrant. One or the other must be, in order to be an arbiter over the other, and a court of last appeal.”⁶⁰

59 Homer C. Hoeksema, In *The Beginning God*, RFP, 1966

60 W.G.T. Shedd, *Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy*, Chapter 1

Christian ministers are going to have to swim against the tide and affirm what Scripture says about creation, and we're going to have to be prepared to suffer the reproach of Christ.⁶¹ Our Westminster Confession of Faith states unequivocally: "It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,⁶² a for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness,⁶³ in the beginning, to create or make of nothing the world, and all things therein, whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days, and all very good."^{64 65}

The compromise with Darwinism on the doctrine of Creation is rampant. If many ministers who have subscribed to either the Westminster Standards or Three Forms of Unity (but are in fact Ninth Commandment breakers) are to be believed, we should thank God for sending us the God-hating duo of Darwin and Huxley, without whom we could never have understood God's creation (and His Word) correctly, and without whom our Reformation forefathers stumbled in intellectual and theological darkness. Even Benny Hinn isn't guilty of Gnosticism this blatant!

John Trapp wrote:

*"All men are Socinians by nature; they will believe God's word no farther than they can see reason; which while men make the rule of their faith (as did the wise Greeks, the rational Romans), they stumble at the preaching of the cross of foolishness; and disbelieve the riches of Christ, which are unsearchable."*⁶⁶

As we have already noted, the so-called battle between the Bible and Science is really a battle over who is the infallible source of knowledge. The Christian minister who believes the edicts of science over the declarations of Scripture makes God a liar.

As Reformed people, we profess that Scripture interprets Scripture. A person who compromises with Darwinism, by way, for example, of "theistic evolution," believes that science interprets Scripture. When Scripture states something that makes him uncomfortable as an advocate of modern scientific theories, he will inevitably side with the ungodly over the Scriptures and will mock those

61 Hebrews 11:26

62 Gen 1:2; Job 26:13; 33:4; John 1:2-3; Hebrews 1:2

63 Psalm 33:5-6; 104:24; Jeremiah 10:12; Rom 1:20.

64 Gen 1 throughout; Acts 17:24; Col 1:16; Hebrews 11:3

65 Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 4, paragraph 1

66 John Trapp, Commentary on Psalm 119:129

who refuse to compromise as “out of touch.”

Darwinism discounts and mocks the Bible’s account of creation and everything this entails. It is not unexpected that men who love sin try to find a way to discount the existence of the God they know exists. But it is unthinkable that people who call themselves Christians would adopt this same interpretation of the world. The so-called battle between science and the Bible is not about data or evidence. It never has been. It is philosophical battle over who gets to be the infallible interpreter of reality.⁶⁷

That a person claiming to be a Christian, or that a denomination claiming to be Christian would cast aside what Christians have adhered to for centuries in favor of views promoted by God-haters with a vested interest in God’s non-existence is criminal at best. A profession of the Christian faith is 100% incompatible with belief in or support of things such as evolution, Marxism, women’s ordination, abortion, or sodomy.

Unbelievers always take the most liberal view of the Christian faith to be the authoritative version of it. When the Assyrian army attacked Judah, they tried to weaken Judah’s resolve by making the liberal version of the faith look like the correct one. Rabshakeh told Jerusalem that their faith in God would do them no good because Hezekiah had torn down the high places and had insisted on some narrow-minded interpretation of Scripture that restricted worship to the Temple in Jerusalem.⁶⁸ The view that was mocked was the true teaching of Scripture and the view that was promoted was the corrupt liberal form of the faith.

C. Resolutely discipline the compromisers.

This is perhaps the most difficult challenge before us. Truth be told, this is the most difficult challenge the Church will face in any generation. We are torn between our love of the truth, our love for our brethren, and our desire to be understanding with the weak.

Stated plainly, the challenge is this: The Church must rigorously and tenaciously defend the faith. We are called to “contend for the faith.”⁶⁹ *ἐπαγωνίζομαι* literally means to struggle as in a competition. Inherent in the word is the presumption of a right side and a wrong side. We must be prepared to do battle for the truth and our biggest battles will always be intramural battles. We overlook this to our own peril. We will need the courage, determination, and resolution to fight the battles in the face of accusations of being uncharitable, nit-picky, judgmental, heresy hunters.

A soft spot for “differences of opinion” regarding our doctrinal standards will be our demise. It is an admission that we believe doctrine to be mere opinion.

67 W.G.T. Shedd, *Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy*, Chapter 1

68 2 Kings 18:22

69 Jude 1:3

We either believe in objective truth, or we are not Christians, period. If a man cannot sign off on our doctrinal standards with a clean conscience – fine. But let us make an honest man of him and tell him to seek ordination elsewhere. In matters of truth and error, compromise will always be on error’s terms. Never forget that.

*“What are the standards of the church? If you may reject one doctrine, as non-essential, may not I reject another? May not the next brother, reject a third? - and the next, a fourth? And what will be left?...What are the standards of the church? Why, sir, is it not as clear as sunshine, that there neither is nor can be any standard of doctrine at this rate....Again, I repeat it - If the doctrine of the brethren, who advocate the boasted liberal construction, be adopted, there is an end of constitutional order.”*⁷⁰

Church history demonstrates this time and time again. The above quote from George Junkin provides us with a perfect example.

In 1801, there was a movement called the Plan of Union which intended to merge the Presbyterians and the Congregationalists. Large portions the newly acquired Louisiana Territory had been settled and evangelized. But there were many congregations without ministers. The idea was that between the Presbyterians and Congregationalists, there would be enough ministers to go around. The plan sounded noble. The problem lay in the compromises necessary make it work.

Presbyterians had a rigorous plan of ministerial preparation, Congregationalists did not. While the Congregationalists were ostensibly Reformed, per the Savoy Declaration, there was a widely-acknowledged downgrade at work within Congregationalism. This movement was called Hopkinsianism. Although the merger never took place, for many years both denominations acted as if it were a given, and ministers received calls from either denomination. And since the pool of potential ministers contained far more Congregationalists, the error of Hopkinsianism quickly spread into Presbyterianism. In Presbyterian circles, this heresy was known as the New School. It eventually led to a schism in 1837.

New School theology quickly degenerated into Arminianism Deism, and Unitarianism.⁷¹ The reason this is important to us, is that all the damage could have been averted. The fact is the damage should have been averted. But poor, inconsistent application of Church discipline is to blame.

Why was it poor and inconsistent? Because otherwise good men were swayed by the same weapons wielded today by the traitors within our midst. These weapons consist of the following (among others): redefining standard terminology and portraying criticism of error as “unloving.”

James Wood, in his work on the New School, documents New School writers using standard terminology, but with new and altered meanings. One can

70 George Junkin, *The Vindication, Containing a History of the Trial of the Rev. Albert Barnes*

71 “Arminianism lies within a bow-shot of Socinianism and Deism.” - Augustus Toplady, *A Letter to Mr. John Wesley*, Works: Volume 5, page 325

only suspect intentional deceit. Wood says, “[w]e wish to observe that those who hold...to the above doctrines, have not entirely laid aside the use of the terms... but they employ them in a different sense from that which has been generally attached to them by Calvinistic writers.”⁷² It is no secret that terms and concepts long used among us are being redefined before our very eyes. The God-hating world is redefining basic terms, such as “identity,” “gender,” and “race,” and far too many of our spokesmen are rushing to follow suit.

As the “pillar of truth,”⁷³ the Church must speak the truth regardless of the world. But when the sins of the world are brought into the Church, we must “contend for the faith.” This requires application of church discipline. The Scriptures say, “For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.”⁷⁴ We will have to fight bloody battles against “nice people,” with otherwise good reputations, for bringing into the church the cultural wickedness of our society.

I realize what this means. I fully understand that the men who will present heresy charges to our churches’ ruling bodies will likely be ridiculed. They will be chastised as trouble makers. And worst of all, in our cultural climate, they will be publicly castigated as “unloving.” If I did not believe that Christ is the Head of the Church, and that He overrules all things, even evil, for His own glorious purposes, I would lose heart at the prospect of church officers faithfully and consistently administering negative sanctions against covenant-breakers. Church history does not present a very pretty picture on this score.

Of course, there are men among us capable of withstanding the scorn and persecution of compromised denominations or churches. The question is whether these men will have enough positive influence to effect a real change. Victory will come, but it may not come in our lifetime and we need to be steeled to that possibility.

In all the anti-New School works that I have read⁷⁵ there is a common theme: Heretics appealing to “charity,” in other words, accusing the defenders of orthodoxy of being bigoted and unloving. Because this tactic works, it is always employed

72 James Wood, *Old and New Theology*, Chapter 2, Philadelphia, 1838

73 1 Timothy 3:15

74 1 Corinthians 5:12-13

75 *A History of the New School* by Samuel John Baird; *Old and New Theology* by James Wood; *A Contrast Between Hopkinsianism and Calvinism* by Ezra Stiles Ely; *Differences Between Old and New School Presbyterians* by Lewis Cheeseman; *The Vindication, Containing a History of the Trial of the Rev. Albert Barnes* by George Junkin; *The Reformed Presbyterian 1837-1838* by Moses Roney (Editor), etc.

in the cause of error. Always.

The Sodomite movement is making frightening inroads into what have hitherto been conservative denominations. Feminism is making bigger strides than we ever thought possible. Social Liberalism is rearing its ugly head in places that seemed impenetrable a decade ago. Ostensibly “conservative” ministers are advocating alliances with pro-abortion politicians. The stronger these movements grow, the harder it will be to speak out against them without being labeled an unloving, intolerant bigot. Ministers of the Gospel need nerves of steel and an unshakable commitment to Scripture. In an earlier day, one could skate through a pastorate without them. Not anymore.

“Another form in which the same spirit of concession exhibits itself, is the craven apology which too often accompanies the truth when it is preached. The sinner cannot be told that he is a sinner and deserves to be damned, unless the message is preceded with a thousand regrets that his feelings should be hurt in the matter; and God cannot be suffered his divine prerogative ‘to have mercy upon whom he will have mercy, and whom he wills to harden,’ until it be first covered by a blasphemous apology from the preacher. How many ministers of the word are thus systematically giving aid and comfort to the spirit of rebellion and infidelity, so rampant upon this apostate globe, is doubtless reserved among the terrible revelations of the judgement day. But that many, through excessive fear of exciting the prejudices of men, fail to preach the offensive doctrines of the cross with a bold and manly tone, is too painfully forced upon our daily observation.”⁷⁶

Theological errors, if not checked, progress with frightening speed. What seems on the fringe today will be boldly pillaging churches tomorrow. “History has justified all of Athanasius’ fears. To take but a single example: New England Unitarianism has run the whole gamut of dreadful denial of Christ’s divinity in the past seventy-five years, until one section of it now shrinks from the very name of Jesus Christ and sets up a rival lord in an ‘historic Jesus.’”⁷⁷

Boldness in decrying error is not unloving. Commenting on Matthew 23, J.C. Ryle says, “The whole chapter is a signal example of boldness and faithfulness in denouncing error. It is a striking proof that it is possible for the most loving heart to use the language of stern reproof: above all, it is an awful evidence of the guilt of unfaithful teachers. So long as the world stands, this chapter ought to be a warning and a beacon to all ministers of religion...”⁷⁸

76 Benjamin Morgan Palmer, A Plea For Doctrine As The Instrument of Sanctification, Southern Presbyterian Review, Volume III, No. 1, July 1849.

77 Ethelbert D. Warfield, Two Famous Christmas Days: 496 and 800, The Presbyterian Quarterly, No. 44, April 1898

78 J.C. Ryle, Expository Thoughts on the Gospels, Volume 1, on Matthew 23:1-12

We must therefore reject calls to compromise, and we must refuse to bow to the idol of “tone.” It is increasingly common in Reformed circles to see legitimate criticism glibly swept aside simply on the basis of the “tone” of the critic. Obsession with “tone” is another example of our violating the Antithesis. Secular culture believes that all criticism is inherently judgmental and hateful. Sadly, far too many Christians have imbibed the spirit of the age. Until American evangelicals get over their effeminate obsession with “tone,” there will be nothing but dark days ahead of us.

I want to conclude with some wonderful counsel by the incomparable William G. T. Shedd: “The words of St. Paul (1 Cor. 4:3) should be the watchword and the battle-cry of the theologian: ‘With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment;’ or, as the original text reads, ‘by a human day.’ To be judged by a ‘human day’ is to be judged by the spirit of the age. The spirit of an age is reflected in its philosophy, science, literature, and art. Revelation is judged by a ‘human day,’ whenever it is interpreted by the shifting theories in human speculation, and the changing fashions in human taste and culture, instead of being interpreted by itself. St. Paul teaches that Revelation is self-consistent and self-explaining, and therefore will not submit to be made consistent with something that is not itself, or to be explained by it. . . He asserts the difference in kind between the spiritual and the natural, the revealed and the non-revealed, and affirms the superiority of the Christian religion not only to all other religions, but to all secular knowledge. ‘The foolishness of God is wiser than men.’ 1 Cor. 1:25. For this reason, he maintains that divine revelation is to criticize and judge the products of the human intellect, and that no product of the human intellect is to criticize and judge divine revelation. ‘He that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.’ 1 Cor. 2:15.”⁷⁹

THE DANGER OF AN UNCONVERTED MINISTRY

REV. GILBERT TENNENT



*Gilbert Tennent was the oldest son of William Tennent, Sr. and the first graduate of the Log College. He briefly assisted his father in teaching responsibilities there before he was called to pastor the New Brunswick Presbyterian Church in New Jersey. Gilbert is best known for his role in the Great Awakening, second only to his close friend and ministry associate, George Whitefield. Gilbert's most famous sermon, *The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry*, was preached at Nottingham on March 8th, 1740. Serving as both pastoral counsel for ministerial candidates and vacant churches seeking ministers, its most pointed application perhaps was its scathing rebuke of many of the "Old Side" ministers who opposed the revival. The sermon had a tremendous effect, spurring the eventual split of the colonial Presbyterian church into two functionally separate denominational entities, a division that would not be resolved until 1758. Gilbert was a major contributor in bringing about the reunion and lamented that his sermon had such a divisive result. Charles Spurgeon considered Gilbert Tennent as "one of the most earnest and seraphic men who ever proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ." Does Gilbert's famous sermon have anything to say to the modern church? Ministerial candidates and churches will find much instruction regarding the nature and character of a faithful minister. And dare we say, there may be some pointed application for current ministers who indeed have no business behind the pulpit?*

– Dr. John McDonald

Mark 6:34

“And Jesus, when He came out, saw much people and was moved with compassion towards them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd.”

As a faithful ministry is a great ornament, blessing, and comfort, to the church of God (even the feet of such messengers are beautiful), so, on the contrary, an ungodly ministry is a great curse and judgment. These caterpillars labor to devour every green thing.

There is nothing that may more justly call forth our saddest sorrows, and make all our powers and passions mourn in the most doleful accents, the most incessant, insatiable, and deploring agonies, than the melancholy case of such who have no faithful ministry! This truth is set before our minds in a strong light in the words that I have chosen now to insist upon, in which we have an account of our Lord’s grief with the causes of it.

We are informed that our dear Redeemer was moved with compassion towards them. The original word signifies the strongest and most vehement pity, issuing from the innermost bowels. But what was the cause of this great and compassionate commotion in the heart of Christ? It was because He saw much people as sheep having no shepherd. Why, had the people then no teachers? O yes! They had heaps of Pharisee-teachers that came out, no doubt, after they had been at the feet of Gamaliel the usual time, and according to the acts, canons, and traditions of the Jewish church. But, notwithstanding the great crowds of these orthodox, letter-learned, and regular Pharisees, our Lord laments the unhappy case of that great number of people who, in the days of His flesh, had no better guides, because those were as good as none (in many respects), in our Savior’s judgment. For all them, the people were as sheep without a Shepherd.

From the words of our text, the following proposition offers itself to our consideration: that the case of such is much to be pitied who have no other but Pharisee-shepherds, or unconverted teachers.

In discoursing upon this subject, I would:

I. Inquire into the characters of the old Pharisee-teachers.

II. Show why the case of such people who have no better should be pitied.

And,

III. Show how pity should be expressed upon this mournful occasion!

First, I am to inquire into the characters of the old Pharisee-teachers. No, I think the most notorious branches of their character were these: pride, policy, malice, ignorance, covetousness, and bigotry to human inventions in religious matters.

The old Pharisees were very proud and conceited. They loved the uppermost seats in the synagogues and to be called “Rabbi.” They were masterly and positive in their assertions, as if knowledge must die with them. They looked

upon others who differed from them, and the common people, with an air of disdain and, especially any who had a respect for Jesus and His doctrine. They disliked them and judged them accursed.

The old Pharisee-shepherds were as crafty as foxes. They tried by all means to ensnare our Lord by their captious questions, and to expose Him to the displeasure of the state while, in the meantime, by sly and sneaking methods, they tried to secure for themselves the favor of the Grandees and the people's applause, and this they obtained to their satisfaction (John 7:48).

But while they exerted the craft of foxes, they did not forget to breathe forth the cruelty of wolves in a malicious aspersing the person of Christ, and in a violent opposing of the truths, people, and power of His religion. Yes, the most stern and strict of them were the ringleaders of the party. Witness Saul's journey to Damascus, with letters from the chief priest to bring bound to Jerusalem all that he could find of The Way. It's true that the Pharisees did not proceed to violent measures with our Savior and His disciples just at first; but that was not owing to their good nature, but their policy, for they feared the people. They must keep the people in their interests. Aye, that was the main chance, the compass that directed all their proceedings and, therefore, such sly cautious methods must be pursued as might consist herewith. They wanted to root vital religion out of the world, but they found it beyond their thumb.

Although some of the old Pharisee-shepherds had a very fair and strict outside, yet they were ignorant of the New Birth. Witness Rabbi Nicodemus, who talked like a fool about it. Hear how our Lord cursed those plastered hypocrites in Matthew 23:27-28: "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye are like whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead bones and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." Aye, if they had but a little of the learning then in fashion, and a fair outside, they were presently put into the priest's office, though they had no experience of the New Birth. O sad!

The old Pharisees, for all their long prayers and other pious pretenses, had their eyes, with Judas, fixed upon the bag. Why, they came into the priest's office for a piece of bread. They took it up as a trade and, therefore, endeavored to make the best market of it they could. O shame!

It may be further observed that the Pharisee-teachers in Christ's time were great bigots to small matters in religion. Matthew 23:23: "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the Law, judgment, mercy, and faith." The Pharisees were fired with a party-zeal. They compassed sea and land to make a proselyte; and yet, when he was made, they made him twofold more the child of hell than themselves. They were also bigoted to human inventions in religious matters. Paul himself, while he was a natural man, was wonderfully zealous for the traditions of the Fathers. Aye, those poor, blind guides, as our Lord testifies, strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel.

And what a mighty respect they had for the Sabbath Day, insomuch that Christ and His disciples must be charged with the breach thereof for doing

works of mercy and necessity! Ah, the rottenness of these hypocrites! It was not so much respect to the Sabbath as malice against Christ; that was the occasion of the charge. They wanted some plausible pretense to offer against Him in order to blacken His character.

And what a great love had they in pretense to those pious prophets who were dead before they were born while, in the meantime, they were persecuting the Prince of Prophets! Hear how the King of the Church speaks to them upon this head, Matthew 23:29–33: “Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous; and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?”

II. The second general head of discourse is to show why such people, who have no better than the old Pharisee-teachers, are to be pitied:

1. Natural men have no call of God to the ministerial work under the gospel dispensation.

Isn't it a principal part of the ordinary call of God to the ministerial work to aim at the glory of God and, in subordination thereunto, the good of souls as their chief marks in their undertaking that work? And can any natural man on earth do this? No! No! Every skin of them has an evil eye, for no cause can produce effects above its own power. Are not wicked men forbidden to meddle in things sacred? Psalm 50:16: “But unto the wicked, God saith, ‘What hast thou to do to declare My statutes, or that thou shouldst take My covenant in thy mouth?’” Now, are not all unconverted men wicked men? Does not the Lord Jesus inform us in John 10:1 that “he who entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber?” In the 9th verse, Christ tells us that He is the Door, and that if any man enters in by Him, he shall be saved by Him, i.e., by faith in Him, says (Matthew) Henry. Hence we read of a “door of faith” being opened to the Gentiles (Acts 14:22). It confirms this gloss, that salvation is annexed to the entrance before-mentioned. Remarkable is that saying of our Savior in Matthew 4:9: “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” See, our Lord will not make men ministers till they follow Him. Men who do not follow Christ may fish faithfully for a good name, and for worldly self, but not for the conversion of sinners to God. Is it reasonable to suppose that they will be earnestly concerned for others' salvation when they slight their own? Our Lord reproved Nicodemus for taking upon himself the office of instructing others while he himself was a stranger to the New Birth. John 3:10: “Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?” The Apostle Paul (1 Timothy 1:12) thanks God for counting him faithful, and putting him into the ministry, which plainly supposes that God Almighty does not send Pharisees and natural men into ministry; for how can those men be faithful who have no faith? It's true, men may put themselves into the ministry through unfaithfulness or mistake. Credit and money may draw them, and the devil may drive them into it, knowing by

long experience of what special service they may be to his kingdom in that office; but God sends not such hypocritical varlets. Hence Timothy was directed by the Apostle Paul to commit the ministerial work to faithful men (2 Timothy 2:2), and do not those qualifications necessary for church-officers, specified in 1 Timothy 3:2-3, 9-11 and Titus 1:7-8 plainly suppose converting grace? How else can they avoid being greedy of filthy lucre? How else can they hold the mystery of faith in a pure conscience and be faithful in all things? How else can they be lovers of good, sober, just, holy, temperate?

2. *The ministry of natural men is uncomfortable to gracious souls.*

The enmity that is put between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent will, now and then, be creating jars. And no wonder; for as it was of old, so it is now: "He that was born after the flesh, persecuteth him that was born after the Spirit." This enmity is not one grain less in unconverted ministers than in others; though it is possible it may be better polished with wit and rhetoric, and gilded with the specious names of zeal, fidelity, peace, good order, and unity.

Natural men, not having true love to Christ or the souls of their fellow-creatures, hence their discourses are cold and sapless, and, as it were, freeze between their lips. And not being sent of God, they lack the divine authority with which the faithful ambassadors of Christ are clothed, who herein resemble their blessed Master of whom it is said, "He taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matthew 7:29).

And Pharisee-teachers, having no experience of a special work of the Holy Ghost upon their own souls, are therefore neither inclined to nor fitted for discursing frequently, clearly, and pathetically upon such important subjects. The application of their discourses is either short or indistinct and general. They do not distinguish the precious from the vile, and divide not to every man his portion, according to the apostolic direction to Timothy. No! They carelessly offer a common mess to their people, and leave it to them to divide it among themselves as they see fit. This is, indeed, their general practice, which is bad enough; but sometimes they do worse by misapplying the Word through ignorance or anger. They often strengthen the hands of the wicked by promising him life. They comfort people before they convince them, sow before they plow, and are busy in raising a fabric before they lay a foundation. These foolish builders do but strengthen men's carnal security by their soft, selfish, cowardly discourses. They do not have the courage or honesty to thrust the nail of terror into sleeping souls. Nay, sometimes they strive with all their might to fasten terror into the hearts of the righteous, and so to make those sad whom God would not have made sad! And this happens when pious people begin to suspect their hypocrisy, for which they have good reason, I may add that, inasmuch as Pharisee-teachers seek after righteousness, as it were, by the works of the law themselves, they therefore do not distinguish as they ought between Law and Gospel in their discourses to others. They keep driving, driving, to duty, duty, under this notion that it will recommend natural men to the favor of God, or entitle them to the promises of grace and salvation. And thus those blind guides fix a deluded world upon the

false foundation of their own righteousness, and so exclude them from the dear Redeemer. All the doings of unconverted men not proceeding from the principles of faith, love, and a new nature, nor being directed to the divine glory as their highest end, but flowing from, and tending to, self as their principle and end, are, doubtless, damnably wicked in their manner of performance, and deserve the wrath and curse of a sin-avenging God. Neither can any other encouragement be justly given them but that, in the way of duty, there is a peradventure or probability of obtaining mercy.

And natural men, lacking the experience of those spiritual difficulties which pious souls are exposed to in this vale of tears, they know not how to speak a word to the weary in season. Their prayers are also cold; little child-like love to God or pity to poor perishing souls runs through their veins. Their conversation has nothing of the savor of Christ, neither is it perfumed with the spices of heaven. They seem to make as little distinction in their practice as preaching. They love those unbelievers that are kind to them better than many Christians, and choose them for companions, contrary to Psalm 15:4, Psalm 119:115 and Galatians 6:10. Poor Christians are stunted and starved who are put to feed on such bare pastures, on such "dry nurses," as Rev. Mr. (Arthur) Hildersham justly calls them. It's only when the wise virgins sleep that they can bear with those dead dogs who can't bark; but when the Lord revives His people, they can't but abhor them. O! It is ready to break their very hearts with grief, to see how lukewarm those Pharisee-teachers are in their public discourses, while sinners are sinking into damnation in multitudes! But:

3. *The ministry of natural men is, for the most part, unprofitable, which is confirmed by a three-fold evidence of Scripture, reason, and experience.*

Such as the Lord sends not, He Himself assures us, shall not profit the people at all (Jeremiah 23:32). Matthew Poole justly glosses upon this passage of sacred Scripture thus, "None can expect God's blessing upon their ministry that are not called and sent of God into the ministry." And right reason will inform us how unfit instruments they are to negotiate that work they pretend to. Is a blind man fit to be a guide in a very dangerous way? Is a dead man fit to bring others to life? A mad man fit to give to cast out devils? A rebel, an enemy to God, fit to be sent on an embassy of peace to bring rebels into a state of friendship with God? A captive bound in the massy chains of darkness and guilt, a proper person to set others at liberty? A leper, or one that has plague-sores upon him, fit to be a good physician? Is an ignorant rustic that has never been at sea in his life fit to be a pilot, to keep vessels from being dashed to pieces upon rocks and sand-banks? Isn't an unconverted minister like a man who would learn others to swim before he has learned it himself, and so is drowned in the act and dies like a fool?

I may add that sad experience verifies what has been now observed concerning the unprofitableness of the ministry of unconverted men. Look into the congregations of unconverted ministers, and see what a sad security reigns there; not a soul convinced that can be heard of for many years together, and yet the ministers are easy, for they say they do their duty! Aye, a small matter

will satisfy us in the lack of that which we have no great desire after, but when persons have their eyes opened and their hearts set upon the work of God, they are not so soon satisfied with their doings, and with lack of success for a time. O! They mourn with Micah that they are as those that gather the summer-fruits, as the grape-gleaning of the vintage. Mr. (Richard) Baxter justly observes that those who speak about their doings in the aforesaid manner are like to do little good to the Church of God. But many Ministers (as Mr. Bracel observes) think the gospel flourishes among them when the people are in peace, and many come to hear the Word and to the Sacrament. If, with the other, they get the salaries well paid, then it is fine times indeed in their opinion! O sad! And they are full of hopes that they do good, though they know nothing about it. But what comfort can a conscientious man, who travails in birth that Christ may be formed in His hearers' hearts, take from what he knows not? Will a hungry stomach be satisfied with dreams about meat? I believe not, though, I confess, a full one may.

What if some instances could be shown of unconverted ministers being instrumental in convincing persons of their lost state? The thing is very rare and extraordinary. And, for what I know, as many instances may be given of Satan's convincing persons by his temptations. Indeed, it's a kind of chance-medly, both in respect of the father and his children, when any such event happens. And isn't this the reason why a work of conviction and conversion has been so rarely heard of for a long time in the churches till of late, that the bulk of her spiritual guides were stone-blind and stone-dead?

4. The ministry of natural men is dangerous, both in respect of the doctrines and practice of piety.

The doctrines of original sin, justification by faith alone, and the other points of Calvinism, are very cross to the grain of unrenewed nature. And though men, by the influence of a good education and hopes of preferment, may have the edge of their natural enmity against them blunted, yet it's far from being broken or removed. It's only the saving grace of God that can give us a true relish for those nature-humbling doctrines, and so effectually secure us from being infected by the contrary. Is not the carnality of the ministry one great cause of the general spread of Arminianism, Socinianism, Arianism, and Deism, at this day through the world?

And alas! What poor guides are natural ministers to those who are under spiritual trouble? They either slight such distress altogether and call it "melancholy," or "madness," or daub those that are under it with untempered mortar. Our Lord assures us that the salt which has lost its savor is good for nothing. Some say, "It genders worms and vermin." Now, what savor have Pharisee-ministers? In truth, a very stinking one, both in the nostrils of God and good men. "Be these moral Negroes never so white in the mouth (as one expresses it), yet will they hinder instead of helping others in at the strait gate." Hence is that threatening of our Lord against them in Matthew 23:13: "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, nor suffer those that are entering to go in." Pharisee-

teachers will, with the utmost hate, oppose the very work of God's Spirit upon the souls of men, and labor by all means to blacken it, as well as the Instruments, which the Almighty improves to promote the same if it comes near their borders and interferes with their credit or interest. Thus did the Pharisees deal with our Savior.

If it is objected against what has been offered under this general head of discourse, that Judas was sent by Christ, I answer:

(1) That Judas's ministry was partly legal, inasmuch as, during that period, the disciples were subject to Jewish observances and sent only to the house of Israel (Matthew 10:5-6). And in that they waited after Christ's resurrection for another mission (Acts 1:4), which we find they obtained, and that was different from the former (Matthew 28:19).

(2) Judas's ministry was extraordinarily necessary in order to fulfil some ancient prophesies concerning him (Acts 1:16-18, 20; John 13:18). I fear that the abuse of this instance has brought many "Judases" into the ministry whose chief desire, like their great grandfather, is to finger the pence and carry the bag. But let such hireling, murderous hypocrites take care that they don't feel the force of a halter in this world, and an aggravated damnation in the next.

Again, if it is objected that Paul rejoiced that the gospel was preached, though of contention and not sincerely, I answer this: the expression signifies the apostle's great self-denial! Some labored to eclipse his fame and character by contentious preaching, thinking thereby to afflict him; but they were mistaken. As to that, he was easy; for he had long before learned to die to his own reputation. The apostle's rejoicing was comparative only. He would rather that Christ should be preached out of envy than not at all, especially considering the gross ignorance of the doctrinal knowledge of the gospel which prevailed almost universally in that age of the world. Besides, the apostle knew that that trial should be sanctified to him to promote his spiritual progress in goodness and, perhaps, prove a means of procuring his temporal freedom; and, therefore, he would rejoice. It is certain, we may both rejoice and mourn in relation to the same thing upon different accounts without any contradiction.

III. But the third general head was to show how pity should be expressed upon this mournful occasion.

My brethren, we should mourn over those who are destitute of faithful ministers and sympathize with them. Our bowels should be moved with the most compassionate tenderness over those dear fainting souls that are as "sheep having no Shepherd," and that after the example of our blessed Lord.

Dear sirs! We should also most earnestly pray for them that the compassionate Savior may preserve them by His mighty power, through faith, unto salvation; support their sinking spirits under the melancholy uneasiness of a dead ministry; sanctify and sweeten to them the dry morsels they get under such

blind men, when they have none better to repair to.

And more especially, my brethren, we should pray to the Lord of the harvest to send forth faithful laborers into His harvest, seeing that the harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. And, O sirs, how humble, believing, and importunate should we be in this petition! O! Let us follow the Lord day and night with cries, tears, pleadings, and groanings upon this account! For God knows there is great necessity of it. O! Thou Fountain of mercy and Father of pity, pour forth upon Thy poor children a Spirit of prayer for the obtaining of this important mercy! Help, help, O Eternal God and Father, for Christ's sake!

And indeed, my brethren, we should join our endeavors to our prayers. The most likely method to stock the church with a faithful ministry, in the present situation of things, the public academies being so much corrupted and abused generally, is to encourage private schools, or seminaries of learning, which are under the care of skillful and experienced Christians; in which those only should be admitted who, upon strict examination have, in the judgment of a reasonable charity, the plain evidences of experimental religion. Pious and experienced youths, who have a good natural capacity, and great desires after the ministerial work, from good motives, might be sought for, and found up and down in the country, and put to private schools of the Prophets, especially in such places where the public ones are not. This method, in my opinion, has a noble tendency. It builds up the church for the coming of His Kingdom. The church should be ready, according to their ability, to give something, from time to time, for the support of such poor youths who have nothing of their own. And truly, brethren, this charity to the souls of men is the most noble kind of charity. O! If the love of God is in you, it will constrain you to do something to promote so noble and necessary a work. It looks hypocritical to go no further, when other things are required, than cheap prayer. Don't think it much if the Pharisees should be offended at such a proposal; these subtle, selfish hypocrites are wont to be scared about their credit and their kingdom. And truly they are both little worth, for all the bustle they make about them. If they could help it, they wouldn't let one faithful man come into the ministry; and, therefore, their opposition is an encouraging sign. Let all the followers of the Lamb stand up and act for God against all opposers. Who is upon God's side? Who?

The improvement of this subject remains:

1. If it is so, then the case of those who have no other, or no better, than Pharisee-teachers is to be pitied. Then what a scrole and scene of mourning, lamentation, and woe is opened, because of the swarms of locusts, the crowds of Pharisees, that have so covetously and cruelly crept into the ministry in this adulterous generation! They as nearly resemble the character given of the old Pharisees, in the doctrinal part of this discourse, as one crow's egg does another. It is true, some of the modern Pharisees have learned to prate a little more orthodoxy about the New Birth than their predecessor Nicodemus, who are, in the meantime, as great strangers to the feeling experience of it as he. They are blind who see not this to be the case of the body of the clergy of this generation. And O! that our heads

were waters, and our eyes a fountain of tears, that we could day and night lament, with the utmost bitterness, the doleful case of the poor church of God upon this account.

2. From what has been said, we may learn that such who are contented under a dead ministry do not have in them the temper of that Savior they profess. It's an awful sign that they are as blind as moles and as dead as stones without any spiritual taste and relish. And alas! Isn't this the case of multitudes? If they can get one who has the name of a minister, with a band and a black coat or gown to carry on a Sabbath-day among them, although never so coldly and unsuccessfully; if he is free from gross crimes in practice and takes good care to keep at a due distance from their consciences, and is never troubled about his unsuccessfulness, "O!" think the poor fools, "that is a fine man, indeed! Our minister is a prudent, charitable man; he is not always harping upon terror, and sounding damnation in our ears, like some rash-headed preachers who, by their uncharitable methods, are ready to put poor people out of their wits, or to run them into despair. O! How terrible a thing is that despair! Aye, our minister, honest man, gives us good caution against it." Poor, silly souls, consider seriously these passages of the Prophet Jeremiah (5:30–31).

3. We may learn the mercy and duty of those who enjoy a faithful ministry. Let such glorify God for distinguishing a privilege, and labor to walk worthy of it to all well-pleasing. Left for their abuse thereof, they be exposed to a greater damnation.

1. If the ministry of natural men is as it has been represented, then it is both lawful and expedient to go from them to hear godly persons; yea, it's so far from being sinful to do this that one who lives under a pious minister of lesser gifts, after having honestly endeavored to get benefit by his ministry, and yet gets little or none, but finds real benefit elsewhere, I say, he may lawfully go, and that frequently, where he gets most good to his precious soul. He may do this after regular application to the pastor where he lives for his consent, proposing the reasons thereof when this is done in the spirit of love and meekness, without contempt of any, and also without rash anger or vain curiosity.

Natural reason will inform us that good is desirable for its own sake. Now, a Dr. Voetius observes that good added to good makes it a greater good, and so more desirable; and, therefore, evil as evil, or a lesser good, which is comparatively evil, cannot be the object of desire.

There is a natural instinct put even into the irrational creature by the Author of their being to seek after the greater natural good, as far as they know it. Hence, the birds of the air fly to the warmer climates in order to shun the winter cold, and also, doubtless, to get better food; for where the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together. The beasts of the field seek the best pastures, and the fishes of the ocean seek after the food they like best.

But the written Word of God confirms the aforesaid proposition while God, by it, enjoins us, “to covet earnestly the best gifts; as also to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good” (1 Corinthians 12:31 and 1 Thessalonians 5:2). And is it not the command of God that we should grow in grace (2 Peter 3:18 and 1 Peter 2:2)? Now, does not every positive command enjoin the use of such means as have the directest tendency to answer the end designed, namely, the duty commanded? If there is a variety of means, is not the best to be chosen? Else how can the choice be called rational and becoming an intelligent creature? To choose otherwise, knowingly, is it not contrary to common sense as well as religion, and daily confuted by the common practice of all the rational creation, about things of far less moment and consequence?

That there is a difference and variety in preachers’ gifts and graces is undeniably evident from the united testimony of Scripture and reason. And that there is a great difference in the degrees of hearers’ edification, under the hearing of these different gifts, is as evident to the feeling of experienced Christians as anything can be to sight.

It is also an unquestionable truth that, ordinarily, God blesses most the best gifts for the hearer’s edification, as by the best food He gives the best nourishment. Otherwise, the best gifts would not be desirable, and God Almighty, in the ordinary course of His providence, by not acting according to the nature of things, would be carrying on a series of unnecessary miracles which, to suppose, is unreasonable. The following places of Holy Scripture confirm what has been last observed: 1 Corinthians 14:12; 1 Timothy 4:14–16; 2 Timothy 1:6 and Acts 11:24.

If God’s people have a right to the gifts of all God’s ministers, pray, why may they not use them as they have opportunity? And, if they should go a few miles farther than ordinary to enjoy those which they profit most by, who do they wrong? Now, our Lord informs His people in 1 Corinthians 3:22 that whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, all was theirs.

But the example of our dear Redeemer will give farther light in this argument. Though many of the hearers, not only of the Pharisees but of John the Baptist, came to hear our Savior, and that not only upon weekdays, but upon Sabbath days, and that in great numbers, and from very distant places; yet He reproveth them not. And did not our Lord love the Apostle John more than the rest, and took him with Him, before others, with Peter and James, to Mount Tabor and Gethsemane (Matthew chapters 17 and 26)?

To blind men to a particular minister, against their judgment and inclinations, when they are more edified elsewhere, is carnal with a witness, a cruel oppression of tender consciences, a compelling of men to sin. For he that doubts is damned if he eat, and whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

Besides, it is an unscriptural infringement on Christian liberty (1 Corinthians 3:22). It’s a yoke worse than that of Rome itself. Dr. Voetius asserts, “Even among the Papists, as to hearing of sermons, the people are not deprived of the liberty of choice.” It’s a yoke like that of Egypt which cruel Pharaoh formed for the necks of the oppressed Israelites when he obliged them to make up their

stated task of bricks, but allowed them no straw. So we must grow in grace and knowledge; but, in the meantime, according to the notion of some, we are confined from using the likeliest means to attain that end.

If the great ends of hearing may be attained as well, and better, by hearing another minister than our own, then I see not why we should be under a fatal necessity of hearing him, I mean our parish-minister, perpetually or generally. Now, what are, or ought to be, the ends of hearing but the getting of grace and growing in it (Romans 10:14)? 1 Peter 2:2 says, "As babes desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby" (Poor babes do not like dry breasts, and living men do not like dead pools). Well then, may not these ends be obtained out of our parish-line? Faith is said to come by hearing (Romans 10). But the apostle doesn't add, "your parish-minister." Isn't the same Word preached out of our parish? And is there any restriction in the promises of blessing the Word to those only who keep within their parish-line ordinarily? If there is, I have not yet met with it; yea, I can affirm that, so far as knowledge can be had in such cases, I have known persons to get saving good to their souls by hearing over their parish-line; and this makes me earnest in defense of it.

That which ought to be the main motive of hearing any, that is, our soul's good or greater good, will excite us if we regard our own eternal interest, to hear there where we attain it; and he that hears with less views acts like a fool and a hypocrite.

Now, if it is lawful to withdraw from the ministry of a pious man in the case aforesaid, how much more from the ministry of a natural man? Surely, it is both lawful and expedient for the reason offered in the doctrinal part of this discourse; to which let me add a few words more.

To trust the care of our souls to those who have little or no care for their own, to those who are both unskillful and unfaithful, is contrary to the common practice of considerate mankind, relating to the affairs of their bodies and estates, and would signify that we set light by our souls and did not care what became of them. For if the blind lead the blind, will they not both fall into the ditch?

Is it a strange thing to think that God does not ordinarily use the ministry of His enemies to turn others to be His friends, seeing He works by suitable means? I cannot think that God has given any promise that He will be with and bless the labors of natural ministers for, if He had, He would be surely as good as His Word. But I can neither see nor hear of any blessing upon these men's labors, unless it is a rare, wonderful instance of chance-medley! Whereas, the ministry of faithful men blossoms and bears fruit as the rod of Aaron. Jeremiah 23:22: "But if they had stood in My counsel, and had caused My people to hear My words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings."

From such as have a form of godliness and deny the power thereof, we are enjoined to turn away (2 Timothy 3:5). And are there not many such?

Our Lord advised His disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees (Matthew 16:6), by which He shows that He meant their doctrine and hypocrisy

(Mark 8:15; Luke 12:1), which were both sour enough.

Memorable is the answer of our Lord to His disciples in Matthew 15:12–14: “Then came His disciples and said unto him, ‘Knowest Thou that the Pharisees were offended?’ And He answered and said, ‘Every plant which My heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up. Let them alone; they be blind leaders of the blind: And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.’”

If it is objected that we are bid to go to hear those who sit in Moses’ chair (Matthew 23:2–3), I would answer this, in the words of a body of dissenting ministers: “Sitting in Moses’ chair signifies a succeeding of Moses in the ordinary part of his office and authority; so did Joshua and the 70 elders (Exodus 18:21–26). Now, Moses was no priest (say they) though of Levi’s tribe, but king in Jeshurun, a civil ruler and judge, chosen by God (Exodus 18:13).” Therefore, no more is meant by the Scripture in the objection but that it is the duty of people to hear and obey the lawful commands of the civil magistrate, according to Romans 13:5.

If it is opposed to the preceding reasonings that such an opinion and practice would be apt to cause heats and contentions among people, I answer that the aforesaid practice, accompanied with love, meekness, and humility, is not the proper cause of those divisions, but the occasion only, or the cause by accident, and not by itself. If a person, exercising modesty and love in his carriage to his minister and neighbors, through uprightness of heart, designing nothing but his own greater good, repairs there frequently where he attains it, is this any reasonable cause of anger? Will any be offended with him because he loves his soul and seeks the greater good thereof, and is not like a senseless stone, without choice, sense, and taste? Pray, must we leave off every duty that is the occasion of contention or division? Then we must quit powerful religion altogether, for he who will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution. And particularly, we must carefully avoid faithful preaching, for that is wont to occasion disturbances and divisions, especially when accompanied with divine power. 1 Thessalonians 1:5–6: “Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but in power,” and then it is added that they “received the Word in much affliction.” And, the Apostle Paul informs us in 1 Corinthians 16:9 that a great door, and an effectual one, was opened unto him, and that there were many adversaries. Blessed Paul was accounted a common disturber of the peace as well as Elijah long before him, and yet he left not off preaching for all that. Yea, our blessed Lord informs us that He came not to send peace on earth, but rather a sword, variance, fire, and division, and that even among relations (Matthew 10:34–36; Luke 12:49, 51–53). And also, while the strong man armed keeps the house, all the goods are in peace. It is true the power of the gospel is not the proper cause of those divisions, but the innocent occasion only. No, the proper and selfish lusts are the proper cause of those divisions. And very often natural men, who are the proper causes of the divisions aforesaid, are wont to deal with God’s servants as Potiphar’s wife did by Joseph; they lay all the blame of their own wickedness at their doors, and make a loud cry!

Such as confine opposition and division, as following living godliness

and successful preaching, to the first ages of Christianity, it is much to be feared, neither know themselves nor the gospel of Christ. For surely the nature of true religion, as well as of men and devils, is the same in every age.

Is not the visible church composed of persons of the most contrary characters? While some are sincere servants of God, are not many servants of Satan under a religious mask? And have not these a fixed enmity against the other? How is it then possible that a harmony should subsist between such till their nature is changed? Can light dwell with darkness?

Undoubtedly, it is a great duty to avoid giving just cause of offence to any; and it is also highly necessary that pious souls should maintain union and harmony among themselves, notwithstanding their different opinions in lesser things. And, no doubt, this is the drift of the many exhortations which we have to peace and unity in Scripture.

Surely, it cannot be reasonably supposed that we are exhorted to a unity in anything that is wicked or inconsistent with the good, or greater good, of our poor souls; for that would be like the unity of the devils, a legion of which dwelt peaceably in one man. Or it would be like the unity of Ahab's false prophets; all these four hundred daubers were very peaceable and much united, and all harped on the pleasing string. Aye, they were moderate men, and had the majority on their side.

But, possibly, some may again object against persons going to hear others besides their own ministers. They may use the Scripture about Paul and Apollos from 1 Corinthians 1:12, and say that it is carnal. Dr. Voetius answers the aforesaid objection as follows: 'The apostle reproves such as made sects, saying, 'I am of Paul, and I of Apollos,' and we, with him, reprove them. But this is far from being against the choice which one has of sermons and preachers; seeing at one time we cannot hear all, neither does the explication and application of all equally suit such a person in such a time or condition, or equally quicken and subserve the increase of knowledge.'" Thus far he.

Because that, the apostle, in the aforesaid place, reproves an excessive love to, or admiration of, particular ministers accompanied with a sinful contention, slighting, and disdain of others who are truly godly, and with sect-making. To say that from hence it necessarily follows that we must make no difference in our choice, or in the degrees of our esteem of different ministers according to their different gifts and graces, is an argument of as great force as to say that, because gluttony and drunkenness are forbidden; therefore, we must neither eat, nor drink, or make any choice in drinks or victuals, let our constitution be what it will.

Surely the very nature of Christian love inclines those that are possessed of it to love others chiefly for their goodness and, therefore, in proportion thereto. Now, seeing the inference in the objection is secretly built upon this supposition, that we should love all good men alike, it strikes at the foundation of that love to the brethren which is laid down in Scripture as a mark of true Christianity (1 John 5), and so is carnal with a witness.

Again, it may be objected that the aforesaid practice tends to grieve our parish-minister, and to break congregations in pieces. I answer, if our parish-

minister is grieved at our greater good, or prefers his credit before it, then he has good cause to grieve over his own rottenness and hypocrisy. And as for breaking congregations to pieces upon the account of people's going from place to place to hear the Word with a view to getting greater good, that spiritual blindness and death that so generally prevails will put this out of danger. It is but a very few that have gotten any spiritual relish. The most will venture their souls with any formalist, and be well satisfied with the sapless discourses of such dead drones.

Well, doesn't the apostle assert that Paul and Apollos are nothing? Yes, it is true, they and all others are nothing as efficient causes; they could not change men's hearts, but were they nothing as instruments? The objection insinuates one of these two things: either that there is no difference in means, as to their suitableness, or that there is no reason to expect a greater blessing upon the most suitable means; both which are equally absurd and have already been confuted.

But it may be further objected, with great appearance of zeal, that what has been said about people's getting of good, or greater good, over their parish-line is mere fiction, for they are out of God's way. I answer that there are three monstrous ingredients in the objection: namely, a begging of the question in debate, rash judging, and limiting of God.

It is a mean thing in reasoning to beg or suppose that which should be proved, and then to reason from it. Let it be proved that they are out of God's way, and then I will freely yield; but, till this is done, bold "Say-sos" will not have much weight with any but dupes or dunces. And for such as cry out against others for uncharitableness to be guilty of it themselves, in the meantime, in a very great degree, is very inconsistent. Isn't it rash to judge things they have never heard? But those that have received benefit, and are sensible of their own uprightness, will think it is a light thing to be judged of man's judgment. Let Tertullus ascend the theatre, and gild the objection with the most mellifluous Ciceronian eloquence; it will no more persuade them that what they have felt is but a fancy (unless they are under strong temptations of Satan, or scared out of their wits by frightful expressions) than to tell a man, in proper language, that sees that it is but a notion, that he does not see; or to tell a man that feels pleasure or pain that it's but a deluded fancy. They are quite mistaken.

Besides, there is a limiting the Holy One of Israel in the aforesaid objection, which sinful sin the Hebrews were reprov'd for. It is a piece of daring presumption to pretend, by our finite line, to fathom the infinite depths that are in the being and works of God. The query of Zophar is just and reasonable from Job 11:7-8: "Canst thou by searching find out God?" The humble apostle, with astonishment, acknowledged that the ways of God were past finding out (Romans 1:33). Surely the wind blows where it will, and we cannot tell whence it comes, nor whither it goes. Doesn't Jehovah ride upon a gloomy cloud, and make darkness His pavilion? And isn't His path in the great waters (Psalm 77:19)?

I would conclude my present meditations upon this subject by exhorting all those who enjoy a faithful ministry to a speedy and sincere improvement of so rare and valuable a privilege lest, by their foolish ingratitude, the righteous God is provoked to remove the means they enjoy, or His blessing from them,

and so at last to expose them in another state to enduring and greater miseries. For surely their sins which are committed against greater light and mercy are more presumptuous, ungrateful, and inexcusable. There is in them a greater contempt of God's authority and slight of His mercy. Those evils awfully violate the conscience, and declare a love to sin as sin. Such transgressors rush upon the bosses of God's buckler, they court destruction without a covering and embrace their own ruin with open arms. And, therefore, according to the nature of justice, which proportions sinner's pains, according to the number and heinousness of their crimes, and the declaration of Divine truth, you must expect an enflamed damnation. Surely, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of the Lord than for you, except you repent.

And let gracious souls be exhorted to express the most tender pity over such as have none but Pharisee-teachers; and that in the manner before described. To which let the example of our Lord in the text before us be an inducing and effectual incitement, as well as the gracious and immense rewards which follow upon so generous and noble a charity in this and the next state.

And let those who live under the ministry of dead men, whether they have the form of religion or not, repair to the living where they may be edified. Let who will oppose it. What famous Mr. (Dudley) Fenner observed upon this head is most just, "If there be any godly soul, or any that desires the salvation of his soul, and lives under a blind guide, he cannot go out (of his parish) without giving very great offence; it will be thought a giddiness, and a slighting of his own minister at home. When people came out of every parish roundabout to John, no question but this bred heart-burning against John, aye, and ill-will against those people that would not be satisfied with that teaching they had in their own synagogues." Thus far he. But though your neighbors growl against you, and reproach you for doing your duty, in seeking your soul's good, bear their unjust censures with Christian meekness and persevere, knowing that suffering is the lot of Christ's followers, and that spiritual benefits infinitely overbalance all temporal difficulties.

And, O, that vacant congregations would take due care in the choice of their ministers! Here, indeed, they should hasten slowly. The church of Ephesus is commended for trying them who said they were Apostles and were not, and for finding them liars. Hypocrites are against all knowing of others, and judging, in order to hide their own filthiness; like thieves they flee a search because of the stolen goods. But the more they endeavor to hide, the more they expose their shame.

Does not the spiritual man judge all things? Though he cannot know the states of subtle hypocrites infallibly, yet may he not give a near guess as to who are the sons of Sceva, by their manner of praying, preaching, and living? Many Pharisee-teachers have got a long fine string of prayer by heart, so that they are never at a loss about it. Their prayers and preachings are generally of a length, and both as dead as a stone, and without all savor.

I beseech you, my dear brethren, to consider that there is no probability of your getting good by the ministry of Pharisees, for they are no shepherds (no faithful ones) in Christ's account. They are as good as none, nay, worse than

none upon some account. For take them first and last, and they generally do more hurt than good. They strive to keep better out of the places where they live; nay, when the life of piety comes near their quarters, they rise up in arms against it, consult, contrive, and combine in their conclaves against it as a common enemy that reveals and condemns their craft and hypocrisy. And with what art, rhetoric, and appearances of piety, will they varnish their opposition of Christ's kingdom? As the magicians imitated the works of Moses, so do false apostles, and deceitful workers imitate the apostles of Christ.

I shall conclude the discourse with the words of the Apostle Paul from 2 Corinthians 11:14–15: “And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light: Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.”

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK:

As we bring to a close this, the first edition of Theolog, it is our hope that you find the articles within to be instructive, thought-provoking, and, most importantly, edifying. Our aim, assuming a continual flow of quality articles, is to publish Theolog semiannually both online as a free resource and in-print for a modest fee. Please be encouraged to circulate this journal to anyone who might have an interest in its contents.

On behalf of the Oversight Board, our goal and intention is to secure a place for the Log College & Seminary amongst the many fine theological institutions that our world contains. Further, we believe that LCS provides something that most institutions cannot offer. Not only is our education free, but it is mentor-based with pastors and scholars training other pastors and scholars. Most simply, we believe that LCS is fulfilling Paul's admonition to Timothy to train faithful men who will train faithful men (2 Timothy 1:1-2), which is what the original Log College sought to do.

We believe the LCS model's most significant advantage is that it permits people to study without the need to relocate to another city or another state for training. This approach does have an economic benefit, but we believe that the ecclesiastical benefits of this model are invaluable. Within the LCS approach to theological education, church leaders, Sunday School teachers, and other members of Christ's church all have access to quality seminary instruction, training, and degrees (even terminal degrees are offered). As church members learn and grow in their understanding of the Bible and theology, they will feed that knowledge back into the local congregation, thus strengthening the local church. Finally, all instruction can be done under the oversight of the Pastor and church Elders so that there is never a question of what is being taught to church members.

LCS exists to serve the local church within the local church's context and the church globally as our Lord sees fit. We also commit that we will never charge a dime for this service, though donations are always welcomed. Theolog exists to edify serious students of God's Word and the Christian life.

Win Groseclose
Chief Editor, Theolog
The Log College and Seminary