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וְיִתְבַּונְנוּ חַסְדֵי יְהוָה

Theolog



*The Log College
& Seminary*

Psalm 107:43



Psalm 107:43

THEOLOG

THE JOURNAL OF THE LOG COLLEGE & SEMINARY

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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.

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As much as it pains me to admit, America is now a post-Christian nation. How did it come to this? The answer to this question is of course beyond the scope of an introduction. But perhaps the more vital question we should ask is – “What is the solution to America’s spiritual decline?”

The Log College men wrestled with a very similar question as they surveyed the spiritual climate of the colonial church. An emerging worldliness combined with a toxic dead orthodoxy within the church to form a rather stagnant spiritual state. The Log College men found the answer in the legacy of the Puritans. There must be Biblical preaching, bathed in prayer, focused on Jesus Christ, and delivered by men of vital piety with a burden for the lost. The goal of the Log College was to train and send out such men, and this it did. Revival was the result. While many attribute the Great Awakening in America largely to the labors of George Whitefield, in actuality it was *Gilbert Tennent* that laid the groundwork for an American awakening, even preceding the work of Jonathan Edwards. It was the Great Awakening that forged a truly American identity, and prepared a generation that would establish a godly, Christian nation.

In my estimation, nothing short of a *third great awakening* will solve America’s problems. There must be a return to Biblical preaching, bathed in prayer, focused on Jesus Christ, and delivered by men of vital piety with a burden for the lost. Only this kind of preaching can establish a Christian world and life view. Only this kind of preaching can awaken sinners from their carnal security. Only this kind of preaching can challenge a culture in open defiance of God and bent on self-destruction.

The church does not need new programs. The church does not need to resort to cultural accommodation. What the church needs is to return to the “old paths.” The church must recover the power of the gospel and the primacy of preaching. The Spirit works in and through the Word. God invests His power in the Word! If we are to see spiritual change in our day, we must see the Word faithfully proclaimed. Our culture needs the pure, undiluted, unadulterated, uncompromised, and unapologetic teaching of God’s Word. While our culture *wants* politically correct words, what it *needs* is God’s Word. Let us learn from history, and especially *church history*. The Log College men have given us a wonderful and proven model. Let us continue their legacy and see what great things the Lord will do in our midst.

Dr. John McDonald
President
The Log College & Seminary

SALVATION ORACLES: A STUDY OF THE USE OF SIMILE IN HOSEA

ALLEN DAVIS, MDIV¹

The prophets...are about hearing and seeing, about the opening of the eyes of the heart, about being ready to listen when God decides to speak. They are not as much about telling the future, as effecting a change NOW! For God is indeed a God who speaks, who opens wide the door of His inner life to those He loves. Who, like the Great Romancer that He is, longs to recapture the imaginations of His beloved.²

Introduction

The use of poetry in the writing of the Old Testament prophets receives little acknowledgement among scholars.³ The problem appears to be one of lacking an understanding of the “why” of poetry in the prophets. The answer lies in the fact that God desires to recapture the heart of those whom He loves. To that end, He uses messages which penetrate the head and ring in the heart. Mere statement of the issues, although the same message, lacks the power and impact of poetic language to accomplish God’s goal of reconciliation with His beloved, chosen Israel. The entire book of Hosea revolves around the dichotomy of an adulterous

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2 Michael Card, *The Word*. NT Productions, SPD 1321, compact disk. The quote comes from the printed material accompanying the CD.

3 Terry Lee Brensinger, “Lions, Wind and Fire: A Study of Prophetic Similes” (PhD diss., Drew University, 1985), 2-3. Brensinger suggests that evidence exists showing that this is changing.

wife and the husband who loves her.⁴ Certainly God could use straightforward language to present His case, but doing so robs the book of its power and impact. Without the poetry, what remains to tug at the heartstrings? Without Hosea and Gomer, what exists to penetrate the conscience of a nation hardened by idolatry? No, God must use poetry because the fate of His beloved Israel hangs in the balance.

Three terms used in this article must be defined to assist in the understanding of concepts discussed. These terms are:

Simile: - a figure of speech in which two entities are compared. The comparison is normally created morphologically, namely, by an indicator of resemblance, such as the words “like” or “as.”⁵

Tenor – the idea being expressed or the subject of the comparison.⁶

Vehicle – the image by which the idea (tenor) is conveyed or the subject communicated.⁷

The nature of this discourse does not allow either a discussion of the technicalities involved in the use of similes in the prophetic work generally or

4 Michael Card’s song “Song of Gomer” from the compact disk *The Word*, reflects the love Hosea has for her from her perspective. She cannot understand how Hosea could love someone like her and “How he keeps on forgiving me, how he keeps his sanity, Hosea, you’re a fool.” The words of the chorus are “A fool to love someone like me. A fool to suffer silently. But sometimes through your eyes I see, I’d rather be a fool.” This song beautifully captures the love of Hosea for Gomer, but more importantly, the love of God for his beloved Israel.

5 David L. Petersen and Kent Harold Richards. *Interpreting Hebrew Poetry*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 50. See also Brensinger, “Lions, Wind and Fire,” p. 14 where he writes, “...it is important to emphasize that true similes involve comparisons between objects that are, to one degree or another, dissimilar. To compare similar objects is to do nothing more than to state a fact... This observation is particularly important, for there are of course numerous comparative statements in the prophetic literature that are at times inappropriately classified as similes.”

6 Petersen and Richards, quoting I.A. Richards, 50.

7 Ibid.

Hosea specifically.⁸ This article serves as a short discussion of the use of simile in the prophetic book of Hosea, with the focus specifically on those similes referring to the pronouncement of salvation from YHWH to Israel.

A review of the New American Standard Bible, the New International Version, the Revised Standard Version, and the English Standard Version as to how they depict the passages of Hosea according to the standards of poetry or narrative revealed the following:

1. The NIV, RSV, and ESV do not depict any part of chapter 1 as poetry, whereas the NASB includes 1:10-11 among the poetic passages.
2. The NIV and NASB include 2:2-23 among the poetic passages, whereas the RSV and ESV include 2:2-15 and 2:21-23 among the poetic passages.
3. Neither the NASB, NIV, RSV, or ESV contain any narrative from 4:1-14:9.⁹

Simile in the Salvation Oracles in Hosea

No other prophet – indeed, not one writer in the entire Old Testament uses as many similes as Hosea does.¹⁰

Of the many similes used in Hosea, the most provocative refer to YHWH and Israel.¹¹ Twenty of these similes occur in the accusation, eighteen in the pronouncement of judgment, and only four in oracles of salvation (1:10; 6:1-

8 For an excellent discussion of the technical and grammatical considerations inherent in Hebrew simile see Brensinger, “Lions, Wind and Fire: A Study of Prophetic Similes.”

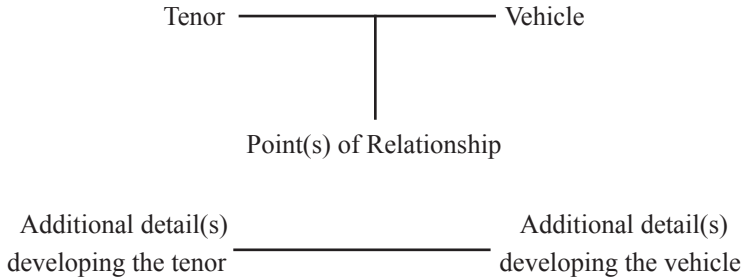
9 This author chose to cite the NASB in this article unless otherwise noted. He did so specifically because the NASB includes 1:10-11 as poetry, and the simile used there is one of the four salvation oracles presented in Hosea.

10 H.W. Wolff. *Hosea: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Hosea*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), xxiv.

11 Ibid.

3; 11:10-11; 1:5-7).¹² Interestingly, this threefold categorization of accusation, judgment, and salvation corresponds to the structural cycle of the book of Judges (accusation, threat, promise).¹³

To better comprehend the similes in Hosea, one must understand the structure used by the prophet to convey his message. To that end, Brensinger employs the following schematic for diagramming similes:¹⁴



As one studies the various similes in Hosea (and elsewhere in prophetic literature), the use of this schematic brings clarity and focus to the poetic structure by depicting the correlation and connection to the various parts of the simile. Petersen and Richards discuss tenor and vehicle briefly, stating, “Vehicles in Hosea often employ nature: rain (6:3), birds (11:1), animals (13:7), and plants (10:11)...There is less variety in the tenors. Either Yahweh’s positive (6:3) or punitive action (5:12) or Israel’s malfeasance (7:6-7) provides the standard

¹² Petersen and Richards, 107. In note 10 the authors quote these statistics from Westermann, *Vergleiche*, 28. One wonders why such heavy emphasis on accusation and judgment and such little attention to salvation? Perhaps the emotions of God compel Him to lay such heavy emphasis in order to awaken Israel to her plight. When the passage penetrates to the heart of Israel, she finds herself prepared to accept the beautiful gift of salvation.

¹³ Compare the structure of Judges as depicted in Judges 3:7-9: “And the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD [accusation]...He sold them into the hands of Cushan-rishathaim [threat]...the LORD raised up a deliverer [promise].”

¹⁴ Brensinger, 94. Note the definitions for Tenor and Vehicle in the Introduction of this article.

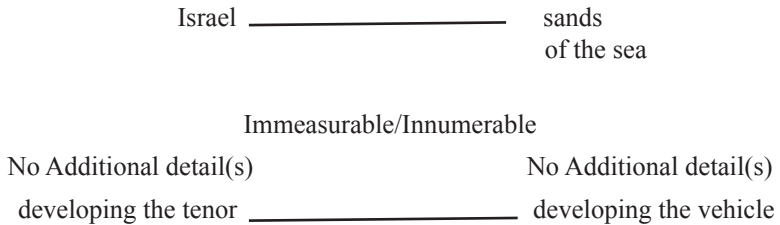
subjects.¹⁵ The remainder of this article will employ this schematic to diagram the four salvation oracle similes used in Hosea.

The First Salvation Oracle: Hosea 1:10.

Hosea writes,

Yet the number of the sons of Israel
 Will be like the sand of the sea,
 Which cannot be measured or numbered;
 And it will come about that, in the place
 Where it said to them,
 “You are not My people,”
 It will be said to them,
 “You are the sons of the living God.” (NASB)

Using Brensinger’s schematic diagram, one finds the following:



The majority of Hosea chapter 1 centers around Hosea’s marriage to Gomer and the three children born to them. The birth of each child provides a living illustration as to how God feels toward Israel.¹⁶ God stands ready to cast Israel off because of the idolatry permeating the land. Alter and Kermode write, “The sequence is cumulative and leads to cancellation of the covenantal bond based on YHWH’s self-revelation at Sinai: ‘for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God’ (1:9, literally, ‘I am not your I am,’ a punning allusion to the divine name; cf.

15 Petersen and Richards, 51.

16 Hos 1:4 = Jezreel for God will punish Israel; 1:6 = Lo-ruhamah (she has not obtained compassion) for God will no longer have compassion for Israel; and 1:9 = Lo-ammi (not my people) for God declares that Israel is not His people, nor He their God.

Exod 3:14).¹⁷ Thus, chapter 1 shows God casting His beloved Israel off in disgust as she continues to play the harlot with gods that are not gods, then immediately He accepts her back and promises to prosper her immeasurably. Only the intense emotions of a broken heart cause such instability. The scene described indicates that God cannot decide whether He loves or hates Israel; whether He desires a relationship or despises the very thought of one. The intensity of these emotions cannot adequately be captured in words on paper. Only experiencing the pain of rejection by someone cherished prepares one to fully comprehend the enormity of this passage.

Notice, then, the diagram. Israel (tenor), shall be as the sand of the sea (vehicle). How so? As the sand of the sea is immeasurable, so shall Israel be without number. Hosea gives no additional details concerning either Israel or the sand of the sea. Therefore, the simile expresses the heart-wrenching desire of God to bless His people once again.¹⁸

The text of Hosea poses interesting points for consideration. YHWH specifically commanded Hosea to name his children Jezreel, Lo-ruhammah, and Lo-ammi in order to illustrate His great displeasure with Israel. He breaks the covenant He made with Israel to be their I AM and casts her off as unloved and unwanted. Without warning, however, YHWH speaks to Hosea saying, “Say to your brothers, ‘Ammi,’ and to your sisters, ‘Ruhammah.’”¹⁹ The shortened names given mean “my people” an “she has obtained compassion,” respectively. Surprisingly, YHWH moves from a position of no compassion and utter disgust with Israel to one of compassion and love. The Apostles Paul and Peter both used

17 Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, eds., *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 214.

18 One cannot forget the great promise of God to Abraham that He would bless Abraham, make him a great nation, and that He would bless all nations and families of the earth through him (Gen 12:1-3); that God would make Abraham’s descendants as numerous as the dust of the earth (Gen 13:16) and as innumerable as the stars of heaven (Gen 15:7); that Abraham would become a mighty nation and all the nations of the earth would be blessed through him (Gen 18:18); and that because Abraham did not withhold Isaac from God, God would multiply his offspring as the stars of the heaven and as the sand on the seashore, and that in his offspring all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen 22:15-19).

19 Hos 2:1.

this section of Hosea in their epistles. Paul understands Hosea to speak of the Gentile's inclusion in the people of God through Christ.²⁰ Peter's use of Hosea 1 and 2 refers to Christians (both Jew and Gentile) who, through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, now claim full participation in the "holy nation" of God.²¹ Thus, Hosea's prophecy concerning God's people and His compassion finds ultimate fulfillment not in physical Israel, but rather in the spiritual Israel of God.²² This message radiates the love of God for lost souls and the hope of those standing in need of His grace and mercy.

The Second Salvation Oracle: Hosea 6:1-3.

Hosea writes:

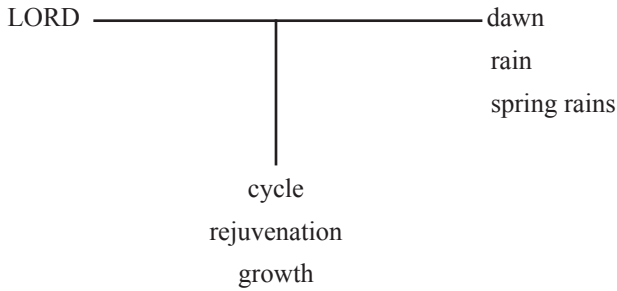
Come, let us return to the LORD.
For He has torn us, but He will heal us:
He has wounded us, but He will bandage us.
He will revive us after two days;
He will raise us up on the third day
That we may live before Him.
So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD.
His going forth is as certain as the dawn;
And He will come to us like the rain.
Like the spring rain watering the earth. (NASB)

By inserting the various components of the simile from this passage into Brensinger's diagram, we find the following:

20 Rom 9:19-26.

21 1 Pet 2:9-10.

22 The scope of this article of necessity allows no room for a full discussion of the concept of "spiritual Israel." Thus, suffice it to say that the author believes the church to be "spiritual Israel" and therefore the ultimate recipient of God's promises.



No Additional detail(s)
developing the tenor

No Additional detail(s)
developing the vehicle

This simile contains a compound vehicle which reveals a climatic arrangement.²³ Although this simile comes at the end of a lengthy section (vv 1-3), and contains a compound vehicle, it remains a simple simile. The diagram shows the LORD (Tenor) coming like the dawn, rain, and spring rains (compound vehicle). The compound vehicle consists of three things which remain constant in the cycle of nature: dawn, rain, and spring rains. Just as the dawn comes morning by morning, so also the Lord's coming is certain. As surely as the rain appears and the spring rains wet the earth year after year, so also God continues to make His presence known. Hosea uses a natural cycle which produces rejuvenation and growth to show that God's coming to Israel contains assurances of revitalization and growth. This promise of new blessing shines in contrast to the words of accusation and judgment in Hosea.

The Third Salvation Oracle: Hosea 11:10-11.

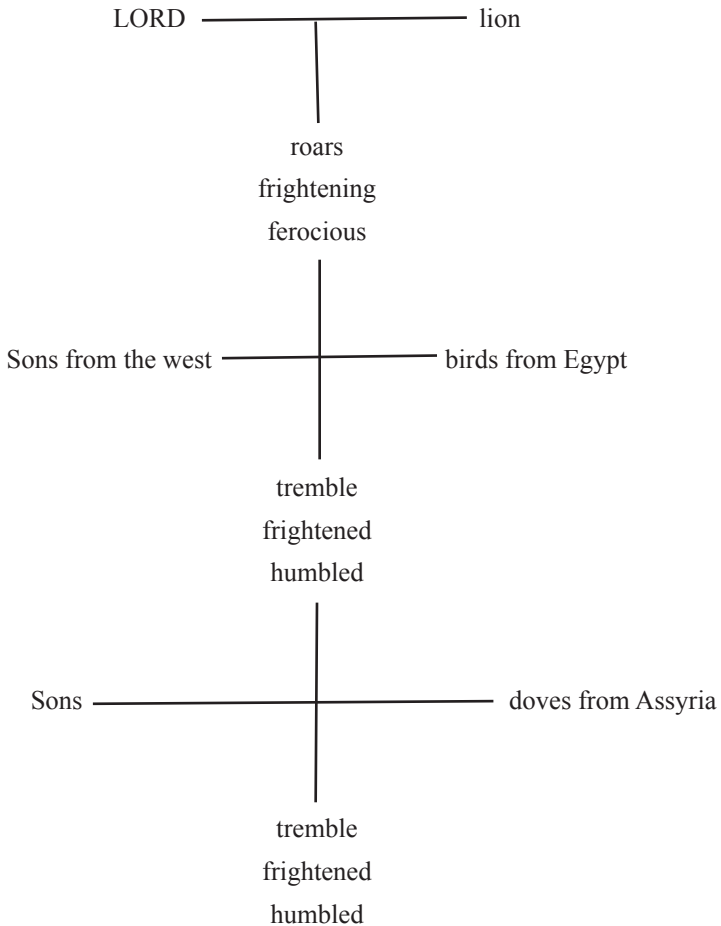
We find these words in Hosea:

They will walk after the LORD,
He will roar like a lion;
Indeed He will roar,
And His sons will come trembling from the West.
They will come trembling like the birds from Egypt,
And like doves from the land of Assyria;

²³ Brensinger, 127.

And I will settle them in their houses, declares the LORD. (NASB)

These words come in the midst of great emotional turmoil on the part of God in which God describes the state of Israel when they finally return to Him, and what He promises to do for them. Using Brensinger’s schematic, one finds the following compound simile (two tenors: LORD and sons; two vehicles: birds and doves):



Here, Hosea employs a frightening picture to illustrate God’s tremendous love for Israel. Notice the questions raised by God in the context:

1. How can I give you up? (11:8a).
2. How can I surrender you? (11:8b).
3. How can I treat you (badly)? (11:8c-d)

Contrast these questions with the pronouncement of judgment immediately preceding:

1. Assyria to be Israel's king (11:5).
2. The sword to whirl against their cities (11:6a).
3. The gate bars of the cities demolished and consumed (11:6b).

Once again God shows the emotional turmoil of one rejected by His beloved. God says, "My heart is turned over within me, all my compassions are kindled" (11:8e). Therefore, He says, "I will not execute My fierce anger; I will not destroy Ephraim again. For I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath" (11:9). God portrays His anger and emotion in contrast with a man's anger and emotion. Whereas a man acts irrationally due to intense emotional strain, God uses restraint and acts according to His holiness.

Therefore, the simile used sheds light on the holy balance between God's fierce anger (11:9) and His compassion (11:8). Rather than destroy Israel, God intends to bring her back into submission by subjecting her to a frightening experience. Just as a lion roars causing terror in the hearts of those who hear, so God roars and causes Israel to fear. This results in Israel "walking after the LORD," (11:10a) in humility (11:10d-11).

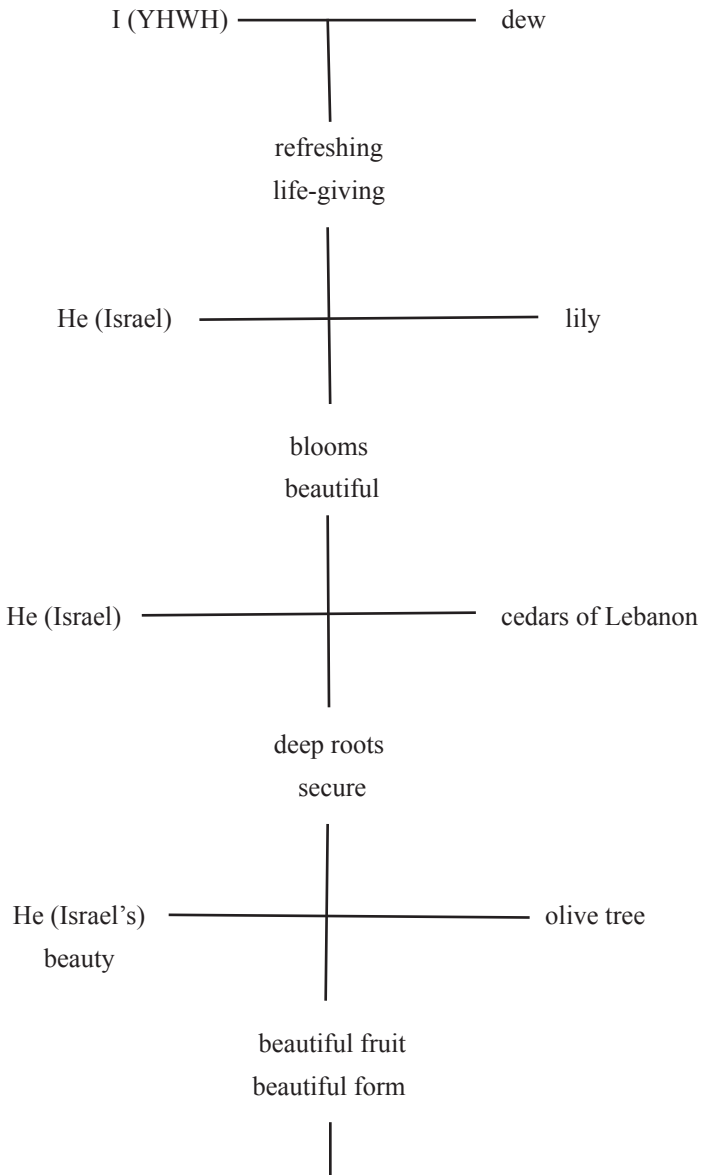
The Fourth Salvation Oracle: Hosea 14:5-7.

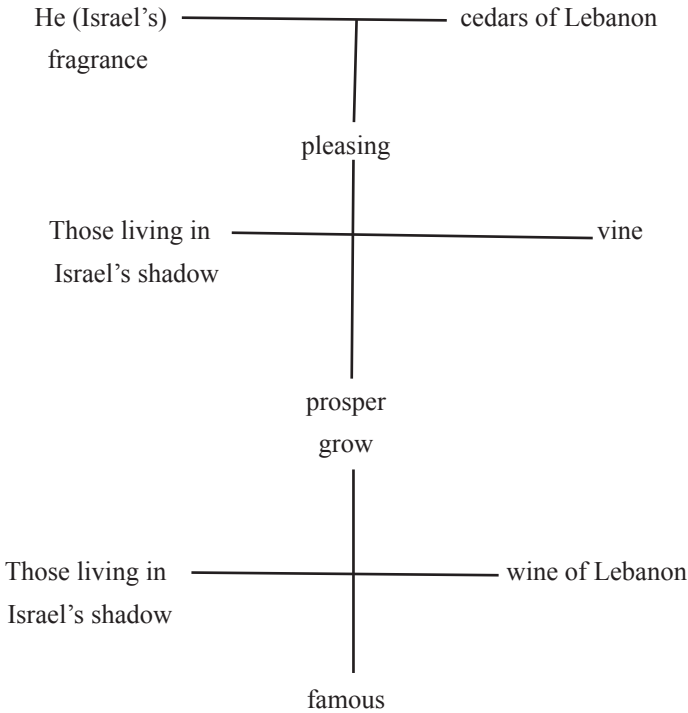
Hosea writes:

I will be like the dew to Israel;
 He will blossom like the lilly,
 And he will take root like the cedars of Lebanon.
 His shoots will sprout,
 And his beauty will be like the olive tree,
 And his fragrance like the cedars of Lebanon.
 Those who live in his shadow

Will again raise grain,
 And they will blossom like the vine
 His renown will be like the wine of Lebanon. (NASB)

Again, Brensinger's diagram is useful in showing the structure and components of this simile:





Of all the prophets, only Hosea shows a clear tendency to use compound similes such as the one under consideration here.²⁴ This particular compound simile appears to form a climactic expression of Israel's future hope.

God compares Himself to dew here in contrast to the roaring lion of the previously considered simile. Interestingly, the writer of Proverbs combines both elements when he writes, "The king's wrath is like the roaring of a lion, but his favor is like the dew on the grass."²⁵ The roar of a lion (as with a king) strikes terror, but the cool dampness of the morning dew somehow brings peace and a calming effect. Thus, God promises to refresh Israel's troubled, frightened spirit.

²⁴ Brensinger, 120. He comments, "Of his eleven compounds, five incorporate three or even four similes... In fact, four of Hosea's lengthy compound similes occur in chapters 13 and 14." This phenomenon illustrates the climactic nature of Hosea as he "reaches the peak with the concluding salvation speech," 121-122.

²⁵ Prov 19:12.

As dew refreshes the earth causing the vegetation to grow, so does God's presence cause Israel to bloom. The picture of the lily appears fifteen times throughout the biblical text.²⁶ This refers to flowers of great beauty.²⁷

The cedars of Lebanon signified royal power and wealth, and thus came to symbolize growth and strength.²⁸ As cedars sent forth deep roots resulting in tremendous strength and security, so God promises to make Israel secure once again. This message resounds with hope for a nation who faces the heavy burden of captivity because of spiritual adultery. The strength of cedars combines with the beauty of olive trees to form a breath-taking image. The olive tree begins to flower when it is less than ten years old, although only a tree 40 or 50 years old produces a full yield of fruit.²⁹ Hosea says that "Israel's shoots will sprout" (11:6a). This, in fact, typifies exactly what happens to the olive tree as its roots "spread widely to gain nourishment."³⁰ Jeremiah presents the olive tree as one which combines beautiful fruit with beautiful form, thus making it very pleasing to the eye.³¹

Solomon's Song depicts the pleasing aroma of the cedar's fragrance by stating, "Your lips, my bride, drip honey; Honey and milk are under your tongue,

26 James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, (Iowa Falls: World Bible Publishers, nd), 606.

27 Trent C. Butler, gen. ed., *Holman Bible Dictionary*, (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991), 884. This dictionary suggests, "In biblical usage, any of a number of distinctive flowers ranging from the lotus of the Nile (1 Kings 7:19) to wild field flowers in Palestine (Matt 6:28). The lily was the inspiration for the rim of the molten sea in the Temple in Jerusalem (1 Kings 7:26; compare 1 Kings 7:19, 22). The Song of Solomon uses it to beautify the writer's description of love (2:1; 4:5)."

28 Ibid, 240.

29 Ibid, 25.

30 Ibid.

31 Jer 11:16a.

and the fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon.”³²

These figures combine to pronounce a portrait of a strong, growing, admired nation which pleases God. Hosea’s final discourse on salvation presents God’s desire for His people, Israel. The nation hears hope and healing in these words as opposed to the accusations and judgment contained in the majority of the similes used by Hosea.

The final simile in this compound simile refers to all those who come under the influence of this renewed Israel. Israel receives blessing from God which extend to those with whom he comes in contact.

Conclusion

The book of Hosea contains the message from a broken-hearted God to the one who rejects His love. The prophecy moves through a continual cycle of accusatory statements, pronouncements of judgment, and oracles of salvation. Throughout the message one finds heart-wrenching emotion as God struggles to maintain a balance between His anger and compassion, His justice and mercy, His desire to cast Israel off completely and His longing to hold Israel in a loving embrace.

The use of similes takes this message from the mundane, ordinary vernacular and couches it within mental pictures designed to stir the head and the heart of Israel. Placing the similes in a diagram helps one to understand the relationship between the words spoken and the emotion behind them.

Ultimately, the message presented in Hosea must penetrate the heart of all those who desire a relationship with God. He remains the same loving, concerned, jealous, angry God illuminated in the prophet’s oracle. Perhaps a continual searching after a heart and head level of understanding of the poetry used in Hosea produces the same effect on the modern reader as it had on the original recipients.

32 Song of Sol 4:11.

THE CONCEPT OF 'ASSEMBLY': A LINGUISTIC-BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

SAMUEL BATHIRAN D. D., TH. D. ¹

The Ancient Near East (ANE) known as Fertile Crescent, from Sumer in the third millennium B.C.E. to the fourth century B. C. E., contains records that are older than found in any other ancient civilization of the world. These records are greatly valuable to the Old Testament studies as they not only evidence their similarities and influence with the Hebrew writings in certain aspects but also represent the continuation of the legal traditions in some measures generation after generation till the Hellenistic period,² when Alexander the great spread the Hellenistic culture worldwide and made Ancient Near East part of his Hellenistic kingdom. Thus, students of the Word must recognize the legitimacy of the historiography of the Old Testament, as there is substantial connectivity between the Hebraic society and her neighbours in the ancient near eastern contextual studies. In understanding this historical relationship, the students in a great measure to interpret the text significantly, as there exists various commonalities in

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2 Raymond Westbrook, ed., *A History of Ancient Near Eastern law* "Volume One" (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2003), 1-2; Charles Foster Kent, *The Student's Old Testament: Israel's Laws and Legal Precedents From the Days of Moses to the Closing of the Legal Canon* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), 3-7. The significant distinction between the legal system of ANE and OT is that the OT laws are inspired by the Spirit of God, that which were already written in the heart of man at creation. Most of these laws were oral in form from the time of Adam until they were inscripturated by Moses who had the divine revelation of God to do so. The students of OT should note that the majority of the OT laws have no ancient parallel.

their cultural traditions and customs of their day, in reference to Hebraic context, convey a great amount of realities passed on the next generations with significant similarities and peculiarities from antiquity. In having such comprehensive knowledge, we will be facilitated why God has commanded Israelites to be separated from her neighbours in her manners and customs, so as to have a distinction without assimilation in their practicality.

By having an in-depth understanding, on the grounds mentioned above, another important thing to be kept in mind is that we need to recognize the relationship between Hebrew and the Semitic languages³ for two primary reasons: (i) Hebrew is not the first language in the world, and (ii) Hebrew had a great influence by the other Semitic languages. It is true to the fact that when Abraham and his posterity settled in Canaan, were greatly influenced by the language of the Canaanites. Similarly, Jacob and his posterity migrated to Egypt and were under bondage for four hundred and thirty years (Gal 3:17), and were influenced by the language of Egyptians. In this context, “Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words⁴ and in deeds”⁵ (Acts 7:22), which alludes that he mastered the Hebrew language that was already being influenced by numerous dialectical variations, which occurred over a period of time, under the influence of various Semitic languages. With this linguistic influence in his learning at Egypt, thus, when Moses wrote Torah, he used the Hebrew dialect

3 The Hebrew language is a branch of Semitic languages. The Semitic family of languages is divided into four groups: (i) Middle Semitic or Canaanite branch (Canaanite, Moabite, Phoenician, Ugaritic and Hebrew); (ii) North Semitic or Aramaic branch (Syriac and Aramaic); (iii) East Semitic branch (Akkadian) and (iv) South Semitic or Arabic branch (Arabic and Ethiopic). See, E. Kautzsch & S. A. E. Cowley, ed., *Gesenius' Hebrew grammar*; (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems Inc, 2003). Hebrew is known as a language of Canaan (Isa 19:18).

4 He was well educated in Egypt with potential skills in the reading and writing of Hieroglyphics, Hieratics and Paleo-Hebrew scripts.

5 Unless otherwise noted, all the scriptural quotations are taken from *King James Version*, 1611/ 1769.

that had several adaptations or loan words from the Semitic family of languages.⁶ Further, Israel was under Babylonian captivity for seventy years, and during this time, the Hebrew had, again, underwent dialectical changes. In addition, Israel was under the various empires (Persians, Greeks and Romans) and their rule, and consequently Hebrew had influence within new cultures and languages. Thus, to attain the proper biblical interpretation of Scriptures in the light of its historical setting so as to convey its meaning more significantly, we should be conversant with context of ANE society as well as Greco-Roman Society. Setting this backdrop in mind, this paper will analyze the concept of assembly, so as to highlight the significance of this concept, in the linguistic-biblical-theological components, by its research and investigation, primarily focusing on the syntactical and theological standpoint. In so doing, this paper will analyze the following key areas: (i) Linguistic similarities between Akkadian, Hebrew, and Greek, and its theological significance to the Church; (ii) Word study for Church in the light of Hebrew and Greek languages; and (iii) The first church in Eden which continues throughout the Bible as one people of God under the headship of Christ, even in eternity future.

Temples and Assembly in ANE Context

In the Neo-Sumerian Period, the laws of Ur-Namma (LU) testified that various temples existed during the third dynasty of Ur (Ur III), and in the ancient Babylonian records, the judges though they are not priests, were at the gate of the temple dealing with the theft cases of the temple.⁷ The concept of assembly was set up in temple courts and local courts in the Sumerian cultural context. In beginning of the third millennium B. C., the temples were, initially, given the

6 T. O. Lambdin, *Egyptian Loan Words in the Old Testament* JAOS 73 (1953), 145-55; T. O. Lambdin, *Egyptian Loan Words and Transcriptions in the Ancient Semitic Languages* (PhD dissertation: John Hopkins, 1952); Y. Muchiki, *Egyptian Proper Names and Loan Words in Northwest Semitic* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1999); S. A. Kaufman, *The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1974); P. V. Mankowski, *Akkadian Loan Words in Biblical Hebrew* (Winonalake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000); M. Ellenbogen, *Foreign Words in the Old Testament: Their Origin and Etymology* (London: Luzac, 1962).

7 Westbrook, *A History of Ancient Near Eastern law*, 368.

state of independent entity, and over the course of various periods, particularly in the Neo-Babylonian period, the administration of the temples were under the purview of the civil administration, since the royal officials exercised their power and authority in the matters of the temples and its related activities.⁸ The Neo-Babylonian kings, during this time, have appointed various royal representatives so as to bring the entire temple administrative structure under the control of their power,⁹ as they dominantly exercise their power in the popular Babylonian assemblies. In this era, they had their assembly in their local courts as well as in temple courts to deal any significant matters. Their assembly in the local courts consists of the members who were free citizens and local elders, and the members of the assembly in the temple courts consisted of royal officials and the members of the assembly from the local courts.¹⁰

Royal officials, whether central or provincial, exercised jurisdiction in the same manner. Provincial officials sometimes sat with the local council to constitute a court. The local courts give the impression of being ad hoc assemblies, especially with such designations as the Egyptian “court of this day” (*qnbt n hrw pn*). They could have large numbers, as the terms like Akkadian “assembly” (*puhrum*) and Egyptian “The Thirty” suggest. The local council (*qenbet*) at Deir-el-Medina, when sitting as a court, comprised between eight and fourteen villagers, meeting after work.¹¹

With this backdrop pertaining to the ancient near eastern context, now let us turn our attention to the concept of ‘assembly’¹² which is found in Sumerian and Akkadian sources, as their records reflect it. The term assembly was known as in Akkadian *puhrum* and Sumerian *ûkkin*. These assemblies gathered at the

8 Ibid, 29.

9 Ibid, 918.

10 Ibid, 919. A similar type of assembly consisting of princes, priests, prophets and all the people is paralleled to the Jeremiah’s day. See, Jer. 26.

11 Ibid, 30.

12 It is interesting to note that besides human assembly, the ancient Babylonian records authenticate that their deities themselves gathered in the specific place within the temple premises known as *ubšu-ukkin-na* where the lesser gods hear, obey and praise the greater gods for their wisdom. John Arthur Bloom, *Ancient Near Eastern Temple Assemblies: A Survey and Prolegomena* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: PhD dissertation, Annenberg Research Institute, May 1992), 170-200.

temple premises for taking oaths, settling their disputes in temple incidents and worshipping their god(s).¹³ The temple assembly mentioned in *Atra-Hasis* epic and *Enuma eliš* resembled their administrative functions with the following characteristics, as John Arthur Bloom in his thesis *Ancient Near Eastern Temple Assemblies: A Survey and Prolegomena* explained: (i) Most of the times, the assembly began with banquet, (ii) they sat together in a semi-circle or “siege shield” shape, (iii) the assembly member or leader stood up to address them, (iv) the leaders of the assembly were in the midst of the gathering, seated honourably (v) they assembled in the holy area of the temple, (vi) the practice of voting is observed, and (vii) the people directly addressed the leaders of the assembly.¹⁴ These entire characteristics facilitate our understanding so as to ascertain the fact that the assembly was in proper arrangement to inculcate certain order, even in the days of antiquity. Having understood the concept of assembly in ANE times, and now we turn to look at the linguistic significance of the Akkadian word *puḫrum*, and its connotation in the light of Hebrew terminology עֲדָוָה which is frequently translated as “assembly” or “congregation” in the Hebrew Bible.

Etymology of עֲדָוָה and Its Relation to the Other Semitic Languages

The Hebrew word עֲדָוָה is derived from the Arabic cognate *qāla*, meaning to “say.”¹⁵ The Arabic root *qāla*, etymologically is connected to the Semitic languages such as in Ugaritic *ql*, “voice, sound, and thunder” ; Phoenicians *ql*, “voice, cry”; Aramaic *qāl* “voice,” and the relationship with Akkadian, seems opposite as *qālu* and *qūlu* means “be silent, pay attention,” or “quietness, silence.”¹⁶ The distinction between Akkadian and other Semitic languages occurred, in the latter days, due to the language development,

13 Bloom, *Ancient Near Eastern Temple Assemblies*, 1-7, 129-207ff.

14 Ibid, 129-138.

15 T. K. Cheyne and J. Sutherland Black, ed. *Encyclopedia Biblica : A Critical Dictionary of the Literary Political and Religious History The Archeology Geography and Natural History of the Bible* (Toronto: George N. Morang & Company, 1899), I: 345, [Hereafter cited as EB].

16 G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds., Douglas W. Stott, trans., *The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2003), 12: 576. [Hereafter cited as TDOT].

in which the designation for a certain acoustic perception split semantically into the opposing notions of “generate a sound” on the other hand, and “listen attentively to a sound” on the other. Such development would also explain the use of the Hebrew word as an interjection: *qôl*, approximately “listen” can mean both “a sound is audible” and “be quite and listen **in any assembly when the people gather for their purpose** (emphasis mine).¹⁷

What is interesting to note here that the relationship between Arabic and Hebrew terminology here is analogous¹⁸ since the verb *qāl* could mean “call” and *qāhāl* “assemble” as it conveys the idea that people are called and assembled. This significant idea resembles the concept of assembly in a general sense in a Hebrew and Greek thought, and the terminology *קָהָל* appeared in Hebrew Scriptures since the assembly of YHWH usually had it in their usages, in reference to the community of God which belongs to the Lord, come together for worshipping the true living God in a theological sense.

The term *קָהָל* not only has its connection to Arabic *qāl* but also had a close connection to the Akkadian term *puḫrum* meaning “assembly.” The OT scholars are, in their opinion, to attest that the accurate corresponding terminology for *qāhāl* in Akkadian language is *puḫrum*, though in the Akkadian context, it was used to refer to the assembly in the community of unbelievers.

The most appropriate equivalent to *qāhāl* among ancient languages is Sem. *pḥr*. The Akk. vb. means “assemble,” in the D stem “gather, collect.” The noun *puḫru* (which was adopted into Aramaic) means “assembly, council (of gods and people),” and ultimately “totality (of living beings or things).” The Sumerian worldview already thought the earthly form of society correspond precisely to the world of the gods; accordingly, the king’s council corresponded to an “assembly of divine beings” (Sum. *ûkkin*; Akk. *puḫur ilani*).¹⁹

Although *puḫrum* is equivalent to *qāhāl*, we do not interpret and mean that the Babylonian assembly and assembly of YHWH are same, since both of these are separate entities, traveling in separate directions. While the Akkadian assembly’s

17 TDOT, 12:576.

18 EB, I:345.

19 TDOT, 12: 548.

belief system is based on the common mythological idea, Yahweh's assembly is God's family based on the truth, as they are predestined, elected, called, sanctified and glorified by God as His redeemed people. The terminology equivalents do not emphasize that these two assemblies share a common mythological idea; rather, they denote the concept of assembly in a general sense, since the Hebrew *qāhāl* shares its semantic equivalent with Akkadian *puhru*.²⁰ Though the general meaning of assembly, technically, is conveyed in both contexts, the assembly of YHWH had its meaning beyond the technical sense, in an extreme distinction to the Akkadian assembly's religious mythological idea, more significantly in a theological sense, in an everlasting fellowship with eternal God.

Appeal to the Students of Divinity

More vigilance is required of the students of the Word when they study extra-biblical sources. The liberal theologians in this regard had brought great damage to the veracity of the Bible, denying the inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture. In their attempts, they have distorted the pure teachings of Scripture, in a comparative study of ANE texts with biblical texts, by equating the god(s)/goddess with the sovereign God, the act which is detestable in His sight. They do this by emphasizing the similarities found in these texts. While liberal scholarship made several attempts to equate the Akkadian god(s) with Yahweh by the way of a comparative study found in ANE texts,²¹ it is irrelevant, conceptually as well as theologically, as this comparison fails to recognize the most significant point that there is only one true living God, and besides Him there is none, and He is Holy One. In refutation of this truth, the Akkadian assemblies reflect several god(s) / goddess(es) in their context, that they are merely created beings. The Akkadian god "Sin," known as *Anu* is associated with the moon, while the God of Hebrews is the Creator who is not created by others, nor is He self-created. He is eternal. Here, the fundamental distinctions between the God of Hebrews and ANE god(s) should be understood, precisely, so as to emphasize the sovereignty of Most High, the omnipotent God of the Bible. Thus, the similarities found in these texts do

20 Alan Lenzi, ed., *Akkadian Prayers and Hymns : A Reader* "Ancient Near East Monographs" (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 399.

21 Lenzi, *Akkadian Prayers and Hymns*, 123-399.

not establish their point of argument. Indeed, there exist undoubtedly several similarities between the ANE texts and the Hebrew biblical texts. However, this is not the basis to establish that there are gods other than YHWH in the world. Our God himself has told that there is none besides Him.²²

Syntactical Study on קהל

In the Hebrew Scriptures, vocabularies such as קהל, עדה, סוד, ועצרה, and מועד are translated as ‘assembly,’ ‘congregation,’ or ‘council,’ in different contextual settings with specific meanings attached within the larger / immediate contexts. In the primary sense, though these terms denote frequently the religious congregation of Israel, we should be aware of the fact that these terms do not mean genuine believers in every context; rather, these words should be interpreted in the light of its immediate context about whom it actually addresses, since their usage in different contextual settings, in certain passages, implies its implied meaning, in association with ungodly in certain passages, though its basic meaning in the context remains unchanged. Thus, first, the word lhq is briefly treated so as to establish its specified meaning significantly, and second, its relative term hd'[e how it is used to convey its meaning principally in reference to both godly and ungodly.

In light of this search, first, it is necessary to establish the proper meaning of קהל from the biblical standpoint. The Hebrew word קהל means assembly / congregation. The word is used for the religious assembly of the OT church. While several verses authenticate it, a couple of examples are provided here to identify with the terminology in the OT church context. The term קהל is used for the worship service of Israelites in the temple in 2 Chronicles 20:5. It reads, “then Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD before the new court” (NASB), which is read in (Masoretic Text) MT: וַיַּעֲמֵד וַיְהוֹשָׁפָט בְּקֶהֱל יְהוּדָה וְיִירוּשָׁלַם בְּבַיִת יְהוָה לִפְנֵי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ הַחֲדָשָׁה. Here, “The assembly of Judah,” בְּקֶהֱל יְהוּדָה, is the church of God for they were gathered יְהוָה בְּבַיִת, “in the house of God,” for the purpose of worship. Further, we should note that the book of Chronicles is not simply recognized as the history of Judah but the ecclesiastical history of Judah and temple which is OT church as Charles Foster Kent writes that

22 See, Scripture verses Isa 45:5-6, 14, 18, 21-22; 46:9.

the purpose of the chronicler,

however, was not to give an ordinary history of Judah. Many incidents of great political significance are ignored. Nor was it to write the history of Israel's religion, else he would not have passed over without mention the great work of Elijah, Amos and Hosea. It was rather to record the history of Judah, conceived of from the first as a sacred state centering about the temple, with the priests, the Levities, and earlier the king and his court, as its officials. Although the words, *church* and *ecclesiastical*, are in a sense, anachronisms, the Judah which the Chronicler knows and pictures is nothing more than an ecclesiastical state, and his narrative as a whole may best be designated as the *Ecclesiastical History of Judah and the Temple*.²³

The teaching concerning the OT church is biblical as Numbers 33:23 points out that “they went from Kehelathah (כִּהְלָתָה) and pitched in mount Shapher.” Here, the root word *lhq* implies that Israel in the OT is the church. The mention of כִּהְלָתָה in the book of Ecclesiastes affirms this idea more clearer when it denotes ‘one who assembles’ / ‘preacher’ / ‘member of the assembly’ in the context of OT church gathering. Now, turning our attention to Deuteronomy 9:10 (NASB) which reads, “And the LORD gave me the two tablets of stone written with the finger of God, and on them were all the words that the LORD had spoken with you on the mountain out of the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly,” we realize that Israelites gathered together to worship God on the Sabbath day which is mentioned in this verse as “the day of the assembly,” in MT לַיּוֹם הַקָּהֵל and in LXX, ἡμέρα ἐκκλησίας. The same phrase, “the day of the assembly,” is mentioned in Deut 10:24 and 18:16. Besides these passages, Micah 2:5 is an another good example to prove what is said above, as it talks about the OT church as “the assembly of the Lord,” יְהוָה הַקָּהֵל in MT and ἐκκλησία κυρίου in LXX which means that it is the church that belongs to our Lord as the ecclesiastical equivalent of κυριακός (1 Cori 11:20 and Rev 1:10). The OT church is, Judges 20:2 says, “the assembly of the people of God,” עַם הַקָּהֵל in MT and in LXX

23 Charles Foster Kent, *The Student's Old Testament: Israel's Historical and Biographical Narratives From the Establishment of the Hebrew Kingdom to the End of the Maccabean Struggle* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), 24.

24 LXX omits the phrase לַיּוֹם הַקָּהֵל in translation. It might have occurred due to Scribal errors in the transmission of the text.

ἐκκλησία τοῦ λαοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ “the church of God’s people.”

What merits in this syntactical study is that *קהל* is read in Hebrew Bible with *עדה* interchangeably in meaning and significance, in some contexts, in reference to the congregation of OT church. Lev 4:13 reads, “And if the whole congregation of Israel [*כָּל־עַדְתֵּי יִשְׂרָאֵל*] sin through ignorance, and the thing be hid from the eyes of the assembly, [*מִעֵינֵי הַקְהָל*].” Similarly, during the institution of the Passover, Ex 12:3, 6 also reads both of these terms equally, “Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel [*כָּל־עַדְתֵּי יִשְׂרָאֵל*], saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house. . . . And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel [*כָּל־קְהָל עַדְתֵּי־יִשְׂרָאֵל*] shall kill it in the evening.”

Having known this syntactical light in reference to the godly, we should not be ignorant of its other usages in reference to the ungodly. It is true that *קהל* is used, in a wider sense, for various purposes, assemblies include political entities. For instance, we see that *קהל* is also used to the army of Pharaoh in Exodus 17:17. Another example we read in Psalm 26:5 (KJV) “the congregation of evil doers” and the LXX reads ἐκκλησίαν πονηρευομένων (Psalm 25:5). MT reads *קְהָלֵי הַרְעִים* (Psalm 26:5). Here *קהל* is translated as ἐκκλησία in LXX. All these passages suggest that the word *קהל* or ἐκκλησία is figuratively interpreted in a collective sense, meaning that evil-doers’ congregations, by no means, have any association with the assembly of YHWH. In light of this understanding, the phrase for the army of Pharaoh in Ezekiel 17:17 should be interpreted as well. Evidently, in all such usages with reference to the ungodly, the terminology is not interrelated to the religious assembly of YHWH. In the same time, inevitably, it is an undeniable fact that the word *קהל* is, in a more appropriately narrow sense, often used theologically to the religious assembly of God in a very significant way, and it should be kept in our minds that OT church comprehended the significance of *קהל* in a specific reference to the congregation of God, and in the same time, while in reference to the unbelieving community, it did not provide any significance other than a general assembly as a common man could understand from his point of view.

Similarly, we note that the Hebrew terminology *עדה* is used in Psalm 22:17 *עַדְתֵּי הַרְעִים* “assembly of the wicked” (Psalm 22:16 KJV) and the LXX reads

συναγωγὴ πονηρευομένων (Psalm 21:17). In reference to the unbelievers, when this term עָרָה is used, it is used in a collective sense, as the unbelieving individuals are doomed collectively to their condemnation.²⁵ The Septuagint translates it as συναγωγὴ, meaning in Hebrew thought that such an individual has no fellowship with God's community in Jewish synagogues but is damned with the 'synagogues of the wicked' which are 'synagogues of Satan,' the terminology συναγωγὴ is interpreted in a figurative sense.

In addition to what is said above, further light to be shed on עָרָה as it is also mentioned, in certain instances, in reference to the believing community when they sin against God. In his last words to his sons, Jacob speaks of עָרָה in reference to Simon and Levi's wicked council in Genesis 49:6 "Let not my glory be united with their assembly" (NASB), as BHS reads בְּקִהְלָם אֶל־יָתֵד בְּבָרְיִ; it does not mean that they have no fellowship in God's assembly, rather the point of emphasis here is that their wicked counsel is not part of the assembly which God has established for His people. Thus, in their repentance unto God, they need to renew their fellowship with God, following godly counsel in His assembly, forsaking and forbidding any such evil counsel that comes from worldly pleasure. The text here provides us an exhortation that spiritually weak believers are to understand the foundational difference between the assembly of ungodly and the assembly of godly, so as to practice the counsel of God, to fulfill the pleasures of God through His counsel amongst His congregation. Besides this understanding, the familiar term עֵדָה which meant congregation of Israel in several places, is also used of the sinning members of the local church in some instances, and in such a case, the terminology is interpreted within the context of the local church community which comprises of both believers and unbelievers. For example, the Hebrew word עֵדָה is mentioned for the company of Korah in Numbers 16:16.

Akkadian kiništu and הכְּנִיסָה

Having established the etymological relationship of Akkadian *puhrum* with Hebrew עָרָה and the syntactical analysis in the context of biblical interpretation

25 Similarly, the Hebrew word סוּד is used for council or assembly in Psalm 64:3 (KJV) reads "counsel of the wicked." This conveys the similar idea as explained for עָרָה in the collective sense that such council always exist in its totality against the assembly of YHWH.

to prove OT church, now we turn our attention to the relationship of Akkadian *kiništu* with הַכְּנִסָּה in Hebrew. In the cuneiform texts of neo-Babylonian times, we know the Akkadian term *kiništu*, which is borrowed from Aramaic *kni/ustā*, that is derived from the root *knš* meaning ‘to gather.’²⁶ Otto Schroeder made a further research on this term by bringing a light linguistically as he correlated *kiništu* with its Aramaic cognates found in Targums, and in consequence, he projected that the term could mean either a priest, a group of priests or a school.²⁷ This was the first attempt to show a connection between *kiništu* and synagogue. Moshe Weinfeld, arguing for the origin of the synagogue, makes his point that the neo-babylonian *kiništu* is the forerunner of the emerging religious Jewish guilds in the latter days.²⁸ He further noted that the Hebrew הַכְּנִסָּה as the Jewish legislative body in Israel during the Second Temple period (sixth century B.C.E) had two groups: a *keneset* of priests who served in the temple and the great assembly (*keneset ha-gedolā*) who are the delegates of that assembly.²⁹ While Weinfeld’s proposal *kiništu- keneset* is acceptable to some extent, his argument for origin of the synagogue is unacceptable, as the exact date for origin of synagogues is untraceable. Since the worship to God ever remained from the first Church of Eden garden (Gen 1), we assume that “buildings or tents for the accommodation of worshippers may have existed in the land from an early time, and thus the system of synagogues would be gradually developed.”³⁰ In support of this fact, Psalm 74:8 (GNV and KJV) reads, “all the Synagogues of God in the land,” though MT reads : כָּל־מוֹעֲדֵי־אֱלֹהִים בְּאֶרֶץ; literally: “all the meeting places of God in the land.”

26 Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the midrashic literature* (New York: Choreb, 1926) vol. I p. 651, as quoted in John Arthur Bloom, *Ancient Near Eastern Temple Assemblies: A Survey and Prolegomena* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: PhD dissertation, Annenberg Research Institute, May 1992), 140.

27 Otto Schroeder, OLZ 9 (1916), p. 268ff, as quoted in John Arthur Bloom, *Ancient Near Eastern Temple Assemblies: A Survey and Prolegomena* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: PhD dissertation, Annenberg Research Institute, May 1992), 163. Refuting Otto Schroeder’s proposal, Bloom argues that *kiništu* is meant as the administrative board in the temple affairs. See, *Ibid*, 164.

28 Bloom, *Ancient Near Eastern Temple Assemblies*, 168.

29 *Ibid*, 163-164.

30 *Easton’s Bible Dictionary*, Bible Works Software, s.v. 3545: “Synagogue.”

Though many OT scholars argue that these meeting places are not synagogues, they fail to establish their argument. They are not merely the meeting places for entertainment purposes, but are “the meeting places of God,” which signifies that they are the places where the Jewish assembly gathered for prayer and instruction in the Torah. This alludes the point of fact that they are synagogues of God in the land, and the term בית signifies there were numerous synagogues of God in the land prior to their Babylonian captivity. Thus, the origin of the synagogues, as a logical construction from biblical and theological perspectives, could not be traced back to the Babylonian captivity but to earlier times as suggested above. “The system of synagogue worship,” as pointed earlier, though not originated in the period of Babylonian captivity, “if not actually introduced, was at least reorganized on a systematic plan, *under the leadership of Ezra during Post-Babylonian captivity period* [Italics Mine].”³¹ Accordingly, Weinfeld’s proposal, however, could be validated only in the sense that בית הכנסת is the house of assembly, and in reality, though it had Babylonian similarities linguistically to some extent on *kiništu-keneset*, could not be validated in terms of its inter-religious relationship, as the history of church worship is distinctly traceable in Eden-garden Church, Tabernacles, Synagogues and temple of God which were existed in the history, prior to the time which Weinfeld proposes. Though *kiništu-keneset* linguistically related, these two institutions are different entities, traveling in different directions. God’s assembly in synagogues is different from the Akkadian assembly, and the constitution of synagogues is different from the constitution of Akkadian *kiništu*. John Arthur Bloom assumes wrongly suggesting that these two institutions are related due to their linguistic similarities when he writes,

Although tradition tells that the *keneset* or synagogue got its start from the assemblies organized by Ezra, the linguistic similarity between the Hebrew *keneset* and the Akkadian *kiništu* suggests that the two institutions may be related. The vehicle for this relationship would be the Babylonian and Hebrew cultural intermingling that occurred during the exile (586-538 B.C.).³²

Indeed, since its reorganization, a revival occurred in the hearts of the

31 Ibid. Refer, Eze 8:1; 14:1.

32 Bloom, *Ancient Near Eastern Temple Assemblies*, 164.

faithful Jewish community to read the Law of God, love it and do it in their lives, and in consequence, they assembled together, building the synagogues over all the land once again, and later they would be scattered all over the world due to persecution in first century A. D.³³ While synagogues worshiped God, so did the community of Christians in NT. As OT church worshipped God in synagogues hoping for the coming of the Messiah, the NT church spread the gospel of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, who had dwelt among them, was crucified by them, was resurrected on the third day, and will come back again. “The worship of the Christian Church was afterward modeled after that of the synagogue. Christ and his disciples frequently taught in the synagogues.”³⁴ In fact, συναγωγή is the place where Jewish community assembled together for the purpose of prayer, reading, and instruction in the Torah.³⁵

Εκκλησία in the Hellenistic Thought

The term ἐκκλησία, as per the Greek sources,³⁶ does mean assembly and conveyed the meaning that it was just an assembly of Greek citizens for public debate and vote.³⁷ The Athenian assembly was considered the sovereign, political

33 *Easton's Bible Dictionary*, Bible Works Software, s.v. 3545: “Synagogue.” See, Ezr 8:15; Neh 8:2; Acts 9:20; 13:5; 17:1; 17:17; 18:4.

34 *Ibid.* Scripture reference include Mtt 13:54; Mk 6:2; Jn 18:20; Acts 13:5,15,44; 14:1; 17:2-4,10,17; 18:4,26; 19:8

35 EB, IV: 4836.

36 Chester G. Starr, *The Birth of Athenian Democracy: The Assembly in the Fifth Century B.C.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); M. H. Hansen, *The Athenian Assembly in the age of Demosthenes* (New York: Blackwell, 1987); M. H. Hansen, *The Athenian Ecclesia: A Collection of Articles, 1976-1983* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 1983); M. H. Hansen, *The Athenian Ecclesia II: A Collection of Articles, 1983-1989* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 1989)

37 David Sacks, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Ancient Greek World* (New York: Facts On File, Inc, 2005), 54 cf. 247, 253-254, 294, 326, 351; EB, I: 820. The public debate occupied a prominent place in the Athenian assembly as in all debates “any Athenian had the right to address the assembly; a chairman of the day presided; and rules of order were maintained. Foreign ambassadors and other noncitizens might be allowed to address the assembly on issues of state.” By the way of vote, the Athenian assembly “passed laws, declared war, made peace, inflicted individual sentences of death or exile, and elected the army’s generals and the other important executives.” Sacks, *Encyclopedia of the Ancient Greek World*, 54. The women in ancient Greek community were not allowed to vote or to participate in the debates, in the assembly. See, *Ibid.*, 366.

decision-making body of the state, by its power and authority, pronounced final verdicts for settling issues, similar to the secular court powers of our day.³⁸ In the 400's and 300's B.C.E., they did, however, gather at the hillside auditorium 'Πνύξ' (The Packing place) located to the west of the Acropolis, at least forty times per year regularly, and the additional number of meetings were increased annually if the situations warranted such and were called by the council or board of generals.³⁹ It is true that the Hellenistic culture had some sort of impact on the Jewish customs and traditions during the rule of Alexander the Great,⁴⁰ who Hellenised the Hebrew culture, and thus the Hellenistic Jews were distinct from the Hebraic Jews in several aspects. In this process of assimilation of cultures and traditions, Greek vocabulary, inevitably and dogmatically, had its weight over the Jews, and significantly impacted the LXX, the translation of the Hebrew OT, during the reign of Ptolemy Philometer, about the middle of the second century B. C. In fact, the Greek nomenclature penetrated Judaism during the Inter-testamental period. Such infiltration resembles the Greek terminology *sunagwgh*, which meant an assembly place in Greek thought,⁴¹ was unquestionably carried into LXX for the Hebrew terminology *הַקָּהָל* in Jewish thought as an equal weight in the general meaning. The Athenian *ἐκκλησία* gathered occasionally for certain purposes by the announcement or call to the homes, and they conveyed their idea to their business meeting itself, not to the people. In this sense of gathering, this can be no more be called an assembly if or when the people dismissed. This means that the assembly is only an assembly when it is specifically organized, otherwise, it is not. In the NT theological understanding, unlike the Athenian assembly, God's *ἐκκλησία* always exists in the biblical church, though they both share the concept of assembly in a general sense. Added to this general view, God's people theologically had its unique sense of gathering, as God-glorifying people in His everlasting Word-centred fellowship, while the secular assembly assembled for temporal purpose and earthly benefits. The underlying purpose of God's elect

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid, 54, 93, 109-110.

40 For instance, the Greek style Gymnasium and theatre were built in Jerusalem around 100s B.C.E.

41 Ibid, 176.

in His church is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever, since the people of God are “the sole constituents of the church in its ultimate glory, and that God knows infallibly who they will be.”⁴²

Ἐκκλησία in the context of LXX

The term ἔκκλησία as per the LXX reading, is used translating the Hebrew lh'q' in seventy seven passages. The term ἔκκλησία can also mean the popular assemblies of the Greek republics as was in Athens (Acts 19:32, 39-41) in the case a mob gathered at the theatre in Ephesus. Similarly, it was used for the gathering of the citizens summoned by civil authority, as discussed above. In Septuagint, it frequently denotes the congregation of the Israel who is considered as the OT church. The connotation of ἔκκλησία in LXX, is perhaps not derived from the Hellenistic Jewish societal thought and adopted by NT writers, but rather from Greek secular society to convey the idea of assembly in general meaning so that a common reader could comprehend, at the first glance, this general meaning, and in addition to this general concept of assembly, NT writers have provided the church of God with a more significant theological meaning, derived from the OT Jewish church, so that the congregation in NT could interpret, the concept of ἔκκλησία beyond its general sense, and more precisely, in the terms of theological meaning of לְהָקֵף, the assembly belonging to the Lord. The Hellenistic Jews understood it similarly as the Hebraic Jews, as the concept of assembly was rightly read through the lens of the Jewish eyes. With this backdrop of Jewish comprehension in Jewish understanding, the NT church could relate it to the religious scenarios of the Hebraic thought. In this way, it is very interesting to study the translation of לְהָקֵף in LXX and how such translation conveyed the idea to NT congregation. When we read the Septuagint, we ascertain the Greek συναγωγή is employed frequently in the place of לְהָקֵף, which indicated to the readers of NT times, who understood that the concept of church as synagogue-based, that it was the Jewish assembly of the OT church. To further prove this point, a couple of verses are taken from MT and read in the light of LXX from the book of Genesis. The use of לְהָקֵף first appeared in Genesis 28:3, where Issac blessed Jacob that he may be an “assembly of peoples” (NKJV), which is read in Hebrew לְהָקֵף עַמִּים and

42 Henry J. Van Dyke, *The Church: Her Ministry and Sacraments* (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph and Company, 1890), 2.

translated as συναγωγὰς ἔθνων in LXX. Again, at another instance of the book of Genesis, we read it in 35:11 when God blessed Jacob in Bethel “A nation and a company of nations shall come from you...” (ESV) which reads in MT אֶתְנַתְּ וְאֶתְקָהָל וְאֶתְנַתְּ and LXX translates it ἔθνη καὶ συναγωγὰς ἔθνων. Now, it is so evident here that קָהָל is translated as Synagogue the term that very emphatically expresses the assembly of God in OT.

Biblical-Theological Explorations

Having understood the concept of assembly both in secular and biblical linguistic contexts, the theological grounds concerning the concept of assembly is to be established here. In this process of research and study, one of the intriguing questions echoed in the minds of many theologians, ‘when did the church begin?’ needs to be addressed in a cohesive manner. This question is one of the ongoing serious issues hotly debated between covenant theologians and dispensational theologians. Though both camps have sundry similarities in their faith and practice, there is a vast differential set of beliefs and understandings, within their own parameters, as to the conviction pertaining to ecclesiology, soteriology, and eschatology. With such ongoing theological tensions, indeed, the dispensational paradigm has constructed its own system of theology against traditional reformed theology. Consequently, as a matter of fact, denying the existence of the OT church, they have proposed various time periods within the NT contexts concerning the origin of the Church. In refutation of their extravagant claims, covenant theologians take a different stand emphasizing the origin and development of the church in a cohesive manner, from the Garden of Eden onwards. This is the biblical idea dogmatically proclaimed by the reformed divines faithfully, generation after generation. This paper will address this issue with supporting biblical data, eloquently, by the aid of Holy Spirit, in the following pages, expounding and elucidating why the interpretation of covenant theologians is biblically sound than the dispensational understanding in this matter is naïve.

The First Church in Eden’s Garden

The church was born in the Garden of Eden along with her members, namely Adam and Eve, under the headship of Christ. Classic reformed theology strongly emphasizes this truth generation after generation. Within the reformed

circles, some covenant theologians technically emphasize the origin of the church with Abraham, though the classic idea drives us to Adam. The church in OT could be divided into three periods in her growing process: (i) Adam to Abraham, (ii) Abraham to Moses, and (iii) Moses to Christ. These three periods of church history provide us a comprehensive view as to how her Chief Shepherd cherished her in different times with different administrations as God willed it.

The head of the family was in a leading role of the church during this first phase; namely, we understand Adam was “the first priest to serve in and guard God’s temple.”⁴³ This kind of leadership model continued in the second phase as well. During patriarchal times, this was unmistakably clear as each head of the family, on their functional level, served God in their capacity to glorify God by leading their family to faith and repentance unto God. Based on the revelation given to God in these times, they fellowshiped with God and worshipped Him in total submission and subjection to the Word of God that was in oral form, generation after generation, starting with Adam, until God gave His written Law through His servant Moses. This law was sufficient for the OT church until the OT canonization process was over, possibly by Ezra’s time, prior to the Hellenistic period, when Septuagint was translated. The progressive revelation of God which is inscripturated in each of these phases was more enough for OT church to commune with God and grow in His likeness. Even after Christ tabernacled among His people, the written revelation of the OT is given prime importance for it is the constitution of the Church, as it has come from God and handed to His church, and therefore, no one can eliminate this body of law.

The whole fabric of the Jewish Church in the time of our Lord was based upon the belief that the Law of Moses came from God, and that this God “is not a man that He should lie.” And the belief of the Jewish Church was handed on to the Christian Church along with all its consequences. To revise that belief is to revise the dogmas of the Christian Church as they have been held for the last eighteen centuries; to reject it utterly is to reject the primary

43 Gregory K. Beale, *Eden, the Temple, and the Church’s Mission in the New Creation* (JETS 48/1 (March 2005), 8; For fuller treatment of the first-garden temple’s parallel to Israel’s tabernacle and temple, see, Gregory K. Beale, *Eden, the Temple, and the Church’s Mission in the New Creation* (Leicester, Downers Grove: IVP, 2004).

document of the faith into which we have been baptized.⁴⁴

God's written revelation of OT scriptures, thus, has validity for all the generation of believers, no matter when and where they live. Henry Thatcher Fowler writes,

The two great elements of religion which persist and struggle today in the Jewish church and the Christian, the moral and the institutional, are remarkably combined in the Hexateuch. This composite work grew out of centuries of life and the most varied experiences; it is not strange that it fits into the varied needs of multitudes of individuals, of hundreds of generations.⁴⁵

One People of God or Two?

“Where is the genesis of the church?” The question is perplexing to many theologians. “Genesis” means “the beginning.” The book of genesis provides us with the beginning of the universe, man, sin, human race, human government, civilization, etc. Beyond these, the most important truth is that the book provides ‘the beginning of the church in Eden.’ From this time onwards, God had only one people of God throughout the Bible. Evidently, we can see how the book concentrates its view on the chosen people of God in the history of redemption. “The first eleven chapters of Genesis contain traditions of the beginnings of the human race; the view narrows from the race as a whole to the Semites and then to the Hebraic branch of this race. The remainder of the book has the story of the beginnings of the chosen people.”⁴⁶ The chosen people of God throughout the Bible are known as one family of God, His Church. This concept is clearly seen from Genesis to Revelation. Therefore, there are not two people of God in the Bible as dispensationalists propagate, but one covenant community of God, His

44 A. H. Sayce, *Patriarchal Palestine: Canaan and the Canaanites before the Israelitish Conquest* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1912), 14.

45 Henry Thatcher Fowler, *A History of the Literature of Ancient Israel From the Earliest Times to 135 B. C.* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912), 302.

46 Fowler, *A History of the Literature of Ancient Israel From the Earliest Times to 135 B. C.*, 302.

Church.

The truth about the one-church view is clearly understood from the truth that we are united as one in Christ universally. The NT church is not a different community from the OT church, as all the elect are God's one covenant community in Christ, continued as the Christian society in NT, as gentiles were grafted to the existing church of OT. The Church is the Israel of God (Galatians 6:6). Whether Jew or Gentle, all are inseparably bonded as one spiritual entity in the body of Christ (Ephesians 2:14-16), and thus the true believers of God from any age could not be separated from this everlasting fellowship.

(1.) Its unity. God has ever had only one church on earth. We sometimes speak of the Old Testament Church and of the New Testament church, but they are one and the same. The Old Testament church was not to be changed but enlarged Isaiah 49:13-23 60:1-14 When the Jews are at length restored, they will not enter a new church, but will be grafted again into "their own olive tree" Romans 11:18-24 comp. Ephesians 2:11-22 The apostles did not set up a new organization. Under their ministry disciples were "added" to the "church" already existing Acts 2:47 (2.) Its universality. It is the "catholic" church; not confined to any particular country or outward organization, but comprehending all believers throughout the whole world. (3.) Its perpetuity. It will continue through all ages to the end of the world. It can never be destroyed. It is an "everlasting kingdom."⁴⁷

As noted above, the churches in all the ages have its members united in Christ, in the spiritual sense. John T. Stevenson points out,

The fact that there is one church is to be the basis of unity among believers. This becomes immediately obvious if we examine the context of Ephesians 4:4. This unity is so strong that it is to break past any prejudices between Jew or Gentiles, male or female, slave or free. This means there is not to be one church for Jews and another for Gentiles. There is not to be one church for slaves and another for free men. We are all one in Christ. This principle has some implications with regard to Dispensationalism—the view that God has two separate and distinct assemblies of people in Israel and the church. By contrast, Paul says that there is only one assembly of God's people. There is only one church. It had an Old Testament manifestation, but it is one church.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ *Easton's Bible Dictionary*, Bible Works Software, s.v. 828: "Church."

⁴⁸ John T. Stevenson, *Studies in the Doctrines of the Bible*, (John Stevenson Publications, 2008), 372.

The unity of believers, thus, is the result of the union with Christ, which is the basis for one covenant community of God. The unity of believers in this effect is recognized as an invisible or universal church, which consists of all the true believers of all ages. The invisible church, as a matter of truth, is visible to God, and consists as the spiritual body of believers of all the times.

The church invisible “consists of the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one under Christ, the head thereof.” This is a pure society, the church in which Christ dwells. It is the body of Christ. It is called “invisible” because the greater part of those who constitute it are already in heaven or are yet unborn, and also because its members still on earth cannot certainly be distinguished. The qualifications of membership in it are internal and are hidden. It is unseen except by Him who “searches the heart.” “The Lord knoweth them that are his” 2Timothy 2:19 The church to which the attributes, prerogatives, and promises appertaining to Christ’s kingdom belong, is a spiritual body consisting of all true believers, i.e., the church invisible.⁴⁹

From the above, we glean our understanding that what is the building agent of Church. Unlike dispensationalists who argue for Spirit Baptism as its ground, we emphasize, by inferring the undeniable point of truth here, that regeneration is the building agent of the church, from Eden to second coming of Christ. “The doctrine of the church,” Strong says, “is a necessary outgrowth of the doctrine of regeneration. As this fundamental spiritual change is mediated not by outward appliances, but by inward and conscious reception of Christ and his truth, union with the church logically follows, not precedes, the soul’s spiritual union with Christ.”⁵⁰

Now we recognize from this question regarding the building agent of the church that the covenant theologians always highlight the truth that regeneration is the building agent of the church, and in contra, the dispensationalists claim, not regeneration but Spirit baptism is in the view of the building agent of the church. In doing so, they fallibly begin the church on Pentecost (Acts 2), breaking one people of God into two groups, which is not what God intended in Scripture.

From what is reasoned above, from the biblical point of view regarding one-

49 *ISBE*, Bible Works Software s.v., Church.

50 Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Toronto: The Judson Press, 1907), s.v. “Part 7: Chapter 1.”

church view, we realize the doctrine of Christ is the foundational doctrine to clearly comprehend that there is one covenant community. Now the question about the election in Ephesians 1:3 favours whether soteriological sense, the ecclesiastical sense, or both is to be examined so as to faithfully approach its interpretation after God's thoughts in the overall eternal plan of God in understanding the precious truth of God's church. The question could be well addressed that it is taken, first, in the soteriological sense that God has elected all of his elect before the foundation of the world, from the first believer of the Church to the last elect, each individually in their appointed times, and were accepted within the body of Church prior to the creation of the world, and in the ecclesiastical sense, according to the foreknowledge of God in the eternity past. The invisible church, in fact, is always visible to God from eternity past to eternity future. Thus, it emphasizes one covenant community of God under the covenant of Grace. Now, if one can agree that both OT and NT saints are saved by grace alone by faith alone, in Christ alone, for the glory of God alone, then all believers of the Bible are saved by God invariably in Him alone! Hence, there is one covenant community of God. God's election forces us to see there is one people of God always. If God has, in the eternity past, elected all believers in Christ, then we affirm that there itself was the Body of Christ to which Christ is Head! This compels one to believe the body of Christ is not temporary but eternal, and God has one people who are elected in Christ. Wayne Grudem writes,

The church is the community of all true believers for all time. This definition understands the church to be made of all those who are truly saved. Paul says, "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Eph. 5:25). Here the term "the church" is used to apply to all those whom Christ died to redeem, all those who are saved by the death of Christ. But that must include all true believers for all time, both believers in the New Testament age and believers in the Old Testament age as well.⁵¹

This one covenant community is known as the body of Christ, and elected in Christ before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:1-3), not only in the soteriological sense but also in ecclesiastical sense, ever since the Church of God is eternal and so is the body of Christ, the members of whom consists of all

51 Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction To Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), s.v., "Chapter 44": para 1.

generations of all times, elected from Adam to the last elect sheep in His flock. The God of the covenant who spoke in OT is the same God who speaks in Christ in NT, and the same God gave promise to OT church believers and the fulfilment of such promise is taken place in NT church believers who accepted Christ. Thus, it is more reasonable to conclude that the assembly of NT is the continuation of the assembly of OT.

Exposition on 'I will build My Church'

Matthew 16:18 reads, ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ οἰκοδομήσω⁵² μου τὴν ἐκκλησίαν which is translated “upon this rock, I will build my church.” Based on this verse, many dispensationalists argue for the origin of the Church on the day of Pentecost, as their conviction aligns with two families of God in different periods. Their underlying argument is based on the use of future tense verb⁵³ in Matthew 16:18⁵⁴ οἰκοδομήσω as it seems the process is not yet started. This forms the basis for their argument for the origin of the church on the day of Pentecost. Their reasoning behind this interpretation is that the church will begin in the future, as inferred from their reading of the text. Unlike the dispensational view, covenant theologians have interpreted it so significantly and properly as to the use of future tense in this text, and how it is meant within the immediate context as well as the overall interpretation of Scripture. To understand it more precisely, first we need to look at how Greek Grammarians classify the use of future tense in various categories,⁵⁵ and how this text should align with it. Under the various given categories of future tense usages in NT, it is appropriate to

52 See, *Bible Works NT Morphology*, s.v., οἰκοδομέω .

53 For dispensationalists, future tense verb argument could not be established, because, present tense verbs are used for the church in Mtt 18:17. Even dispensationalists like John Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck have interpreted it as a Jewish assembly. See, their *Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament* (Hyderabad: Authentic, 2012), 62.

54 Matt 16: 18 “Upon this rock, I will build my church” has its parallel to Acts 15:16ff “I will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down” which is the direct quotation taken from Amos 9:11ff.

55 Ernest De Witt Burton, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek* (Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 31-37; Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, 565-572; William Watson Goodwin, *Syntax of Moods and Tenses of the Greek Verb* (Boston: Ginn and Company, n. d), 18-22.

translate the future tense verb in Matthew 16:18 as a progressive future, in which we understand that the church which is already in existence, at that time, will be being built or edified by Messiah in the future.

A careful attention given to this passage will elucidate this point of truth so as to have clarity of thought on what Christ meant when he said it. In the phrase, “I will build my Church,” we do not have any doubt that it is Jesus Christ who is the builder of the Church. The phrase οἰκοδομήσω parsed as first person singular, future tense verb, indicative mood, active voice from οἰκοδομέω meaning ‘build / edify,’ conveys the idea that it is a progressive future,⁵⁶ that establishes the point that the church is being built / edified or the church will be being built/ edified by our Messiah who is our Lord Jesus Christ, as mentioned above. The term *μου* personal pronoun in genitive case, here is a possessive pronoun that gives us a glimpse of thought on the Church is Christ’s, since He voluntarily, in the covenant of redemption, agreed with God the Father to sacrifice His life for her, and He indeed purchased her with His blood, redeeming all the elect of God, as her representative Head in the covenant of Grace. The church with definite article τὴν ἐκκλησίαν here refers to the members of God’s family who are foreknown, elected, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified in Him. This is not, suggesting two people but one, indeed, one only in the sight of God. It is not a new church which Christ is going to establish, But, He is going to build / edify the existing OT church under His Messianic rule and authority, with Messianic doctrines which were, indeed, promised to OT church of God. Another significant point in relation to why Christ should build / edify His Church is that as Jews did not accept Him as Messiah and both Jesus Christ and His apostles were excommunicated from synagogues at this time, and thus it was important for Christ to build / edify His Church under His Messianic rule and authority which was promised to OT church. Henry J. Van Dyke, in his book *The Church: Her Ministry and Sacraments*, wrote,

The first reference in the New Testament to the Church under the name of the ecclesia is found in the promise of Christ to Peter, “On this rock I will build My Church” (Matthew xvi. 18), or, as it might be more accurately rendered, “I will build the Church for Myself.” This gives the true emphasis to the promise; for at the time it was uttered Jesus and His disciples had been excommunicated from the existing Church, and He was on his way to

56 Burton, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek*, 32.

be crucified.⁵⁷

‘Upon this rock’ ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ refers in part to Peter, by whom Christ will be continuing to build His church in Acts calling Jews and gentiles by His Messianic rule and authority. Yet, it is not Peter who builds or edifies the church but our Lord Himself. The Greek audience grasped the significance of ἐκκλησία ever since it already had a religious significance on them. Similarly, Joseph Addison Alexander noted when he wrote,

It thus appears that whether this rock mean our Lord himself or Peter, it is easy to refute the papal claims, erected upon this expression, without resorting to any forced or fanciful construction. I will build (as something yet to be accomplished) my church, a Greek word, which according to its etymology means something called out or evoked, and by implication called together or convoked, as a separate assembly or society, selected from a greater number. As in the classics it denotes the popular assemblies of the Greek republics, and especially of Athens (compare Acts 19,32. 39. 41), so in the Septuagint version it had long been used to represent a Hebrew word (lh’q’) denoting the host or congregation of Israel. To the Greek-speaking Jews, therefore, it had already a religious import, and would here be understood as meaning that the Saviour was about to found such a society, and to found it on the rock just mentioned.⁵⁸

“Jesus Christ himself builds the church by calling his people to himself,” Wayne Grudem correctly says,

but this process whereby Christ builds the church is just a continuation of the pattern established by God in the Old Testament whereby he called people to himself to be a worshiping assembly before him. There are several indications in the Old Testament that God thought of his people as a “church,” a people assembled for the purpose of worshiping God.⁵⁹

The passage in Matthew 16:19 affirms that the church is the Kingdom of

57 Dyke, *The Church: Her Ministry and Sacraments*, 18. In synagogues, excommunication was practiced. “To put out of the Synagogue” means excommunication from Synagogues. See, scripture verses Jn 9:22; 12:42; 16:2.

58 Joseph Addison Alexander, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (New York, December 1860), 440.

59 Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, s.v., “Chapter 44”: para 2.

God which Christ came to expand on this earth. Keeping all these together, it should be kept in our mind that when Christ said, “I will build My Church”, He did not mean a new church here but the continuation of the OT church under Messianic rule and authority, as the church enter at a new era in ‘her enlargement’ by gentile believers. When Christ said it, what did He mean by the church? Is it a local church or the universal church? Christ mentioned here the aspect of universal church. Commenting on Matthew 16:18, John H. Gerstner is right regarding the conception of the Church that “The powers of Hell not only stand against but they often make conquests of the visible church. It is only the invisible church of which Christ’s description is true.”⁶⁰ Gerstner further points “it is the invisible, infallible, indestructible, indivisible, invincible, and universal body consisting of all those who truly believe in and adhere to their Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. In the vast majority of cases, they are members of the visible church.”⁶¹ In sum, Jesus Christ here says that “I will build / edify My Church,” which implies that the action is yet to be accomplished in the future, progressively as He meant that the Church under the new epochs, will be built and edified under Jesus’ Messianic rule and Messianic authority. In contrast, the Jewish church community had already excommunicated the Head of the Church, at the time when Christ proclaimed this statement.

NT Church’s Attestation on OT Church

John Dick, in his book *Lectures on Theology*, writes, “the church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, holds the truths taught by both, and acknowledges as her Head the same divine Redeemer who is the subject of their united testimony.”⁶² In Ephesians we read in 2:19–22:

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief

60 John H. Gerstner, *Theology for Everyman*, “The Church: The Body of Christ,” Chapter IX. http://www.the-highway.com/theology9_Gerstner.html (accessed April 2021).

61 John H. Gerstner, *Theology for Everyman*, s.v., “The Church: The Body of Christ,” Chapter IX.

62 John Dick, *Lectures on Theology* “Volume I” (New York: M. W. Dodd, 1850), 138.

corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. (KJV)

Apostle Paul in this passage, has compared the Church to a building to which Christ is the chief corner stone, and the foundation of the building are the OT prophets and NT Apostles since God has revealed His teachings through them to His church, and In Him, all the members of Church are builded together. Stephen, in his preaching, mentioned about the church in wilderness (Acts 7:38). John H. Gerstner wrote concerning the congregation in wilderness in Acts 7:38 is the visible church which includes hypocrites as follows,

Now we know that not only were there some hypocrites in that body called the “church” but almost all of the members were such. That was the generation of which God swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest (Psalm 95:11). Only the younger generation were spared, but the rest perished in the wilderness — a symbol of eternal perishing. Yet they were called “the church.” In the apostolic church itself there were those who were not true believers, as indicated by the Apostle John in I John 2:19: “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”⁶³

Interestingly, instead of the word *Ekklesia*, Apostle Peter, in 1 Peter 2:5-9, applied a string of OT church phrases in his writings when he addressed the church in NT,

Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. (KJV)

63 John H. Gerstner, *Theology for Everyman*, s.v., “The Church: The Body of Christ,” Chapter IX.

James in his epistle (2:2) writes of the Christian church under the designation of Synagogue, since the epistle is addressed to the Jewish Christians, so that it may sound more authentic and meaningful for them, as they do worship the one and same God who has distinctly revealed himself as three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This further emphasizes the biblical idea that there is only one family of God composed of all the believers in all the ages, from the time of Adam to Christ's second coming. There is a partition between believers and unbelievers, while there is no partition within believers themselves, as dispensationalists proclaim, because all true believers are one family of God, even in eternity. In the light of this knowledge, we should interpret the term Synagogue when it is used for the Christian Church by Apostle James and the author of Hebrews. Moreover, by the usage of this familiar term to the Christian church, the Jewish Christians may be well pleased as Pictet comments,

It must however be observed that the word συναγωγή answers to the Hebrew עדה, and generally in the New Testament denotes the religious assemblies of the Jews, or the place of such assemblies, (Luke 7:5.) Indeed the most learned men observe that there is scarcely one passage in scripture, in which this word is used to denote the assemblies of Christians. The apostle does indeed admonish the Hebrews "not to forsake the assembling of themselves together," ἐπισυναγωγήν αὐτῶν, (Heb. 10:25,) but he uses the term, in order to accommodate himself to the modes of expression used by those whom he addressed; and after all he does not use the simple word συναγωγή. James only uses this term, (James 2:2.) where, however, he principally addresses Jews, who he knew would be pleased by the use of so familiar a term.⁶⁴

Psalm 40:9 reads "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation (קהל)" is quoted by the author of Hebrews to the Christian congregation (ἐκκλησία) in Hebrews 2:12. This evidence further facilitates our understanding that there is one God, one faith and one church in the sight of God. When the NT writers write scripture, they were immersed in Jewish thought, and they understood the church in NT was the body of believers continued from the OT, and thus they acknowledged the existence of the church in the OT, is the church

64 Benedict Pictet, *Christian Theology*, s.v., Book X: Of the Church: I The Word Church, Its Meaning and Definition, para. 1. [available at Monergism Books, accessed on March 2021].

in the NT continued, with added revelatory knowledge, under Messianic rule and authority.

The Nature of the Members of the Local Church

Both OT and NT churches had true believers and false believers. Only God knows who are His. The term *ekklesia* is referred to both believers and hypocrites in the local congregations. This denotes that,

there are two classes of men, those who are Christians by outward profession, and those who are real believers. In this respect the church is compared to a threshing-floor, in which the chaff is mingled with the wheat; to a net, in which there are good and bad fishes; to a house, in which there are vessels of gold and silver, and of wood and earth.⁶⁵

Pictet points out that the term is used in three different ways: “either in reference to its internal communion with Christ, or to its external profession, or to its ecclesiastical rule or government.” He further clarifies:

According to these different respects it may be differently defined. In the first point of view it is defined to be, a religious society of elect persons, whom God effectually calls by his word and Spirit, and who not only profess to believe in Christ, but really believe in him, and prove their faith by newness of life. In the second view it is defined to be a religious society of men called by the preaching of the gospel. In the third it is an assembly of the rulers and pastors of the church, who are furnished with a lawful call and with lawful authority, to preach the word, to administer the sacraments, and to maintain holy discipline.⁶⁶

Metaphors of the Church Attests One People of God

In Bible, we see several metaphors that are used in affirmation of only one church from a theo-centric view. Briefly, the following eight metaphors used for the church are discussed, by the way of comparing OT and NT supporting verses. (a) Body. The church is the body of Christ. It is logically not temporal but universal and eternal. 1 Corinthians 12:12-13. It is “an organic living body” and

65 Pictet, *Christian Theology*, Book X: I, para 2.

66 Ibid, para 3.

“a single body,” despite consisting of various parts.⁶⁷ (b) Vine: The church in the Bible is portrayed as Vine, a metaphor that is applied to the OT church as well. (Psalm 80:8-9; Isaiah 5:1-2 cf. John 15:1-2). “The nation of Israel was God’s vine. He called Israel out from all of the other nations of the world to be His own nation and His own people. Like a farmer who chooses one vine out of his vineyard upon which he bestows special care, so the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt and planted her in a cultivated field of His own choosing, giving her His law and His ordinances.”⁶⁸ (c) House: The church is the House of the Lord⁶⁹ (Psalm 23:6; Isaiah 56:7 cf. 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19; John 2: 19-21; Ephesians 2:19-22). (d) Bride: The Church is the Bride of Christ. (Isaiah 54:5; Ephesians 5:25-27)

The nation of Israel was often described in the Old Testament as the wife of the Lord. The Song of Solomon was not only an ancient love story, it was also seen to be a picture between Yahweh and Israel. Likewise, Hosea’s adulterous wife was a type of Israel going after false gods. The same imagery is seen of the New Testament Church. In Ephesians 5:25-33, as Paul presents an exhortation to husbands and wives, he said that these same truths apply to Christ and to the church. As such, the church is to be chaste, giving her single minded attention to her husband, We are not called to be “once-a-week saints.”⁷⁰

(e) Kingdom: The Church is the Kingdom of God. (Exodus 19:6 cf. 1 Peter 2:9). The church is ‘a chosen generation,’ ‘a royal priesthood,’ and ‘a holy nation.’ Both Kingdom of God and Kingdom of Heaven are used synonymously in Bible, and this refers to the Church. Our mission is to advance His Kingdom over this earth, as Christ taught us in “Lord’s prayer” that we should earnestly know and do His will in everything so that the kingdom of Satan would be destroyed and God’s Kingdom of Grace be advanced. Under His Kingship, the members of the church are citizens of a Heavenly Kingdom. (f) The Church is the flock of God. (Psalm 23:1-6; Ezekiel 34 cf. John 10:1-18). (g) Family: God has only one family (John 1:12), and we are His children under His Fatherhood. Metaphorically, He

67 Stevenson, *Studies in the Doctrines of the Bible*, 379.

68 Ibid, 380.

69 See, s.v., *Church is the House of God* in this paper.

70 Stevenson, *Studies in the Doctrines of the Bible*, 382.

is the father as well as husband to His Church. “As father and husband, God identifies himself as head of the family. They are terms of authority, but also of love, compassion, and grace.”⁷¹ Henry Van J. Dyke writes, “The visible Church – which is also catholic, or universal, under the Gospel, not confined to one nation, as before under the law – consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children, and is the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God.”⁷²

Church is the House of God

The concept of the house of God goes back to the Old Testament. When Moses led the Israelites into the wilderness, God gave specific instructions for the building of a tabernacle. When it was completed, the presence of God, as manifested by the cloud, came and rested upon the tent of meeting. Later, when the tabernacle was replaced by Solomon’s temple, the same cloud was seen to fill the temple, signifying that God had moved into His house. Likewise, the prophets of the exile spoke of the presence of the Lord departing from His temple. Even when the temple was rebuilt after the Babylonian Captivity, the post Exilic prophets would do no more than promise that one day the Lord would return to His temple.⁷³

The Christians were called “the temple of the living God” by Apostle Paul in Ephesians 2:19-22, as they were being “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone” (KJV). “They were “buildded together, for a habitation of God through the Spirit.” Such was then the only true Temple; though when Paul thus wrote, the Temple in Jerusalem was still standing; its daily sacrifice was still offered; its numerous priests still ministered. Such is still the only true Temple.”⁷⁴ M’ilvaine notes:

In the true temple there was no essential change. It continued as ever of old, and as it has ever since been described under the promise, “I will dwell

71 John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (New Jersey: P&R Publishing Company, 2013), 107.

72 Dyke, *The Church: Her Ministry and Sacraments*, 24.

73 Stevenson, *Studies in the Doctrines of the Bible*, 381.

74 Charles Pettit M’ilvaine, *The Temple of God; or the Holy Catholic Church and Communion of Saints in Its Nature, Structure And Unity* (Philadelphia: Protestant Episcopal Book Society, 1861), 7.

in them, and walk in them, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God,” – a “household of faith,” a people “not of the world,” in whose hearts God abides by the indwelling of His Spirit. A spiritual church, there had always been in the world since the covenant of grace began. The time came when the bounds of its habitation were to be enlarged; when the privileges of such a relation to God were to be pressed upon the acceptance of all nations. An entire change of outward economy was therefore necessary. Hence, were laid aside the forms of the Jewish dispensation, as embodied in the visible temple, with its alters and sacrifices and priesthood and cumbrous ceremonial, confined, to a single nation; and in their stead there was put on, that simple exterior of the Christian Church, which adapts it alike to all people, and under which no place has any peculiar privilege, no earthly condition or office any special acceptance with God...The true people of God in all the world are “the Temple of the living God.”⁷⁵

The Church, from Adam to Exodus period, worshiped God in their homes and later, under the direction of our Lord. The church worshiped in tabernacle and synagogues which were built up for religious gatherings. It was in the time of Solomon a glorious temple for our sovereign God was erected. The expressions “House of the Lord,” “My House,” and “Temple” should be interpreted in the context of the congregation, who came together to ascribe glory to YHWH in the most submissive manner, with much reverence in Worship. Roddy Braun writes, “For Judaism, the growth of the synagogue marks another stage, while for Christians, a new era has been introduced by Jesus, who identified himself with the temple (John 2:21) and pointed to a worship in spirit and truth which would supersede that of the temple (John 4:21-26).”⁷⁶

Church in Eternity

In light of biblical understanding on the concept of assembly, by applying proper hermeneutics and exegesis, one may be enlightened with the truth that God’s people are one in OT and NT! For this reason, it is proper to say that God has known those who are His, and so are they in His invisible church, according to His foreknowledge. Then, the idea of the Church is, conceived in the mind of eternal God in the eternity past, born in the garden of Eden with her first members

75 M’Ilvaine, *The Temple of God* 8-9.

76 Roddy Braun, *I Chronicles: Word Biblical Commentary Volume 14*, (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1986), 341.

namely Adam and Eve, under the headship of Christ, and from there she continues her God-given mission, until the second coming of our Lord, multiplying the citizens of the Kingdom of God, to be culminated in His likeness, so that they may glorify and enjoy Him everlastingly both in heaven and on earth, even in the eternity future. The church is eternal because the body of Christ is eternal. “The Church, as part of the creation of God, has for its last end the manifestation of His glory. It is of God, and through God, and to God; and the revelation of His glory in His Church will occupy not only all time, but eternity also.”⁷⁷

The genuine members of the militant church on this earth are the members of triumphant church in heaven, existing even in eternity to come. Further, she is referred to as the heavenly Jerusalem in Revelation 21:10–11: “And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.” Hebrews 12:23 refers to her as the “church of the firstborn which are written in heaven.” May our eternal God help us to understand His eternal purpose for His congregation that all genuine believers, as one family in Him, will serve Him, not only here on this earth but also in heaven everlastingly! Amen!

⁷⁷ Charles Colcock Jones, *The History of the Church of God During the Period of Revelation* (New York: Charles Scribner & Co, 1867), 14.

SOLA PSALMIS: AN OFTEN OVERLOOKED APPLICATION OF SOLA SCRIPTURA

WIN GROSECLOSE, D.D.¹

Abraham Kuyper writes that in 1807 many young pastors, just out of seminary, began introducing hymnody to their congregations. He continued:

Here we come to the issue of psalms versus hymns. Our fathers ruled that, with a few exceptions, only the singing of psalms was permitted in the assembly of believers. When hymns were introduced in 1807 (by unlawful ecclesiastical might), many people refused to sing them when announced from the pulpit. At the time of the restoration of the church in the Secession and *Doleantie*², the position was reaffirmed that only psalms were to be sung.³

The “Fathers” so mentioned is a reference to those fathers at the Great Synod of Dordrecht held in 1618 and 1619. Most commonly, people think of the Canons of Dordt in the context of its rebuttal of the Remonstrance, the position of the Arminians. Yet, when assembled, the delegates to Dordt were also put to the work of producing a new translation of the Bible into Dutch, complete with commentary and notes, and they were called upon to standardize a book of church order for use in the Dutch churches. Upon completion, these documents became the standard exposition of Scripture and ecclesiastical practice for Dutch Reformed theology.⁴ Article 69 of the Book of Church Order of Dordt reads:

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2 *Doleantie* is Latin for “the Sorrowing,” a term given to the split in the Dutch Reformed church led by Kuyper in 1886, responding to the liberalizing trends taking place within the larger body.

3 Abraham Kuyper. *Our Worship*. Trans. Harry Boonstra (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 37.

4 It should also be noted that in 1645, the Westminster Assembly would adopt the Canons of Dordt and the Belgic Confession as providing a confessional standard by which orthodoxy was to be judged. Further, they elected to adopt the Dordrecht Bible Commentary as the standard exposition of Scripture for the Assembly.

In the Churches, only the 150 Psalms of David, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Twelve Articles of Faith⁵, the Song of Mary, that of Zacharias, and that of Simeon shall be sung. It is left to the individual Churches whether or not to use the hymn, "Oh God! who art our Father."⁶ All other hymns are to be excluded from the Churches, and in those places where some have already been introduced, they are to be removed by the most suitable means.⁷

Thus, with very few exceptions, the Dutch Fathers insisted that the Psalms were the only proper form of music to be sung during the worship of God. Given the influence of Dordt upon the Assembly at Westminster in 1646, it should be no surprise that when the Divines wrote on the acceptable elements of worship, they spoke only of the "singing of psalms with grace in the heart."⁸ Furthermore, when the Assembly drafted *The Directory for Public Worship*, they wrote:

It is the duty of Christians to praise God publicly, by the singing of psalms together in the congregation, and also privately in the family. In singing of psalms, the voice is to be tunably and gravely ordered; but the chief care must be to sing with understanding, and with grace in the heart, making melody unto the Lord. That the whole congregation may join herein, everyone that can read is to have a psalm book; and all others, not disabled by age or otherwise, are to be exhorted to learn to read. But for the present, where many in the congregation cannot read, it is convenient that the minister, or some other fit person appointed by him and the other ruling officers, do read the psalm, line by line, before the singing thereof.⁹

Here we see the Assembly eliminating the remnants of hymnody from within the worship of God's people. They were so committed to the principle of psalm-singing that they would officially sanction the Psalter of Francis Rous

5 A reference to the twelve articles of the Apostles' Creed, which are, in essence, derived directly from Scripture.

6 Degier explains that this is a short hymn by J. Utenhoven which was customarily sung before the sermon.

7 K. Degier. *Explanation of the Church Order of Dordt: In Questions and Answers*. Trans. John J. Van Hassent. (Netherlands: Synod of the Netherlands Reformed Congregations, 1974), 99-100.

8 *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter XXI, V.

9 *Westminster Assembly Directory for Public Worship: Of Singing of Psalms*.

(1579-1659).¹⁰ While many of the German churches would embrace hymnody, the English-speaking churches would follow their French brethren¹¹ and remain committed to psalmody until the rise of Isaac Watts' influence a century later.¹² This can be seen even in the Americas with the publication of the Bay Psalter, the first book printed in North America.¹³

While the transition from psalmody to hymnody is as well-documented in the Patristic church as it is in the Reformational church, the question that is often overlooked is that of why the Reformed Confessions of Dordt and Westminster put such emphasis on exclusive or near-exclusive use of psalmody in their synodical documents. This author's position is that the primary reason for the commitment of the 17th-Century delegates to psalmody is that they saw it as the natural outworking of the principle of Sola Scriptura. If the Scriptures are indeed the "whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life,"¹⁴ that they provide "regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith,"¹⁵ and that "from these Scriptures are to be taken true wisdom and godliness, the reformation and government of churches...and instruction in all duties of piety,"¹⁶ then why would one look elsewhere, rather than to the Scriptures to govern every aspect of our public and private worship?¹⁷ Indeed, the Westminster Divines insisted that "the acceptable way of worshipping

10 Hughes Oliphant Old. *Worship: Guides to the Reformed Tradition*. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1973), 54.

11 The practice of psalmody is a given amongst the Heuguenot churches, but it should also be noted that due to the influence of the poetry of Clement Marot (1497-1544), metrical psalms were also a favorite of the French Catholic court. See Hamilton Macdougall, *Early New England Psalmody: An Historical Appreciation (1620-1820)*. (Brattleboro: Stephen Daye Press, 1940), 4-5.

12 Ibid, 54-55. Bernard Manning argues that while it was Charles Wesley that made hymnody synonymous with the sung worship of the church, it was Watts that opened the door for hymnody with his loose paraphrases of the psalms. See Bernard Manning. *The Hymns of Wesley and Watts: Five Papers*. (London: Epworth Press, 1942).

13 Ibid, 54.

14 *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter I, VI.

15 *Belgic Confession*, Article 5.

16 *Second Helvetic Confession*, Chapter 1, Heading 3.

17 *Heidelberg Catechism*, Question 96; Belgic Confession, Article 32.

the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will, that He may not be worshiped according to the imaginations and devices of men.”¹⁸ The principle of Sola Scriptura then provides us with a rule that governs not only the points of theology we are to believe but also provides for us a rule that regulates faith and life.¹⁹ One of the marks of true faith is that a person “hold[s] for truth all that God has revealed to us in His Word.”²⁰ In the words of A.A. Hodge, “Whatever God teaches or commands is of sovereign authority. Whatever conveys to us an infallible knowledge of His teachings and commands is an infallible rule.”²¹

It is on the basis that the Scriptures contain God’s sovereign commands for our individual and corporate lives that the Regulative Principle of Worship was established amongst the Reformed churches.²² In the words of the Westminster confession, worship is to be “limited by His [God’s] own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or in any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture.”²³ The principle is worded even more simply by the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism: “That we are in no way to represent God by images, nor worship Him in any way than He has commanded in His Word.”²⁴ How does Westminster flesh out this principle? Worship must be Trinitarian with Christ as the only Mediator²⁵; it must contain prayer with thanksgiving in the

18 *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter XXI, I.

19 *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter I, VI.

20 *Heidelberg Catechism*, Question 21.

21 A.A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*. (Chicago: The Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1878), 82.

22 The Regulative Principle establishes that worship is governed by God and the only acceptable elements of worship are those that He established in Scripture. This is in contrast to the Normative Principle of Worship held by most protestant bodies outside of the Reformed faith, suggesting that anything that God does not expressly forbid is permissible.

23 *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter XXI, I.

24 *Heidelberg Catechism*, Question 96.

25 *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter 21, Heading 2.

name of the Son and with the help of the Holy Spirit²⁶, and that it is to contain the elements of the reading of Scripture, the sound preaching of the word with “conscionable hearing” in obedience to God, singing of psalms with grace in the heart, the administration of the Sacraments, as well as those things, like vows, oaths, and fasting that are to be done on special occasions.²⁷ Westminster goes as far as to assert that it is the Christian obligation to oppose “all false worship” and to remove such where possible.²⁸ Indeed, one of the marks of the True Church is to manage all things “according to the pure Word of God” and to reject all things that are “contrary thereunto.”²⁹

And so, if the Scriptures do form the infallible rule in the life of the church and govern our corporate worship as well as our private lives, does it not seem odd that one of the more common “exceptions” to the Confession that pastors and congregations hold is to the phrase, “singing psalms with grace in the heart”? Reformed pastors are often vigilant about ensuring that the “Whole Counsel of God” is preached, but why is “the whole Psalter of God” not sung in many circles? Is not the singing of psalms in worship a “good and necessary consequence” of the Scriptural teachings if not a formal command?³⁰ Is not the singing of inspired songs better than the singing of uninspired songs? And if it is better, why do so many insist on singing the lesser?

The early church was faced with a similar struggle as many uninspired hymns were being introduced to the church by heretics such as Paul of Samosata, Bardesanes, and the Apollinaris.³¹ As early as the Fourth Century, the church met in the city of Laodicea to resolve this matter. The conclusion of the delegates to the Council of Laodicea can be found in Canon 59: “No psalms composed by private individuals or uncanonical books may be read in church, but only the

26 *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter 21, Heading 3.

27 *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter 21, Heading 5.

28 *Westminster Larger Catechism*, Question 108.

29 *Belgic Confession*, Article 29.

30 *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter 1, Heading 6.

31 Charles Joseph Hefele. *A History of the Councils of the Church*. Vol 2. Trans. William Clark. (Edmond, OK: Veritatis Splendor Publications, 2014). P 377.

canonical books of the Old and New Testaments.”³² As noted above, the debate over the use of psalms verses uninspired hymns in worship is not a debate unique to Reformed circles, but it is one that has been had throughout the history of the Christian church.³³

This author’s purpose is not to sit upon a hilltop and condemn but to pose a question and issue a challenge for the betterment of Christ’s church. This author recognizes that some hymns and contemporary songs are theologically sound, yet they are still not inspired writ. This article asks the question: “If we are truly committed to the Regulative Principle of Worship and our Confessions, ought we not take care to sing the words God Himself has given us to sing?” Or, to pose the question in another way, “Is not *Sola Psalmis* the natural outworking of *Sola Scriptura*?”

A Practical Benefit

Christians are called “to test every spirit” to determine whether they are from God or otherwise because many false prophets have gone out into the world.³⁴ Paul wrote that we are to test everything and hold to what is good.³⁵ The wolves are in the world and often wear sheep’s clothing³⁶, serving themselves and not the Lord Jesus Christ.³⁷ Thus, when presented with the words of men to sing, how many people carefully examine the words set before them?³⁸ And, does not that act of discernment distract from singing in worship? Instead, if one sings from the divine writings, what need is there to filter what is being sung? Indeed,

32 Ibid. It should also be noted that Canon 17 makes it clear that the singing of psalms in church worship was the normative practice in the church at this time. Ibid, 363.

33 Thus, as the Reformers sought to return to a faith and practice that was consistent with what was practiced within the early Apostolic church, it should be of no surprise that the Reformers were of one mind that psalm-singing must be preserved within Christ’s body.

34 1 John 4:1

35 1 Thessalonians 5:21.

36 Matthew 7:15.

37 Romans 16:18.

38 This is often much the same with the choice of songs to sing, for very often songs are chosen because of their singability rather than because of their reliability.

there is great freedom when one can sing without the slightest fear of singing a falsehood before God.

In addition, how much of the uninspired hymnody is written by women? Many Reformed churches would not dream of having a woman instruct them from the pulpit³⁹, yet they will allow a woman to instruct them in song. Or what of the songs written by those who are heretics? Most of these churches would never endorse a hymn by Arius or contemporary praise by Hillsong, but what of other heretics like Horatio Spafford? Shall we sing orthodox-sounding hymns written by people who are thoroughly unorthodox or shall we sing psalms that have been inspired by God himself?

Additionally, the Scriptures command us to store up God's Word in our hearts so that we might not sin against Him.⁴⁰ The emphasis on learning the Word of God and then teaching God's word to a new generation runs throughout the Scriptures.⁴¹ Even Eliphaz, Job's pagan "counselor," understood that it was good and proper to receive instruction from God's mouth and lay up His words in your heart.⁴² And as such, singing has always been understood as one of the easiest ways to memorize things.⁴³ Shall we not use this tool when it comes to memorizing Scripture?

Furthermore, singing psalms teaches the church far more than words. The psalms contain history⁴⁴, practical⁴⁵ and systematic theology⁴⁶, the Gospel⁴⁷,

39 1 Timothy 2:12.

40 Psalm 119:11.

41 E.g. Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:6; 11:18; Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:2; Colossians 3:16, and many more places.

42 Job 22:22.

43 How many children are taught their alphabet, the books of the Bible, and other ideas through song?

44 E.g. Psalms 78 & 132.

45 E.g. Psalms 73 & 133.

46 E.g. Psalms 19 & 104.

47 E.g. Psalms 25 & 51.

prayer⁴⁸, and faith.⁴⁹ They even command Christians to worship as they sing a psalm with understanding.⁵⁰ Thus, the use of the psalms is not merely a matter of worship but also a form of divine instruction.⁵¹ Shall the saints be deprived of the benefit of the psalms because we might prefer to sing other? Shall we strengthen or weaken the body?

Objections

While there was a time when the Reformed church spoke almost univocally regarding the use of the Psalter in worship, today, the notion of Sola Psalmis is rare. In the majority of Reformed and non-Reformed churches, hymnody and contemporary praise music have risen in its place. This author has few expectations that many congregations will abandon their practice of singing uninspired songs and return to using psalmody. Still, it is worth addressing some significant objections to using psalms in Christian worship.

Objection 1: Perhaps the most common objection to the idea of exclusively singing psalms in worship is drawn from an interpretation of Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, where Paul instructs the church to come together singing “psalms, hymns, and spiritual odes.” Does not this text undermine the principle that only inspired singing is meant to be in the church?

While discussing this objection, even if a modern interpretation is taken,

48 As the Psalms are all prayers that are sung, the language of the entire Psalter ought to inform every aspect of the Christian's prayer life.

49 E.g. Psalms 40 & 103.

50 Taken from the LXX Psalm 46:8 (Psalm 47:7 in English translations), the phrase $\psi\acute{\alpha}\lambda\alpha\tau\epsilon$ $\sigma\upsilon\nu\epsilon\tau\acute{\omega}\varsigma$ translating the Hebrew phrase $\text{וְקִרְאוּ מִשְׁכִּיל}$.

51 It should be noted that this author spent five years serving as a chaplain for a Christian school in Florida. Amongst his duties was that of the counselor of the male students on campus. His approach to counseling was always to look to a psalm that was relevant to what the young man was going through and using that psalm to help direct the young man's personal and spiritual life. It became the conviction of this author that many, if not the majority, of our emotional disorders can be traced back to dysfunctional worship.

that ψαλμός, ὕμνος, and ᾠδή refer to three different kinds of sung music⁵², the church remains in error if it neglects psalmody altogether from its worship.⁵³ Yet, the historic Reformed position on this question is that these three terms designate three categories of music which are all contained within the book of Psalms. Addressing this question, the Commentary of the Synod of Dordrecht reads:

These three sorts of spiritual singing serve for one end, namely to recreate the spirit, and are in this way distinguished: psalms are all kinds of spiritual songs which are exercised not only with the voice but also with stringed instruments, of music; hymns are thanksgiving to God and metrical celebration of God's grace toward us; spiritual songs are such as contain all manner of spiritual doctrines. And these several names seem to be taken from the several inscriptions of the Psalms of David.⁵⁴

The point is that here is a Council of the Christian Church⁵⁵ teaching that Paul is speaking about three divisions within the Psalter: Psalms, Hymns, and Odes. The Westminster Assembly incorporated this idea into their description of the Regulative Principle of Worship.⁵⁶ As G.I. Williamson states:

[An] element of true worship is ‘the singing of psalms with grace in the heart.’ It will be observed that the Confession does not acknowledge the legitimacy of the use of modern hymns in the worship of God, but rather only the psalms of the Old Testament. It is not generally realized today that Presbyterian and Reformed Churches originally used only the inspired psalms, hymns and songs of the Biblical Psalter in divine worship, but such is the case. The Westminster Assembly not only expressed the conviction that only the psalms should be sung in divine worship, but implemented it by preparing a metrical version of the Psalter for use in the Churches.

How are these “three types” of psalms distinguished within the Psalter? One must remember that much of Paul’s audience used the Septuagint as their

52 Often understood as psalms, hymns, and contemporary praise music.

53 For at the very least, the Apostle is commanding that psalms be included in the worship of God’s people.

54 *The Dordrecht Bible Commentary*, Volume VI. (Clearwater, MN: North Star Ministry Press, 2020), Ephesians 5:19, 174.

55 The Synod of Dordrecht.

56 *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter 21, Heading 5.

primary source for understanding the Old Testament. It was the only Greek translation available in a world where Hebrew was limited to the Jewish culture and select academics. Greek, though, was the common tongue of community life and commerce in the first century. Even the New Testament authors chose to quote from the Septuagint, rather than from the Hebrew text, on a number of occasions. In many cases, even Jews in the Greek-speaking diaspora often used the Septuagint because the language was more accessible. Thus, after their conversion to Christianity, the Septuagint would provide a very natural transition into churches often dominated by gentiles.

Unlike the Masoretic Text, nearly every psalm in the Septuagint was assigned a superscription by their respective translators. Of these superscriptions, sixty-six are listed as psalms, thirty-six are listed as odes, and six are listed as hymns.⁵⁷ In addition, at the close of the second book of Psalms⁵⁸, it is written that the ὕμνος of David, the son of Jesse, are ended.⁵⁹ This confirms not only that the Scriptures designate all of the first seventy-one psalms as hymns, but also that hymnody is simply a category within the Psalter as the delegates to the Synod of Dordrecht defined it.

It should also be noted that the Psalter does not shy away from categorizing a single psalm as covering more than one genre. For instance, Psalm 4 is referred to as a psalm and an ode, while Psalm 6 is referred to as a psalm and a hymn. Two psalms, Psalm 66 and Psalm 75⁶⁰ are referred to by all three designations, a psalm, a hymn, and an ode, suggesting that this was the same shorthand that Paul was using in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16. It should also be noted that when

57 The designations are as follows (note that the numbering in this section is based on the numbering of the psalms in the Septuagint as we are dealing with superscripts within this Greek text, which varies slightly from that of the Masoretic Text or of our English Bibles):

- ψαλμός: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 28, 29, 30, 37, 39, 40, 42, 43, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 72, 74, 75, 76, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 86, 87, 91, 93, 97, 98, 99, 100, 107, 108, 109, 138, 139, 140, 142.
- ὕμνος: 6, 53, 54, 60, 66, 75.
- ᾠδή: 4, 17, 29, 38, 44, 47, 64, 65, 66, 67, 74, 75, 82, 86, 87, 90, 91, 92, 94, 95, 107, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133.

58 Noting that the book of Psalms is broken into five smaller books.

59 Psalm 71:20 (LXX numbering)/Psalm 72:20 (English Bibles).

60 Psalms 67 and 76 in English Bibles.

Paul addresses the church in Corinth about the nature of orderly worship for the building up of God's people, he abbreviates the language he uses in Ephesians and Colossians to simply that they are to bring a psalm.⁶¹

It is clear, then, that ψαλμός, ὕμνος, and ᾠδή refer to three categories within the Psalter, but, what about those with superscripts falling outside of these three categories? Appealing to superscripts alone, that leaves fifty-six psalms as not having a superscript within the category of a psalm, hymn, or ode.⁶²

In the Hebrew text and the LXX, neither Psalm 1 nor Psalm 2 contain a superscript. Yet, remembering that Hebrew superscriptions are part of the inspired text, an argument can be made that the first two psalms of the Psalter form a kind of superscription that applies to the Psalter as a whole, just as the last psalms in the Psalter form a sort of final doxology. Furthermore, as the first seventy-one psalms are referred to as ὕμνος⁶³, it is clear that these two psalms fall within the category of a hymn.

Psalms 16, 85, 89, and 101 are referred to as προσευχή, or prayers. Yet the Hebrew behind προσευχή, תְּפִלָּה, according to Mowinckel, is a technical term referring to psalms of lamentation.⁶⁴ Thus, we find these prayers to be little more than a species within the larger genus of the psalms. A similar argument can be made for Psalms 25-27; 32-36; 68; 70-71; 96; 102-103; 136-137; and 143, which have no “label” contained in their superscript at all but are referred to as being “of David” or “of Solomon.” They are clearly intended to be sub-categories of the psalms by their inclusion within the Psalter and Psalm 70:22 speaks of giving thanks with a psalm, again identifying these as a subgroup of the ψαλμός. Similarly, the nineteen psalms that constitute the “Hallelujah Psalms” can be

61 1 Corinthians 14:26. The English Standard Version and the New International Version make the unfortunate decision to follow a later MSS which reads ὕμνος, while the majority of the best MSS favor ψαλμός here.

62 Note that a cogent argument can be made that places all of these exceptions into the category of a ψαλμός simply by virtue of their presence within the psalms.

63 Psalm 71:20.

64 S. Mowinckel. *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1-2, Oxford 1962. Citation found in *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner. Translated and edited under the supervision of M.E.J. Richardson. Koninklijke Brill NV: Leiden, The Netherlands, 2000. Electronic text hypertexted and prepared by OakTree Software, Inc.

understood as a species within the genus of the psalms.⁶⁵

Eight psalms are referred to as σύνεσις, often translated as “of understanding.”⁶⁶ Of these, Psalm 54 is also referred to as an ᾠδή, again demonstrating that the σύνεσις is a sub-category within the larger category of odes or songs. Six psalms are referred to as στηλογραφία, or inscriptions.⁶⁷ All six of these psalms fall within the category of “hymns” as set by Psalm 71:20. Further, McFall⁶⁸ observes that Psalm 57:7-11 is cited again in Psalm 108:1-5. The former psalm is referred to as a στηλογραφία while the latter is referred to as a ψαλμός, thus strengthening the argument as to sub-categories. Similarly, Psalm 59:5-12 is cited in Psalm 107:6-13, again providing an illustration of genus and species.

Finally, Psalm 69 is referred to as a “Remembrance” and Psalm 144 as a “Praise.” Following the pattern established above, it is clear that these two psalms should be understood as subcategories, not as primary categories in the Psalter.

In short, while on a cursory examination, some psalms do seem to be an exception to the principle of “psalms, hymns, and odes,” by good and necessary consequence, it can be deduced that these are simply sub-categories of the aforementioned division of the Psalter. Further, given that the Scriptures often abbreviate ideas that are well-understood by the audience⁶⁹, it might simply be stated that “psalms, hymns, and odes”⁷⁰ was an abbreviation for the body of music within the Psalter that would have been familiar to the Ephesian and Colossian churches.⁷¹ To imply that these two texts justify the use of non-inspired hymnody

65 Note that Psalm 116:10 and 147:12 refer to this group as “hallelujah psalms.” In addition, Psalm 146:1 instructs the singer to “sing a psalm” to God, implying that what is about to be sung is a psalm.

66 Psalms 31, 41, 51, 52, 54, 73, 88, 141.

67 Psalms 15, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59.

68 Leslie McFall. “The Evidence for a Logical Arrangement of the Psalter.” *Westminster Theological Journal*. Volume 62; Issue 2; Fall 2000.

69 Note that in Luke 24:44, the “Psalms” are used to refer to the entirety of the third section of the Hebrew Scriptures, known as קְהִלֵּי דָוִד.

70 Designations found in Psalms 3-9, the first seven psalms that contain superscriptions.

71 This also seems the logical conclusion when harmonizing Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 with 1 Corinthians 14:26.

be used in Christ's worship is exegetically unnecessary and deviates from the Analogy of Scripture that governs Reformed hermeneutics. It also deviates from the understanding of these passages held by the delegates of the Synod of Dordrecht as well as of the Westminster Assembly. In addition, it is a position inconsistent with the understanding of the ancient Councils of the Christian church.⁷²

Objection 2: The psalms were designed for the worship of God's people prior to the advent of Christ. Thus, they are more anticipatory; with the realization of Christ's first advent, we should be singing "a new song" that is focused on Jesus.

This objection is a fairly common one. It presumes that if one sings nothing more than the psalms, worship will somehow be unbalanced, anticipatory, and not fulfilled in nature. This is one of the primary objections that led Issac Watts to insert the name of Jesus into many of his paraphrases of the psalms. More simply, people state that they want to sing about and in the name of Jesus.

The first thrust of the argument can be met when it is recognized that many of the Psalms are blatantly Messianic. For instance, Psalms 2, 6, 16, 22, 31, 34, 41, 45, 68, 69, 78, 88, 91, 110, 118, and 132 are quoted in the New Testament as being explicitly about Jesus. Further, there are psalms like Psalm 24 and 93, amongst many others, that are steeped boldly in Messianic themes.

This objection is also met when one realizes that throughout the Gospels, when Jesus' disciples spoke to Him, they referred to Him as Lord with very few exceptions.⁷³ Given that the term "Lord" shows up 704 times in the English translation of the Psalms, one cannot argue that the Psalter does not point us clearly to Jesus.

72 The Council of Laodicea in AD 343 and the Council of Trullo (also known as the Quinisext Council) of AD 692 both prescribed the use of the Psalter and chastized churches that sought to use uninspired hymnody. The rulings of both of these Councils were also affirmed by later Ecumenical Councils of the Church.

73 Terms like "Rabboni" and "Son of David" are used with other terms of respect and reverence. His disciples are not recorded as addressing Him by his given name. If there is a historical reference in the narrative, then the name of Jesus is used; sometimes the Demons refer to Him by his first name, but the faithful did not.

Objection 3: Nine verses in the Bible speak of “singing a new song.”⁷⁴ Does this not constitute justification for creating new music of praise to God in every generation?

Those who present this argument do so on the basis that the words *שִׁיר חָדָשׁ* and its equivalent, *καίνός*, refer to something that is new and typically has not existed before. For example, in Exodus 1:8, we are told that a *מֶלֶךְ-חָדָשׁ-לְמִצְרָיִם* had risen to power in Egypt who did not know Joseph. This was not an old king being restored to his throne, nor was this a king with a renewed sense of Egyptian purpose. This was a brand new man who took the throne. Similarly, in Deuteronomy 24:5, when a man takes on a “new wife,” he is not required to serve in the military for a year. Again, like the “new king,” this is a brand new marriage that is being spoken of, not a matter of renewing vows. In turn, those who raise this objection argue that the references to a “new song” are just that – a brand new song being written.

In answering this objection, one must begin by looking at the context of the phrase: *שִׁיר חָדָשׁ לַיהוָה*. The first use of this phrase in the Psalter is found in Psalm 33:3, a song of praise to God for His majesty. In verse 3, we are told to sing a new song to Him. To some, that might be a conclusive statement. Nevertheless, if we look at the preceding verse, we will find that the psalmist is commanding the people to *וְלִי-וְהַמְצִיחַ*. While many modern translators render this as “make melody,” the verb shares the same root word as *וְהַמְצִיחַ*, “to make psalms.” Thus, Matthew Henry translates verse two as: “Praise the Lord with harp; sing unto Him with the psaltry and an instrument of ten strings.”⁷⁵ Thus, the newness in question has not to do with the words, for the words of praise are drawn from the Psalter. Instead, the newness has to do with the instrumentation or the manner in which this praise is made. Henry further elaborates on verse 3: “*Sing unto him a new song*: the best you have, not that which by frequent use is worn threadbare, but that which, being new, is most likely to move the affections, a new song for new mercies and upon every new occasion, for those compassions which are ‘new every morning.’”⁷⁶

74 Psalm 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Isaiah 42:10; Revelation 5:9; 14:3.

75 Matthew Henry. *Commentary on the Whole Bible*. 6 vols. (Iowa Falls: Riverside Book and Bible House). 3:351.

76 Ibid.

Psalm 40:3 illustrates this principle as well but in a different context. The psalmist has been delivered from the “pit of the wasteland” and the “mud of the mire.”⁷⁷ God has changed his suffering into joy and, in turn, put a רִישׁ רִשְׁוֹ into his mouth. This language does not necessitate the creation of new words, but instead, it reflects a renewed spirit and a sense of purpose. What is new has more to do with the life of the psalmist than it has to do with the words he is using. As Matthew Poole writes: “through the Scriptures generally, a new song signifies a song which praiseth God for some new benefits received from Him.”⁷⁸ Indeed, we are told that this new song is a תְּהִלָּה, the plural of which being the title that is given to the entirety of the Hebrew book of Psalms.⁷⁹

Scripture refers to the psalms as the proper means by which God’s people are to praise God.⁸⁰ There are numerous commands in the psalms to honor God with psalms of praise. As noted above, this was also the model in the New Testament church.⁸¹ Matthew Henry echoes this language in his comments on Psalm 9:

God expects suitable returns of praise from those for whom he has done marvelous works. If we would praise God acceptably, we must praise him in sincerity, with our hearts, and not only with our lips, and be lively and fervent in the duty, with our whole heart... Joy and praise are properly expressed by singing psalms.⁸²

As to the above references in Revelation, this language only applies to those

77 Psalm 40:2.

78 Matthew Poole. *Commentary on the Holy Bible*. 3 vols. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1979). 3:987.

79 תְּהִלָּה.

80 James 5:13. Note that many modern translators render the text: “sing praise.” Yet, the Greek word that James uses is ψάλλω: to “sing psalms.”

81 Jesus sang psalms with his disciples at the Last Supper (Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26); Paul instructs the church to come together with a psalm (1 Corinthians 14:26 – though many modern translations do not render it so, the Greek word Paul uses here is ψαλμός), James commands us to sing psalms when we are joyful (James 5:13), and it is likely that Paul and Silas were singing psalms while in the Philippian jail (Acts 16:25 – though ὕμνῳ is used here; see the notes above on ὕμνος above).

82 Matthew Henry. *Commentary on the Whole Bible*. 6 vols. (Iowa Falls: Riverside Book and Bible House). 3:269.

in the heavenly realms. If God so orders a new hymn to be written in the heavenly spaces or the new creation, it is in His purview to do so. Nevertheless, we do not have the right to do anything outside of the constraints of His Word.

Objection 4: In Matthew 26:30 and its parallel in Mark 14:26, we are told that Jesus sang a hymn with his disciples after the Last Supper.

The word that the evangelists use in this reference is ὑμνέω. As previously noted, to sing a hymn was to sing a particular kind of psalm. Furthermore, Jesus and his disciples were Jewish, celebrating a Jewish holy day. While Passover is commonly closed with uninspired hymnody today, in ancient times, it was a common practice to sing the Hallel Psalms⁸³ in the context of the supper. There is no reason to presume that Jesus would have deviated from this and every reason to suppose that if Jesus had celebrated in an uncommon manner, it would have been explained (just as the meaning Jesus gives to the broken bread and cup of wine are explained). With no explanation given, it should be presumed that they sang a psalm or psalms.⁸⁴

Objection 5: If God expects the church to sing the scriptures (i.e., the psalms), why doesn't the church also limit their prayers to the prayers found in the scriptures?

To begin with, there is nothing wrong with praying the prayers found in the Scriptures as part of public worship. The church has been doing this, for instance, with the Lord's Prayer since the earliest days of the Christian church. Before them, the Jewish church has used the Shema⁸⁵ as part of their prayer life since their wilderness wanderings. Nevertheless, there are no commands in Scripture to pray Scriptural prayers as there are with the psalms. Furthermore, we are called

83 Psalm 113-118. Note that the author of Hebrews connects Hallel psalms to hymns when he cites Psalm 22:22 in Hebrews 2:12. He writes: "In the midst of the church I will sing hymns [ὑμνεω] to you." The Hebrew of the psalmist reads: "In the midst of the assembly I will sing praises [הלל] to you."

84 One should remember that by Jesus' day, not only had the psalms been fully codified, but they had been ordered as we have them ordered today (see Acts 13:33).

85 Deuteronomy 6:4.

to “lay every care on God”⁸⁶ The unique nature of the cares of every congregation and each Christian has led believers to pray extemporaneously. Yet, no one would argue on behalf of extemporaneous singing; that would lead to chaos.

A similar argument is that preaching in a worship service sets the uninspired words of a pastor before the congregation. While preaching is composed of the words of the pastor, preaching must also be the words of the pastor as he expounds upon Scripture. It should also be noted that God has “given a permanent office of ministry to the church, pastors, who are to explain the sense of Scripture, ‘rightly dividing the Word of Truth.’”⁸⁷⁸⁸ Furthermore, sermons are meant to reprove, rebuke, and exhort⁸⁹ so that they can equip the believer for every good work.⁹⁰ To accomplish this, sermons must be addressed toward a specific context. As every person is different and every church is different, specific needs for the sermon to address will be different. To quote one old preacher, “You must exegete your audience as well as the text.”⁹¹ Simply reading sermons from the Scriptures is not an effective way of fulfilling this task.

Objection 6: There are psalms and songs that exist outside of the Book of Psalms. The Song of Moses and Miriam after crossing the Red Sea⁹², the song of Habakkuk⁹³, and Mary’s praise⁹⁴ are three examples of such songs. Why not sing them, as well as other passages of the Scriptures?

To begin with, while there are commands for God’s people to sing psalms

86 1 Peter 5:7.

87 2 Timothy 2:15.

88 “A Concise Case for Exclusive Psalmody.” Purely Presbyterian Perspectives Blog. <http://purelypresbyterian.com/2017/09/19/a-concise-case-for-exclusive-psalmody>.

89 2 Timothy 4:2.

90 2 Timothy 3:17.

91 The name of the specific preacher in question is unknown, though it encapsulates a principle that is as old as rhetoric itself.

92 Exodus 15:1-18; 21.

93 Habakkuk 3:17-19.

94 Luke 1:46-55.

(as noted above), there are no commands to sing these other songs. Secondly, many of these songs are context-specific. For instance, none of us were present at the Red Sea deliverance, and none of us are carrying the Christ child in our wombs. While it was appropriate for Mary to sing in this manner, as guided by the Holy Spirit, her singing in this way does not establish precedence for us to sing similarly. Furthermore, we are told that Solomon wrote 1,005 songs⁹⁵. Still, only two are preserved for the singing of God's people⁹⁶, a reminder that not all Biblical or otherwise songs were preserved by the Holy Spirit for congregational singing.

Yet, there is more to the answer than that. The songs found outside the book of Psalms are often preserved in part within the Psalter itself. For instance, major themes from Moses' song of deliverance at the Red Sea⁹⁷ can be found in Psalms 66:5-7; 78:11-16; 106:6-12, and 136:10-16, to name just a few. Miriam's song that follows⁹⁸ is alluded to in Psalm 76:6. Allusions to the song of Deborah can be found in Psalm 68:8-10 and 77:16-18. Habakkuk⁹⁹ draws upon the language of Psalms 9:2-14 and 27:1-3. Psalm 113 quotes verses from Hannah's song¹⁰⁰ verbatim. In the New Testament, the song of Mary draws heavily on the language of Psalms 34 and 86. In other words, when it comes to these very personal psalms which are drawn out of contexts to which we cannot relate experientially, the psalms provide us with a means by which God's people can enter into the spirit of the psalm in a manner in which the body can be edified.¹⁰¹

Objection 7: If one limits singing to the psalms alone, then one robs the pastor of the opportunity to teach on specific doctrines found in the New Testament.

95 1 Kings 4:32.

96 Psalms 72 & 127.

97 Exodus 15:1-18.

98 Exodus 15:21.

99 Habakkuk 3:17-19.

100 1 Samuel 2:1-10.

101 It is also worth noting that Hebrews 1, arguably one of the most worship-centered chapters in the New Testament, quotes from the Psalms seven times.

Two aspects must be addressed within this objection: sufficiency and purpose. The first is the most prominent aspect, which is the doubt that New Testament doctrines can be found within the psalms. In response to the objection, this author would challenge someone to find a New Testament doctrine that is not found in the psalms, at least in its seed form. Even the doctrine of justification by faith alone is addressed in the psalms.¹⁰² As to purpose, the role of the psalms is not just that of teaching, though there are undoubtedly many things that the psalms teach. The psalms are also given to give the believer a language by which they can put their every emotion and experience into language that praises God. While there are many hymns of joy and praise, few would dare express imprecations, as does the Psalter. Matthew Henry writes of Psalm 49:

This psalm is a sermon, and so is the next. In most of the psalms we have the penman praying or praising; in these we have him preaching; and it is our duty, in singing psalms, to teach and admonish ourselves and one another. The scope and design of this discourse is to convince the men of this world of their sin and folly in setting their hearts upon the things of this world, and so to persuade them to seek the things of a better world; as also to comfort the people of God, in reference to their own troubles and the grief that arises from the prosperity of the wicked.¹⁰³

In other words, the purpose of the psalm is didactic and exhortative, teaching with an aim to change the heart in the context of worship. Few non-inspired hymns are designed to do both.

A concluding exhortation:

One of the themes found in Scripture is that of God's people drifting away from worship and the practice of their faith. The Bible is filled with God's commands to worship precisely as he had commanded and to preserve his laws, statutes, and precepts from one generation to the next. Yet the people preferred to do what was right in their own eyes, a practice that brought the nation's collapse as well as that of the Temple, all by the hand of God.

When Nehemiah was sent to rebuild the walls, it is noted that he rebuilt

102 E.g. Psalm 25:16-18; 61:1-2; 103:2-5.

103 Matthew Henry. *Commentary on the Whole Bible*. 6 vols. (Iowa Falls: Riverside Book and Bible House). 3:418.

with the ancient stones of the city's old wall.¹⁰⁴ God blessed that rebuilding and renewed worship was reinstated at the temple. This worship included singing psalms as had been done in David's time.¹⁰⁵ It was also met by careful attention to teaching the people the Word of God.¹⁰⁶ This is the kind of reformation that pleases God. Yet, the people once again fell into sin.

By the time of Jesus, Greek and Roman practice had become intermixed with the worship of the faithful. Once again, God sent messengers to correct the errors of the people and to direct them toward a life of holiness. He sent the prophet John, He sent His Son, he sent the Apostles, and He sent other teachers in the church. The message was the same: repent. In turn, the Apostles and James again point the Church to worship with the psalms with an attention to obedience to the Word of God.¹⁰⁷

By the time of the Reformation, the church had once again fallen into error. God raised up men like Zwingli and Calvin to call the people to repentance. Like those who went before them, both these men, and those who would follow the early Reformers, emphasized Biblical faith and practice. Part of this was a directive that the church once again commits herself to sing psalms in worship. And, once again, God blessed this reformation.

Today the church has again fallen into great apostasy and error, with every pastor and denomination doing what is right in their own eyes. Many call for reformation and pray for revival, but reformation must begin with the church.¹⁰⁸ If we are going to see a reformation that God will bless, it must begin once again with a commitment to the word and the faithful practice of worship, worship that includes the singing of psalms. If the church is to regulate her life and worship by the Scriptures, there can be no other conclusion than that *Sola Scriptura* calls us to *Sola Psalmis*.

104 Nehemiah 4:2-3. Building with "ancient stones" is an apt metaphor for the act of reforming Christ's church. Innovation in worship has no place, but we are called to be faithful to the practice of worship as instituted by Christ and the Apostles.

105 Nehemiah 12:45-46.

106 Nehemiah 8:1-8.

107 Matthew 28:20.

108 1 Peter 4:17.

What is there now to do? It is to have songs not only honest but also holy, which will be like spurs to incite us to pray to and praise God and to meditate upon his works in order to love, fear, honor, and glorify him. Moreover, that which St. Augustine has said is true, that no one is able to sing things worthy of God except that which he has received from him. Therefore, when we have looked thoroughly and searched here and there, we shall not find better songs nor more fitting for the purpose than the Psalms of David, which the Holy Spirit spoke and made through him. And moreover, when we sing them, we are certain that God puts in our mouths these as if he himself were singing in us to exalt his glory. Wherefore Chrysostom exhorts, as well as the men, the women, and the little children to accustom themselves to singing them in order that this may be a sort of meditation to associate themselves with the company of the angels.¹⁰⁹

109 . John Calvin. "Preface to the Genevan Psalter." *Ecclectic Ethreal Encyclopedia*. <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/ccel/eee/files/calvinps.htm>.

A SERMON UPON JUSTIFICATION

BY REV. GILBERT TENNENT



*Portrait of the Rev. Gilbert Tennent attributed to Gustavus Hesselius,
Princeton University Art Museum*

When we consider the history of the great revivals of the past and the content of the preaching of those great eras, we find that a great emphasis was placed upon the doctrine of justification. Indeed, Edwards preached a series of five sermons on justification which immediately preceded the 1734 revival in Northampton. The Holy Spirit always makes much of Christ; it is of course then a little wonder if when the Spirit is poured out, He brings His prophets to speak boldly of the person and work of Christ as the grand subject for newly regenerated hearts to embrace. In the following sermon, preached at New Brunswick on Saturday, August 6th, 1740 (intended to precede a Communion service on Sunday) we see how Gilbert Tennent faithfully and forcefully proclaims this vital doctrine. The reader will note the depth and cogency of argument with which Tennent treats this pivotal truth as he incorporates many of its theological corollaries, including the relationship between faith and works. Revival preaching was indeed doctrinal preaching, and it remains so today! – John McDonald, Th.D.

Romans 3:28

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. (KJV)¹

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quoted in this sermon is from the King James Version (KJV).

It is as foolish and fatal as it is common for mankind, in general, to go on contentedly and securely if they have but an outward reformation without examining their state towards God and the principles of their action. Is it possible that men's actions should be spiritually good when their state towards God and the springs of their action are bad? What can an unjustified person do who is an enemy to God that shall be acceptable to the God he hates? Can those that are in the flesh please God? No, surely! Is it not the practice of wise builders to lay the foundation first? But, alas! The very contrary is the common course of the world. They suppose without examination and reason that their foundation is good and so vainly attempt to build upon the sand. They carefully strive from time to time to mend and patch their practices, and if they can get that done they are easy in the apparent cleanness of the outside of the cup and platter although they know nothing of getting into a new state by justification or of obtaining new principles by regeneration.

It is for a lamentation that most people begin at the wrong end of religion; they attempt to grow in grace before they get grace, and to bring forth living fruit before they have a living principle. O, how hard is it to call foolish sinners back from their empty, airy fabrics to an impartial trial of their states and principles that they may lay a firm foundation that will stand all weathers, without which all their wild grapes and dead performances will but serve with the greater ease and magnificence to lead their deluded souls into everlasting burnings! No doubt, it is their ignorance and love of rest which make them so averse to examine their states, which is notwithstanding of such vast necessity.

To promote this, I have therefore determined to discourse at this time upon justification, which as Luther justly observes, is the "article of a standing or falling church." It is undoubtedly a fundamental truth of the Christian Religion, for no other foundation can any man lay save that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. This, the Apostle, after a long train of close reasoning, concludes to be "by faith, without the deeds of the law,"² in other words, by faith, as an instrument applying the righteousness of Christ to the soul - for which alone the sinner is justified without any mixture of our obedience to the moral law joined with it as a deserving cause thereof.

2 Romans 3:28.

But, to make this more plain, I would discourse upon the two following heads, namely:

I. First: I would endeavour to open the nature of justification.

II. and Secondly: Prove that it cannot be by the works of the law.

I. The first general head to be spoken upon is to open the nature of justification.

Here let it be observed that justification is derived from two words which signify *to make just*. Now, he is just who is free from the guilt of any crime (whereby right is violated) and so deserves not to be punished; and to *make just* or *righteous* is either by infusing righteousness, as was done to our first parents at their creation, or by absolving or declaring to free one from the punishment due for sin. It is in this last sense the word is generally taken in Scripture. It alludes to persons arraigned at a civil court, who upon hearing of their case, are acquitted by reason of another's discharging their debt for them. Justification is diametrically opposed to condemnation, and may be said to be threefold: namely, in the sight of God, conscience, and man.

A. Justification in the sight of God may be thus described, namely, *that it is a declaration of God's pure grace, whereby, upon the account of the obedience and sufferings of Christ imputed and received by faith, He frees persons from the guilt of sin and gives them a right to eternal salvation.*

B. Justification in the sight of conscience is the sense or knowledge of being justified before God, which usually follows the exercise of a saving faith. Hence, the Apostle observes, that "we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, 'Abba Father.'"³

C. Justification before man consists in the spiritual fruits of faith appearing in our practice, which evidence to others the reality of our justification before God. In this sense the Apostle James asserts a man to be justified by works, and desired those who professed faith to show it by their works. And thus is the seeming difference between the two Apostles Paul and James removed; the former speaks only of justification before God, while the latter speaks of a justification before man. It may be also observed that these Apostles had to deal with very different

3 Romans 8:15.

sorts of people: namely, strict Pharisees and loose Libertines. While the former depended upon their strict obedience for acceptance with God, the latter depended on a faith which did not produce obedience. Now, as it was necessary to drive the Pharisees from a carnal dependance upon works that so with poverty of spirit they might receive and rest upon the Redeemer, so it was necessary to convince the Libertines that their faith was not justifying because it did not produce good fruits that so they might be humbled before God and with importunity implore His favour.

But it is justification before God of which the text under our present consideration treats; this therefore the present argument concerns, which is as was before described, namely, a gracious declaration of God, and so forth.

God alone is the author of justification and that under the consideration of a Supreme Lord, Lawgiver, Judge, and Creditor; Whom by sin we have offended, to Whom, by sin, we are become debtors, and Who therefore can only dissolve our obligation to punishment. It is He alone, Who, in infinite wisdom, devised the scene of salvation for fallen mankind, which the Gospel reveals. It is He, Who has in infinite love, provided a surety for sinners, qualified Him for this work, and accepted His accomplishment of it upon their account. And, it is He Who unites those that are to be justified to the Mediator; as well as imputes His righteousness to them for their acceptance. Now, God the Father does not only concur in the justification of a sinner, as has been observed, but also the Son of God concurs by satisfying as a sacrifice and interceding as an advocate, and likewise, the Holy Spirit, by His testifying and sealing influences. Justification, in its nature, may be called a declaration of Almighty God or judicial pronouncing of sentence which was, as it were, conceived in the mind of God from eternity by the decree of justification pronounced in Christ as Head of His people, raised from the dead, but more sensibly and satisfactorily in the conscience, upon the exercise of faith in Christ, especially when the Holy Spirit testifies with ours that we are the sons of God. By faith we know we are justified, according to the divine promise. And indeed, before faith is implanted in the soul, the very elect are under condemnation.

In the meantime, the aforesaid declaration is entirely gracious in respect of us. It springs from the pure unexcited goodness of the blessed God; no inherent righteousness in us, or good work done by us, bears the least part in our

justification, for “we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God.”⁴ The same pure grace that gave a Redeemer to the world and calls the elect to embrace Him, pronounces those righteous who are by faith united to Him. For what is our justification but a blotting out of our iniquities, a forgiving and hiding of our sins as the Psalmist observes (hereby alluding to the mercy-seats covering of the Ark in which were the Tables of the Testimony which are against us)? The freeness of the divine goodness in His dealings with sinners is most nobly represented by the Prophet Ezekiel, where he compares man in his natural state to a new-born infant lying in the open field in its blood, equally exposed to loathing and to ruin.⁵

Now, *this*, even *this*, be astonished O Heavens, is a time of *love*, a time when the great Lord of the universe spreads the Spirit of His condescending kindness over us and says to us, “*Live!*” Blessed God, how pure is Thy mercy, and how well worthy of our supreme regards! But though they be sinners whom God justifies, yet are they elected, redeemed, called, regenerated, and believing ones.

Here it will be proper to enquire what that righteousness is for which a sinner is justified before God. Seeing the Judge of all the Earth must needs do right, and that His judgments are just and true, it will necessarily follow that He cannot pronounce those righteous who have no righteousness at all in any sense. And seeing that the person to be justified is in himself ungodly, having no inward righteousness for which he can be justified, it is therefore absolutely necessary that another’s righteousness intervene for which the sinner may be pronounced righteous. But the righteousness of no mere creature can intervene, because every one of them owes it (by virtue of creation) as a debt to God, from whom he has received his being and all his benefits. The righteousness of Christ therefore alone remains as the deserving cause of a sinner’s justification before God. Hence, He is said to be made sin for us, who knew no sin (by imputation) that in like manner we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He is called, “The Lord our Righteousness,”⁶ and by the righteousness of One the free gift is said to come upon all men (specifically, all believers) unto justification of life. Him, as the Apostle justly observes, “hath God set forth to be a propitiation (or atonement)

4 Romans 3:23

5 Ezekiel 16.

6 Jeremiah 33:16.

through faith in His blood.”⁷ As by the unrighteousness of the First Adam all his natural offspring are condemned, so by the righteousness of the Second all His spiritual offspring, namely believers, are justified.

But seeing the righteousness of Christ is two-fold, namely, essential and acquired, of His nature and life, it may be queried, which of these is imputed to believers? To this it may be replied, that albeit, the whole Saviour and His entire righteousness does conduce to our justification, inasmuch as He is wholly given of God to the world, that whosoever believes in Him might obtain eternal salvation, His birth and life was not for Himself, but for us. Hence it’s said that He came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and give His life a ransom for many. Nevertheless, the essential righteousness of Christ (both divine and human) does not conduce to our justification *as our righteousness* for which we are justified, because that was necessary for Himself. And to suppose that it is imputed to us would render the righteousness of His life and death unnecessary. It was nevertheless necessary to qualify the person of the Mediator, to compass that righteousness for which we are justified, which is the righteousness of His life and death. This is usually called His active and passive obedience. The active obedience of Christ is His perfect fulfilling the commands of the Law of God; His passive is His suffering those penalties which were threatened for our breaches of it, if not altogether in kind, yet in weight. The precept and penalty of the Law must both be fulfilled, because of God’s holiness and truth, in order to free us from the guilt of sin and acquire for us a right to salvation, which we had forfeited by it. Our justification is to be ascribed to the whole obedience of Christ, both active and passive, considered complexly or together; because that satisfying and meriting don’t differ really in this affair. Does not the Scripture inform us, that “as by one Man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous?”⁸

That the satisfaction of Christ was sufficient to answer the demands of the Law and justice, violated and incensed by the creature’s sin, will appear by considering the quality of His person, the degrees of His sufferings, and the perfection of His obedience.

7 Romans 3:25.

8 Romans 5:19.

The blessed Jesus was not the Son of God merely by office, but by nature. On this account we are told, that “He reckoned it no robbery to be equal with God,”⁹ and hence He is called the brightness of His Father’s glory. Now the dignity of His person must needs derive an infinite value both upon His sufferings and obedience, seeing they were endured and performed by One Who was as really God (in the strictest sense of the word) as He was truly man; they must of necessity contain in them infinite worth. Is it not the universal suffrage of all nations, that punishments receive their estimate from the quality of the persons suffering? Had not our Lord been man He could not have suffered at all, for the deity is impassible; and had He not been God as well as man, His sufferings could not have contained infinite value in them and so never have answered the infinite demerit of sin.

Now, the sufferings which our Lord endured in His body and soul in His life and at His death were great in degree; this, His agony and bloody sweat in the Garden and out-cry on the cross, namely: “Eli, Eli, lama sabacthani,”¹⁰ sufficiently confirm. Hence, He is said to tread the winepress of His Father’s wrath alone - undoubtedly a weight of wrath equal in degree to the number and heinousness of all the sins of the elect-world - was laid upon the soul and body of Christ, which nothing less than the divine nature could support Him under. Oh, how affecting is the narrative which the evangelists give us of the sufferings of Christ in His body - by blows, scourges, nails, thorns, and a cruel spear! And was not His soul sorrowful even to death?

Had not our Lord, in the quality of a surety, sufficiently satisfied the Law in His death, He could not have obtained an acquittance in His resurrection; but inasmuch as He was released from the grave, as a prison, by public sentence, and had a triumphant entry into Heaven, it evidently proves the sufficiency of His satisfaction. And the active obedience of Christ was complete and spotless. Hence, we are told that He was holy, harmless, and undefiled, and that it became Him to fulfill all righteousness.

That the satisfaction of a surety in the sinner’s room should be accepted upon His account is wholly owing to the absolute sovereignty and mere good

9 Philippians 2:6

10 Matthew 27:46.

pleasure of the Great God. Right reason will inform us that the Almighty, by an act of supremacy, might relax the Law as to the letter of it (which required perfect, personal obedience upon pain of death to be endured by the delinquent) and dispense with its execution upon such considerations as might answer the ends of government. And this we are assured by the sacred oracles, the blessed God did. Men, not being able to obey perfectly, they being themselves imperfect and being equally incapable to satisfy for their offences, themselves being finite, in order to prevent their unavoidable and everlasting ruin, it pleased the eternal Father to appoint a Mediator to interpose, by way of surety, to authorize and qualify Him for this office and to declare His acceptance of His execution of it. Hence, we are told that *Him hath the Father sealed*¹¹, and that *in Him is the Father well pleased*.¹² But that which completes the whole is the Redeemer's consenting to His Father's proposals, namely, to suffer and obey in the sinner's room and thereby to satisfy divine justice for them. The efficacy of the Redeemer's obedience depends much upon His own voluntary engagement, for being the Lord of Heaven there was no superior authority to compel Him; and supposing there were, He being perfectly innocent, it would not accord with justice to force Him to suffer for another's crimes. But as the Proverb is, "to a willing mind there is no injury done."¹³ Our Lord informs us that *He had power to lay down His life*, and that *He was willing to do it*. He Himself also assures us by saying, "Lo I come, in the volume of Thy Book it is written of Me: I delight to do Thy Will, O My God; yea, Thy Law is within My Heart."¹⁴

But however excellent and perfect the righteousness of the Mediator is, it can be of no avail to us without an appropriation. Here, therefore, it will be necessary to enquire how it is made ours. And that is two ways: namely by imputation and faith, as was observed in the description; the former is without us, and the latter is within us.

He that hath no inward or inherent righteousness of his own for which he

11 John 6:27.

12 Matthew 17:5.

13 An English proverb from Cassell's Illustrated History of England, Volume 3, Chapter 3.

14 Psalm 40:7-8.

should be justified, can be justified no other way but by imputation. However, this term has been scoffed at by Papists and other opposers of the Doctrines of Grace, yet we find it is a Scriptural one. It is said of Abraham, that he believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness¹⁵, and that the man is blessed to whom God will not impute sin. Now the aforesaid imputation consists in the Father's giving of His Son to us and in His referring or accounting the virtue of His death and obedience so far to us as thereby to free us from everlasting punishment and entitle us to everlasting rest.

But the inward mean on men's part of appropriating the righteousness of Christ to us is faith – [but] not a dead faith which is destitute of good works! No, such a historical, ineffectual assent to truth, if it be depended upon, will but serve to deceive us into ruin and aggravate our everlasting pains through surprise. The faith which justifies is a living principle of good action, formed by God's almighty power in the soul, by which we are resolved to have God for our last end and Christ for our only Mediator. This operative faith is only a mean of our justification or prerequisite to it, not any deserving cause of it either in whole or in part. Therefore, our text asserts that we are justified by faith, not for faith. Faith, in the business of justification, is only an instrument whereby we apprehend and lay hold of the righteousness of Christ for our justification. If faith, considered as a work of the creature, was in any degree a meritorious cause of our justification, then we should be justified by works contrary to the Scriptures. That faith should have any instrumentality in our justification above other graces is entirely owing to the most free constitution of Almighty God. But in the meantime, we may venture to say, that in this method the pureness of divine grace shines with the greatest glory towards poor sinners in that God will justify them upon the account of the righteousness of His Son, received by faith alone. And the wisdom of God is also discovered in choosing this grace to be the instrument of a sinner's justification, or a prerequisite before it; because as it inclines to exalting thoughts of God, so it empties a man of self and breaks the pride of the heart.

It was before observed in the description of justification that God thereby frees persons from the guilt of sin and gives them a right to eternal salvation. By the guilt of sin, an obligation to punishment by reason of the threatenings of the

15 Romans 4:3.

Law against transgressors is intended. There is no condemnation to those that are justified. It is true by justification the Almighty God does not take away the stain of sin, for that is done afterwards by sanctification. Neither are all effects of sin together and at once removed. Even justified persons are exercised with various afflictions, and at last endure the pains of a temporal death. But these are not proper punishments inflicted with any view to compensate the injury offered by sin to God. Neither do they proceed from His vindicative justice or tend to the hurt of the person afflicted. No, they are chastenings indeed occasioned by sin, but proceeding from the fatherly love of God; they are made to promote the good of the justified. Now, seeing the guilt of sin is twofold, namely potential and actual, it is not to be supposed that justification removes both. No, potential guilt is inseparable from sin, for it is contradictory to suppose anything to be sin and not at the same time to deserve punishment. It is therefore the latter only which justification abolishes, namely the sinner's obligation to punishment and that by transferring it upon the surety, who in this respect was made sin for us and therefore bore our iniquities (*i.e.* the punishment due for them) on His body on the tree.

Moreover, as the guilt of sin involves or includes a certain captivity to corruption, a debt or subjection to punishment, and an enmity against God, so that absolution, which justification includes, has a threefold denomination. In respect of bondage, it is called "redemption," which is the freeing of a captive soldier by the payment of a certain price. In respect of debt and punishment, it is called "remission" or "forgiveness." In respect of enmity and hatred thereby removed, it is called "reconciliation" inasmuch as it signifies the application of reconciliation to the soul. When guilt, which is the only cause of enmity, is removed, then a sweet peace, friendship, and communion with God is hereby introduced into the soul. Truly, such have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

The guilt of sin being removed, a right to eternal life must needs succeed, which it is best to ascribe to the whole undivided righteousness of Christ, namely, of His active and passive obedience as the meritorious cause thereof. Inasmuch as there seems to be no real difference between a freedom from eternal death, and a right to eternal life, no more than between satisfaction and merit, it therefore seems not proper (in our sentiments) to deprive the passive obedience of Christ of the honour of deserving, or the active of the honour of satisfying.

Albeit, that justification is an unalterable sentence of Almighty God that can never be repealed, the sins of the justified will not be remembered to their condemnation. For it is God that justifieth, who is he therefore that condemneth? Yet it is necessary to have the righteousness of Christ repeatedly applied to the soul by frequent acts of faith because of sins committed after the beginning of our justification, that so it may be continued until it is consummate at the Last Judgment by that voice of Christ, *Come ye blessed of My Father*.¹⁶

Although the perseverance of the justified is bottomed upon the promise of a faithful God, yet it is such as renders the use of a means necessary. We must labour to keep ourselves in the love of God. And although works are no meritorious cause of our justification, yet are they necessary means to obtain it from God Who will be enquired of the House of Israel to do those things for them which He has even purposed to confer.

But it is time to proceed to the

II. Second general head of discourse, which was to show that justification cannot be attained by the works of the Law.

To this end let it be considered that in order to justify by the Law, a perfection of obedience is necessary; the Law curses for the least default in thought, word, or action.¹⁷

Now this is at present impossible for us to perform, for we have already in our first parents sinned and come short of the glory of God; and on this account every mouth is stopped and the whole world is become guilty before God. That awful trespass has robbed us of our original integrity, harmony, and beauty, and introduced into all our powers a universal depravity, discord, and deformity. How therefore can such imperfect causes produce perfect effects? This is impossible in the nature of things. But supposing we could keep the Law of God in time to come, yet how could we make satisfaction for our past disobedience seeing that sin is an offence committed against a Being of infinite perfections, a Being to Whom we are under infinite obligations, not only by reason of His essential

16 Matthew 25:34.

17 Galatians 3:10.

excellency, but communicative kindness to us? Of all which sin is a rebellious and ungrateful breach, it must therefore in its nature deserve infinite punishment which God, in justice, is obliged to inflict. But this, contracted into a finite space, no mere creature can sustain; it would surely destroy his being. Therefore, what the punishment wants in weight must be made up in continuance, and thus the sinning creature will be forever suffering and can never satisfy.

Before persons have faith, the divine Word informs us that whatever they do is sin; and as soon as they attain faith, they are united to Christ and so must needs be justified by His righteousness. Now, is it not unreasonable to suppose that what is sin, at least in the manner of performance, should be a meritorious cause of justification?

To suppose that we are justified by works is to say that the reward is not of grace but of debt, contrary to the most plain and repeated declarations of Scripture that our justification is free and gracious. Neither can our justification be partly of grace and partly of works, for thus as the Apostle justly observes, “grace would be no more grace, and works would be no more works.”¹⁸ To be justified by grace is to be justified freely, without a respect to any work of the creature as a deserving cause thereof. But to be justified by works in any degree respects them as a deserving cause. Now, here is an unreconcilable contradiction. It is the same thing substantially in the case before us, whether merit is supposed to consist in the worth of the work done, or in a promise of the Almighty, pretended to be annexed to the endeavours of natural men (which the Papists distinguish by the terms of “congruity” and “condignity”), for both ways God is bound by the labours of His enemies to give them happiness. Whatever probability of obtaining does attend the endeavours of natural men, there is no certainty; otherwise, justification would be by the works of the Law. And indeed, we may as easily reconcile light and darkness, fire and water, life and death, as justification partly by works and partly by grace; for grace must lose its nature if it be by works with it, and works must lose their nature if it be by grace together with them.

Besides, to suppose that the works of the creature are joined with the righteousness of Christ as deserving causes of justification reflects great dishonour upon His satisfaction, for it plainly intimates that it is incomplete. If

18 Romans 11:6.

it is complete, as the testimony of the Father declares by saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased,"¹⁹ then there is no need of the creature's additions. If it be incomplete, then how can an imperfect creature accomplish that which God Himself is supposed to have left unfinished? Undoubtedly, there is still a necessity of obedience to the moral law, as it is an invariable rule of righteousness corresponding to the divine perfections in order to testify our regard to God's commanding authority and our gratitude for His love to us, as well as to testify the truth of our faith in Him. But by no means is our obedience to be admitted as a meritorious cause of our acceptance with God, for in that respect Christ has become the end of the Law to everyone that believeth, as Bernard of old observed, "Though works be the way to the Kingdom, yet they are not the cause of our reigning there." Surely, we should expect justification only in that way in which Abraham, the father of the faithful, obtained it - but that was not by works, but by faith. "If Abraham," says the Apostle Paul, "were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God."²⁰

The Scripture asserts that we are justified in that way which excludes all boasting, but by what Law is it excluded? Is it by the law of works? Nay, but by the law of faith. If man contributed anything towards His justification he would have whereof to glory, but this no man hath. Hence, we are told that God justifieth the ungodly, namely, such as have no righteousness of their own to commend them to His favour, and that He imputeth righteousness without works. If they which are of the Law be heirs, namely, if men by obedience to the Law can procure an interest in the Heavenly inheritance, then is faith made void and the promise made of no effect. There is no need of believing in Jesus for that which we have in ourselves, nor any need of His atonement seeing that the matter can be otherwise adjusted according to this notion, and if so the very foundation of the Gospel is overthrown - for what need is there of a Saviour to do that for us which we can do for ourselves? The Apostle Paul on the contrary informs us, that Israel, who sought after righteousness, did not obtain it because they sought it, as it were, by the works of the Law; and that being ignorant of God and going about to establish their own righteousness, they did not submit themselves to the righteousness of

19 Matthew 3:17.

20 Romans 4:2.

God. But of himself he says, that he desired not to be found in that righteousness which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ.

Well, seeing justification by works is of impossible attainment, and there being no other way of justification opened but by faith, it must therefore of necessity be by faith. And this indeed is frequently and roundly asserted in the epistles of Paul to the Romans and Galatians. The righteousness of Christ is such alone as can discharge the sinner's debts and procure for him a Heavenly inheritance. And in this way of acceptance God is most glorified and man most humbled.

Neither does this scheme of free-justification open a door to licentiousness as some have imagined, but on the contrary it secures obedience upon the best foundation inasmuch as that faith which justifies is a living, lasting principle of holy and humble action; and the more free and rich the love of God is to us the more it must needs excite our love to Him. For love is love's loadstone, and must not everyone confess that love is the only principle of evangelical and acceptable obedience and that in proportion to the strength of the cause will be the effects produced by it. That obedience which principally springs from a meaner source, *viz.* slavish dread of the divine revenge, or hireling notions of thereby purchasing happiness, however fair appearances it may have in the eye of man, is fleshly and dead, and therefore abhorred by that God who is a Spirit. The Apostle therefore justly rejected the aforesaid cavil with detestation: "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid,"²¹ said he. "How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"²² And elsewhere, "Do we make void the Law by faith? God forbid: yea," (says he), "we establish the Law."²³ Namely, by providing a righteousness which fully answers its demands and by exciting obedience to its precepts from the noblest principle, namely love.

If it be opposed to what has been before observed that we can no more be righteous because of another's righteousness than we can be wise or learned because of another's wisdom or learning, it may be replied that the objection will hold so far as it concerns an essential or inherent righteousness which cannot,

21 Romans 6:1.

22 Romans 6:2.

23 Romans 3:31.

by imputation, be so made another's, that through that he should be reckoned inherently righteous; neither do we affirm any such thing relating to justification. Besides, there is also a difference in this, that one cannot be united with another, so as believers are with Christ, as members with the Head. By the righteousness of Christ being imputed to us, we understand no more than that His merit and satisfaction is so far reckoned to us as that we are thereby freed from the guilt of sin and obtain a right to salvation.

(III.) But it is time to proceed to the improvement of this noble and important subject.

And here let us consider a little of that honour that is hereby reflected upon the divine attributes. With what surprising and unrivaled glory does the unsearchable wisdom of Jehovah shine in devising and concerting a method which at the same time establishes His inviolable truth engaged to issue the threats of the broken Covenant, satisfies His awful and inflexible justice wronged by the creature's sin through an Almighty Surety's sufferings in their room and stead, secures the end of government by honouring the Law more than it ever was before through the spotless obedience of One Who was God as well as man in the guilty sinner's place, and yet opens a door for the manifestation of the purest and richest grace upon unworthy and condemned rebels in their acceptance and salvation! While fallen angels, a nobler order of creatures, are wholly passed by and no offer of mercy made to them! What man, what angel, can sufficiently declare the depth, the glory, of divine wisdom, which has taken occasion by the creature's sin, which is the vilest evil, to bring the greatest glory to Himself and the greatest good to mankind? Oh, with what majesty and sweetness does the harmony of divine perfections sparkle forth in the redemption of man by Jesus Christ? And oh, how amazingly is their salvation hereby secured upon a more unshaken foundation than while man remained in a state of innocence, for now is their stock in the Mediator's hands. O let us dwell upon the thoughts of these things until our hearts be fired with love and gratitude!

But how can we express gratitude without searching the foundations of our hope, seeing that all our peace and consolation in adversity depends upon the certainty of our justification? It must needs be a duty of the last necessity for us to enquire into our present state, which that we may do to some purpose. Faith,

which is the instrument of our justification, should be impartially examined. Now, those that have true faith have been, according to the promise of our Saviour, convinced of their unbelief, namely of their total want of faith, their inability to believe, their utter unworthiness of the gift of faith, as well as of the rebellion and ingratitude that is grasped in unbelief, and of the horrible miseries consequent thereupon. And seeing faith is a receiving of Christ in all His offices upon Gospel terms²⁴, therefore those that do believe have been made sensible of their need of Christ in all His Offices. They have groaned under the burden of their ignorance, guilt, and slavery, and have experienced a virtue flowing from the several offices of Christ to the healing of the aforesaid diseases. And indeed, every believer feels a daily need of Christ in all His offices. He daily lives upon Christ, and to Him, and no more to himself. He comes out of the wilderness of this world leaning upon his Beloved, for to him to live is Christ. Christ is the principal support and highest end of the believer's life. As the glory of Christ is the highest mark of all the different kinds of his action (in general), so the love of Christ, as a principle, constrains him to act, and under a sense of his own folly and weakness by the exercise of faith he desires strength from Christ as the head of influence to serve God spiritually - not in the oldness of the letter, but in the newness of the Spirit.

Again, as the vital act of faith consists in the consent of the will to Gospel terms, therefore those that believe to justification must needs know and have seriously considered them, as well as without reserve and with resolution complied with them. Hence, we may safely assert that such who know not in some measure by experience what it is to deny their natural, civil, sinful, and religious self, are unbelievers. For not only sin is to be denied or forsaken absolutely and immediately, but even the other kinds of self in some respects. And those also who take not up the cross of Christ and follow Him do not believe in Him with a justifying faith. It may be here observed, that as the person (mentioned in the Gospel) in his coming to Christ was thrown down and torn by the Devil, so it is common for those that believe to justification to be opposed and tempted by the Devil in believing.

Justifying faith does also produce powerful effects; as it makes Christ precious to the soul, so it humbles the sinner's heart and makes him think with

24 John 1:12.

Paul that he “is less than the least of all saints.”²⁵ It gives victory over the world (*viz.* the lusts of it) and works by love to God and man. What is said of hope may be justly applied to faith, *viz.* that it purifies the heart (namely makes persons desirous after and labouring for heart-purity) and causes them to enter into a course of war against the contrary.

Such as have a justifying faith must needs have been brought to a heart-affecting complaisance with the Gospel scheme of salvation by grace. This way they desire to be saved, and no other.²⁶

And seeing that faith is the bond of union to Christ, it must needs affect believers with a high regard to His honour and Kingdom. Every believer therefore has a single eye to the glory of God in the course of his actions. Oh, how much depends upon this! If our eye be single, our whole body is full of light; if not, it is full of darkness. O if you think that this is of easy attainment and that you have always had it, you are surely ignorant of God and yourselves! For no natural man on earth hath, or while he so remains can have, a single eye. A fountain can’t send forth streams above a level with itself.

If you have a justifying faith, my dear brethren, ye surely have a tender regard to the Church of God, as a member of the natural body that is united by a living band to the whole must be sensibly touched with the pains and pleasures of any part thereof. Thus it is with you, if ye believe. When God’s name is profaned and His Kingdom is not promoted, ye mourn; but when God is glorified and sinners are convinced and converted, ye rejoice.

Again, such as are justified are effectually called.²⁷ The voice of Christ is accompanied with supernatural light and irresistible power upon their minds and hearts which banish their natural darkness, rebellion, and prejudice, and make them stoop to the Saviour’s scepter. He that commanded the light to shine at first out of darkness, gives them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. God sends the rod of His strength out of Zion, and makes His people a willing people in the day of His power.

And those that are justified do confess their sins with deep humiliation,

25 Ephesians 3:8.

26 Philippians 3:7-9.

27 Romans 8:30.

shame, and sorrow, as the Publican who stood afar off and smote upon his breast and said, "God be merciful to me, a sinner."²⁸ This man went to his house justified, when the proud Pharisee was rejected.

But the justified person does not only confess sin, but forsakes it in his heart and practice. For there is an inseparable connection between justification and sanctification.²⁹ As justification includes in it reconciliation to God, this in the order of nature as well as of God, necessarily supposes our being sorrowfully sensible of our natural enmity against Him, and therefore such as have not been made sensible of the latter may assure themselves that they are unacquainted with the former.³⁰

And those that are reconciled to God Himself, must needs be reconciled to His people, His laws, and providences.

By these things, my dear friends, we should examine ourselves, and see whether we be justified or not. As to those who have experienced the aforesaid signs of justification, ye are blessed indeed – "Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven, and whose sin is covered!"³¹ For ye have peace with God, and peace with conscience, that peace which passes all understanding, that peace which Christ left as a legacy to His disciples.³² And such have free access with a humble boldness to a gracious God in all their straits, Who is both willing and able to relieve them.³³ And, oh how noble, how sweet, how precious, and how important is thy privilege! Who can express it? Such shall persevere in the grace of God and be carried by His mighty power through faith unto salvation. The Gates of Hell shall never prevail against them, nor death or life separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. Such may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God and triumph in all adversity, seeing every affliction they meet with springs from a Father's love, and shall surely, by His direction, promote their good - especially

28 Luke 18:13.

29 1 Corinthians 6:11.

30 Romans 8:7; 2 Corinthians 5:20.

31 Psalm 31:1.

32 Romans 5:1.

33 Ephesians 3:12.

considering that under affliction the love of God is more frequently shed abroad in their hearts. Such are by the righteousness of Christ freed from the guilt of sin, the wrath of God, and eternal condemnation. Oh what sweet consolation springs from the doctrine of justification to every pious soul in every distress, whether it be trouble of conscience about the multitude and heinousness of their sins, or fears of death, judgment, and Hell, or worldly calamities and unjust censures! What can more effectually support the soul than to think that it is God who justifieth, against whom neither the accusations of Satan and of the world, nay, nor of our own consciences, can in the least avail. As also, that God does not justify the righteous, but sinners (and that of the deepest dye, *namely*, the ungodly and rebellious), from pure Grace, whereby He imputes the righteousness of His only begotten Son to them, and thereby upon their believing in Him frees them from the guilt of all their offences (how many and great soever they be), and entitles them to eternal glory. Hence, He is said not to behold iniquity in Jacob or perverseness in Israel.

But on the contrary, how miserable is the case of all unjustified persons, *namely*, such who want the signs of faith and justification before described - such who profess Christ in words, but in works deny Him; such who have only a dead faith without works; such who are strangers to the power of experimental religion, communion with God, and conformity to Him?

If we consider the unjustified in life, their persons are covered with the basest deformity, their bodies are instruments of unrighteousness to sin, and their minds and consciences are defiled. In respect of their worldly goods, they are usurpers: Man having, by his fall, lost his original right to the creatures, it can be only recovered by an interest in Christ through faith, Who is made by His Father heir of all things. Now, inasmuch as they want this, they are usurpers in the sight of God (whatever civil claim they may have notwithstanding).

In regard to their pleasures and prosperity, it is justly said that their table is a snare and a trap to their souls and that the prosperity of fools destroys them; they stand on slippery places and are but the more prepared for an aggravated ruin by all their prosperous successes. Even their very blessings are accursed, as the Prophet Malachi expresses it. Their honourable exaltations serve but to sink them lower at last in the dungeon of devils. Their afflictions are dreadful presages of their approaching, unavoidable, and eternal miseries.

And oh, how dreadful is the case of the unjustified at death (especially if

awakened to a sense of danger) when they must turn their backs forever upon all created enjoyments, face death with all its grizzly horrors, feel its envenomed sting, and launch the eternal deep; and in the meantime have no grain of comfort or glimpse of hope, to use the Psalmist's words, "How are they brought into destruction, as in a moment; they are utterly consumed with terrors!"

But if in our mediation we follow the unjustified farther, we may behold their increasing miseries. With what confusion shall they stand before the bar of the Great God at the general judgment while every of their sins are exposed in all their awful aggravations and they have none to plead their cause? What horror, indignation, and pain must tear their guilty souls when they hear the Great Judge pronounce His final sentence, "Go, ye accursed, into everlasting burnings prepared for the Devil and his angels," and behold him laughing at their calamities.

But if we view their eternal state, alas! How dreadful and how shocking is the sight! For in that prison where they are irrecoverably fixed, there their worm does not die and the fire is unquenchable, and they shall be an abhorring to all flesh.³⁴ How shall horror for past sins and lost mercies with fears of future miseries and utter despair of relief from them, together with the vials of divine vengeance, everlastingly rack damned souls!

Now, seeing the miseries of the unjustified are so great, then let sinners be entreated to beware of abusing the precious doctrine of justification to their own ruin by vainly imagining themselves to be possessors of it when they are far from it. Those who justify themselves when God condemns them are an abomination to Him; they deceive themselves and obstruct the way to their justification and salvation.³⁵ This those do who depend upon church-privileges, a dead faith, the uncovenanted mercy of God, the death of Christ unapplied to the soul, or their own righteousness. It is infinitely better for you, my friends, to know and own the worst of your case and to seek after justification through Christ with the utmost vehemence, by denying your own righteousness (for he that is proud of his own will not prize, seek, or obtain another) by deep humiliation for your many and heinous offences, in the language of the penitent Publican, by seeking the knowledge of Christ crucified and help from God - to receive Him by a living

34 Isaiah 66:24.

35 Proverbs 17:15; Galatians 6:3; Matthew 13.

faith.

And the saints of God should be careful that they abuse not the aforesaid doctrine to sloth and sinful indulgence in their cold frames, for as this is very grieving to the Spirit of God and blots our evidences for Heaven, so it manifests the vilest ingratitude and ministers an occasion of reflection to the adversaries of the doctrines of grace.

The people of God should also beware of condemning themselves when God justifies them - seeing that the Father hath laid upon Christ the iniquities of us all, why should we as ungratefully as foolishly lay them upon ourselves and so act the adversary's part against our own interest? We ought not to cast away our hope because we have not had such deep convictions, such great temptations and consolations as some others, or because we have not arrived to the like degrees of goodness. Rather, let us deal with Christ as Aaron of old did with the live goat, who laid both his hands upon him and confessed the iniquities of the Children of Israel over him.³⁶ After which he is said to bear their iniquities into a land not inhabited. Let us cast the whole weight of our souls and our sins upon Christ by believing - and then we need not fear condemnation.

But in the meantime, the freeness of justification, the honours and happiness of that condition into which the rebellious, mean, and miserable sinner is thereby introduced, should excite the utmost gratitude to the Author of so great and durable a benefit; the sense of the worth of this mercy should be ever in our minds and the perfections of its Author perpetually celebrated with our lips, while in the meantime in our lives we glorify God by all holy obedience. Seeing God has justified us freely, without good works, we should express our thankfulness to Him by a more cheerful, sincere, and steady practice of them, to which let the love of God constrain us.

And particularly, let justified persons obey their Lord's command in sitting down at His table and commemorating His dying love. Here, ye friends of God, you may see as in a glass what the purchase of your pardon cost your dearest Lord! At this banquet you may behold the dreadful agonies of His soul and sufferings of His body for your sins, which should stir up in us, my dear Brethren, the strongest affection. Oh, methinks the Holy Jesus looks exceedingly lovely as He comes

36 Leviticus 16:21.

with died garments from Bozrah and Edom.

O sirs! It is the exercise of a justifying faith which, as an eye, can only help us to behold our Lord's sufferings in a right manner, and as a conduit can convey to us the benefits of them, which may it please the Good God to give us all for Christ's sake, amen.

EXTANT SERMONS
OF THE REVERENT GILBERT TENNENT

The majority of Gilbert's just over three hundred extant sermons remain (unpublished) in manuscript form. Sermons that have been published are marked with an asterisk. As Gilbert did not use a manuscript for preaching until after he entered his pastorate in Philadelphia, there are very few extant sermons before 1743, but interestingly almost all of these "early" extant sermons have been published. A perusal of the sermon titles reveals a remarkable balance of doctrinal and practical topics. It is probable that Gilbert completed an entire sermon series on the Shorter (or Larger) Catechism, and if these sermons were transcribed and published, this work would be of inestimable value as it would constitute Gilbert's own systematic "Body of Divinity."

A Solemn Warning to the Secure World, from the God of Terrible Majesty, 1734*

The Danger of Forgetting God, March 1735*

The Espousals, or A Passionate Persuasive to a Marriage with the Lamb of God, wherein the Sinner's Misery and the Redeemer's Glory is Unveiled, June 22, 1735*

The Necessity of Religious Violence in order to obtain Durable Happiness, June 29, 1735*

The Necessity of Receiving the Truth in Love, August 1735*

The Solemn Scene of the Last Judgment, 1737

The Legal Bow Bent, 1739

The Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees Considered, Jan. 27, 1740*

The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry, March 1740*

Justification, August 1740*

Christ's Kingly Office, Sept. 1740*

The Priestly Office of Christ, 1741*

The Virtue of Charity, 1741*

The Necessity of Holding Fast the Truth (three sermons), April 1742*

Sermon on Psalm 116:12-14, 1743

The Law of God, Feb. 1743

Twenty-Three Sermons Upon the Chief End of Man, the Divine Authority of the Sacred Scriptures, the Being and Attributes of God, and the Doctrine of the Trinity, 1743*

The Enmity of the Unregenerate, Oct. 1743

The Last Judgment, Oct. 1743

Giving One's Heart to God, 1744

Peace with One's Neighbor, Jan. 15, 1744

Sermon on Revelation 3:20, Jan. 29, 1744

God's Decree, Feb. 1744

Baptism (sermon 1), Feb. 5, 1744

Baptism (sermon 2), Feb. 12, 1744

Election, March 1744

The Fear of God and Reliance, March 1,8, 1744

Creation, March 11, 1744

Carnal Security, March 25, 1744

The Paraclete, April 1, 1744

The Six Days of Creation, April 8, 1744

Evil Angels, April 9, 1744

The Necessity of Thankfulness for Wonders of Divine Mercies, April 15, 1744*

Christian Soldiers, April 29, 1744

Providence, April 29, 1744

The Covenant of Nature, May 1744

The Covenant of Works, May 6, 1744

The Sabbath, May 6, 1744

The Violation of the Covenant of Nature, May 21, 1744

The Acceptable Time, June 2, 1744

Christ is All, and in All, June 3, 1744

The Imputation of Original Sin, June 17, 1744

The Glorious Gospel, June 17, 1744

Sacramental Sermon, June 25, 1744

The Punishment of Sin, July 8, 1744

God as a Tower, July 15, 1744

The Holy Spirit is like Wind and the Church is like a Garden (Song of Solomon 4:16), July 22, 1744

The Impotence of Man, July 22, 1744

Communion with the Spirit, July 29, 1744

Humbling Oneself, Prayer, and Reformation, August 3, 1744

The Run of the Christian, August 26, 1744

Prostitution and Adultery, Sept. 3, 1744

Preparatory Sermon Concerning the Wrath of God, Sept. 8, 1744

The Necessity of Studying to be Quiet, and Doing our own Business, Sept. 30, 1744*

The Mortification of Sin, Oct. 7, 1744

Immoderate Care for Worldly Things and One Necessity, Oct. 14, 1744

Pointing to Christ, Oct. 14, 1744

Holy Judges of the World, Oct. 14, 1744

Christ's Humiliation, Nov. 4, 1744

Bad Language, Nov. 4, 1744

Love, Joy, and Peace, Nov. 11, 1744

Stand, Dec. 2, 1744

The Waist Girded with Truth, Dec. 2, 1744

True and Sincere Profession, Dec. 9, 1744

Exaltation, Dec. 9, 1744

The Breastplate of Righteousness, Dec. 16, 1744

The Resurrection of Christ, Dec. 16, 1744

The Necessity of Keeping the Soul, Dec. 23, 1744*

Peace of Conscience, Dec. 30, 1744

The Danger of Spiritual Pride, Dec. 30, 1744*

Discourses on Several Important Subjects (five sermons), 1745*

Redemption, (sermons 1 and 2), Jan. 6, 1745

Redemption - Application (sermon 3), Jan. 13, 1745

Temptations by the Devil, Jan. 20, 1745

Sure Calling, Jan. 20, 1745

Knowledge, Jan. 20, 1745

The Lord's Supper, Jan. 27, 1745

The Work of Salvation, 1745

The Beauty of Christ, 1745

The Nature of Justification Opened, Jan. 1745

Drunkenness, Feb. 3, 1745

The Helmet (of Salvation), Feb. 3, 1745

Adoption, Feb. 3, 1745

Sanctification, Feb. 10, 1745

Peace, Feb. 24, 1745

The Law Established by Faith, two sermons, Feb. and March 1745

The Necessity of Good Works Vindicated, March 1745

Christ as a Fountain, March 3, 1745

Christ as our Foundation, April 21, 1745

Repentance, April 29, 1745

The Final Judgment, April 29, 1745

The Love of Christ and Obedience to the Law, May 5, 1745

Sermon on Song of Solomon 2:1-2, May 5, 1745

The Preamble to the Law, May 13, 1745

The First Commandment, May 19, 1745

Farewell Sermon, July 2, 1745

The Necessity of Praising God for Mercies Received, July 7, 1745*

All Things Come Alike to All, July 28, 1745*

The Fifth Commandment, August 25, 1745

Sermon on 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12, August 1745

The Duties of Husband and Wife, Sept. 1, 1745

The Fifth Commandment (sermon 3), Sept. 15, 1745

The Sixth Commandment, Oct. 6, 1745

Walking in Faith, Oct. 6, 1745

Making Religion one's Business, Oct. 20, 1745

The Heart Slow to Believe, Oct. 21, 1745

God our Shield and Reward, Nov. 3, 1745

The Tenth Commandment (sermon 1), Nov. 10, 1745

The Tenth Commandment (sermon 2), Nov. 17, 1745

Following in Christ's Footsteps, Nov. 3, 1745

The Evil of Sin, Nov. 3, 1745

Prayer in Faith, Nov. 10, 1745

Being Resigned to the Divine Will, Dec. 1745

Sermon on Gal. 4:4-5, Dec. 25, 1745

Diligent in Business, 1746

Rejoicing in Hope, 1746

The Nature of Baptism, Jan. 27, 1746

The Love of Christ, Jan. 27, 1746

The Subjects of Baptism, Feb. 2, 1746

Fruitfulness, Feb. 13, 1746

Sermon on Hebrews 13:5, March 1746

The Metaphor of Salt, April 6, 1746

The Dove and Lily, April 6, 1746

The Fifth Petition of the Lord's Prayer, April 20, 1746

Thanksgiving, July 24, 1746

Divine Judgment, August 3, 1746

The Duties of the Afflicted, August 3, 1746

Coming to Christ, August 10, 1746

God is the Adversary to Sinners, August 10, 1746

Obedience and Acceptance of Correction, August 10, 1746

The Birth of Christ, 1746

Mercy to the Poor, Dec./Jan. 1746/1747

Confessing Sin, Dec./Jan. 1746/1747

Making Peace with Neighbors, Dec./Jan. 1746/1747

Mortification, Jan. 1747

Communion with the Father and the Son, Feb. 1747

The Timing of God's Mercies, March 1747

Providence, March 1747

Patience, April 1747

God our Refuge, April 1747

The Eternal Arms, April 1747

God's Love, April 1747

The Penitent Thief, April 1747

Anointing, May 1747

Prayer, June 1747

The Lost Sheep (sermon 1), June 1747

The Lost Sheep (sermon 2), June 1747

Weak Faith, July 1747

Strong Faith, July 1747

Wine and Oil, July 1747

Christ's Care, July 1747

Ordination Sermon for Job Prudden, 1747

The Pearl of Great Price, August 1747

Sermon on Matthew 21:42, Nov. 1747

The Mystery of Godliness, Nov. 1747

Christ as God's Servant, Nov. 1747

The Sealing of the Spirit, Nov. 1747

The Application of a Wise Heart, Dec. 1747

The Late Association for Defense Encouraged, or The Lawfulness of a Defensive
War, Dec. 24, 1747*

The Manifold Work of God, 1748

Charity, Jan. 1748

Brotherly Love Recommended by the Argument of the Love of Christ, Jan. 1748*

The Passion of Christ, Jan. 1748

The Third Commandment, May 1748

The Throne of Grace, June 1748

Friendship, June 1748

The Dove, July 1748

Christ as the Head of the Church, July 1748

Christ as Refiner, 1748

The Intercession of Christ, Aug. 1748

Doing all things in the Name of Christ, 1748

Manna, 1748

The Covenant of Grace, 1748

Sanctification in Salvation, Nov. 1748

Sermon on Psalm 92:12, 1748

The Absolute Certainty and Great Moment of the Doctrine of the Resurrection
Proved and Illustrated, July 20, 1749

Placing One's Spirit in God's Hands, 1748

Justice, Dec. 1748

Governing One's Tongue, Jan. 1749

Meditation, Feb. 1749

Internal Testimony, Feb. 1749

God's Love in the Redemption by Christ's Death, Feb. 1749

Peaceful Disposition, Feb. 1749

The Manifold Wisdom of God in the Business of Salvation, March 1749

The Nature, Mode, and Seasons of Fasting, 1749*

The Nature and Properties of Prayer, 1749*

The Substance and Scope of both Testaments, or The Distinguishing Glory of
the Gospel: A Sermon on the Displays of Divine Justice, in the Propitiatory
Sacrifice of Christ - Representing the Nature, Necessity, and Sufficiency of

His Satisfaction, the Imputation of His Righteousness, in Consequence of it, together with an Answer to the Most Important Objections, April 1749*

The Terrors of the Lord: A Sermon on the General Judgement, May 1749*

Tranquility, Aug. 1749

Joshua, 1750

The Heart Possessed by a Demon, 1750

The Sixth and Seventh Petitions of the Lord's Prayer, 1750

Christ as the Head, March 1750

Willing People, June 1750

Affliction, Dec. 1750's (page torn containing last digit of year)

Afflictions, June 17, 1750

Invitation to Repentance, 1750

Accepting Afflictions, Aug. 1750

Reading Scripture, Aug. 1750

The Dangers of Riches, Oct. 1750

Giving Ourselves to God, Oct. 1750

The Perseverance of the Saints, Nov. 1750

Following God's Teachings and Statues, 1751

The Dignity and Perfection of God's Law, May 1751

Sermon on Matthew 5:10-12, 1752

The Divine Government over all Considered, and The Necessity of Gratitude, for Benefits Conferred, two sermons, June 1752*

The One Law-Giver, 1752

The Blessings of Affliction, Jan. 1753

Farewell Sermon, Nov. 11, 1753

Sermon on Matthew 22:2, July 1755

Sermon on Romans 3:25-26, July 1755

Longing for God's House, Sept. 1755

The Happiness of Rewarding the Enemies of our Religion and Liberty, Feb. 1756*

The Good Man's Character and Reward Represented, and his Loss Deplored, together with Reflections of the Presages of Approaching Calamities: In a Funeral Discourse, with some Enlargements Occasioned by the Death of Captain William Grant, Nov. 1756*

Security, Nov. 1756

Ministerial Care for the New Birth of the Hearers, Nov. 1756

Security, Dec. 1756

Invitation to Sinners to Come to Christ, Jan. 1757

The Reciprocal Love of Christ, Jan. 1757

Original Sin, 1757*

The Wisdom of God in Redemption, 1757*

Early Religion, two sermons, 1757*

Conversion (ten sermons), 1757*

The Riches of Grace, 1757*

Backsliding, 1757*

Returning to God, 1757*

Religious Singularity, 1757*

Love to Christ, August 1757

Sermon on Song of Solomon 1:4, Aug. 1757

Sermon on Song of Solomon 2:3, 1757

The Spouse's Search for Christ in Song of Solomon 3, Aug. 1757

Original Righteousness, printed October 1757*

Sermon on 2 Peter 1:19, Dec. 1757

The Duty of Parents to Help their Children Seek God's Wisdom, April 1758

Isaiah 1:19-20, June 1758

Sermon on Jeremiah 13:14-15, June 1758

Funeral Sermon for Rev. John Campbell and Samuel Hazard, July 1758

Enmity, Oct. 1758

Love, Nov. 1758

Uprightness, 1758

The Blessedness of Peacemakers Represented and the Danger of Persecution
Considered, May 1759*

Spiritual Taste, Aug. 1759

Requirements of the Ministry, 1759

Fellowship with Works of Darkness, Sept. 1759

Sermon on 1 John 5:21, Oct. 1759

Sermon on Isaiah 48:9-10, Nov. 1759

The Fear of God, 1759

The Nature of Religious Zeal, Jan. 27, 1760*

Life in Heaven, Jan. 1760

Affliction, Aug. 1760

The Death of King George, II, together with some Brief Hints of the Amiable
Character of His Majesty King George, III, Jan. 25, 1761*

Conscience, Aug. 1761

The Office of the Prophet, March 1763

Sermon on Psalm 18:23, Aug. 1763

Sermon on Matthew 11:12, 1763

Gratitude, n.d.

Sermon on Ecclesiastes 1:2, n.d.

Walking in Love, n.d.

Parable of the Net, n.d.

Parable of the Pearl, n.d.

The Justice of God, n.d.*

The Divine Mercy, n.d.*

The Grace of God, n.d.*

Sermon on Malachi 3:17-18, n.d.

Sermon on 2 Chronicles 20:26-29, n.d.

Thanksgiving and Praise, n.d.

Sermon on Psalm 27:4, n.d.

Sermon on Psalm 84:11, n.d.

308 total sermons

Essays, Pamphlets, and Books:

A Solemn Warning to the Secure World, 1735

“Remarks upon a Protestation,” 1741

“Some Account of the Principles of the Moravians,” 1743

“The Examiner, Examined,” 1743

Irenicum Ecclesiasticum, 1749

AN EXEGETICAL EXAMINATION ON THE REQUIREMENTS OF SALVATION FROM EPHESIANS 2:4-10

SAMUEL BATHIRAN D. D., TH. D.¹

How can a sinner be saved? What are the salvific requirements for him to attain saving Grace? In answering these questions many individuals have found their own way in the past. In Christendom, the concept of salvation is interpreted in various unscriptural ways from the first century onwards, ever since early Christianity battled with Greco-Roman concepts which intermingled inevitably with their socio-cultural life, in that many of them have adopted the Hellenistic philosophical thought in practice. Such a situation demanded them to embark and interpret the Christian scriptures from the perspectives of Greek philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle and Zeno. Not merely they had to face such a situation in the first century itself, such worldly thoughts dominated the thinking of Christian writers in a greater aspect, during patristic and post-patristic period as well, and beyond any doubt, such influence paved the way, in midst of Christian society, to formulate the different theological concepts that were even not taught by the New Testament writers who penned down the doctrinal standards in a perspicuous manner, thinking God's thoughts after Him.

Now the important question arises, within the soteriological framework, whether salvation is monergistic or synergistic. Throughout church history, according to their own speculations and ideas, various writers promoted their ideas in various ways by strongly emphasizing that there are several ways or requirements in which man can be saved unto eternal life. For instance, the

¹ Dr. Samuel Bathiran has served the Lord in various capacities as Church Planter, Pastor, Administrator, and Professor in Christian Organizations since 2001. As 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 Master of Arts in English from Manonmaniam Sundaranar University; a Bachelor of Arts in English from Annamalai University. Dr. Samuel and his wife, Salam Sanatombi Chanu are blessed with four children: Rachel Nganbi, Elisheba Rahel, Enoch Joshua and Melchizedek Joshua.

Augustinian-Pelagian controversy² could be noted here. While Augustine emphasized that saving grace is bestowed upon God's elect according to His divine grace and election, Pelagius emphasized that saving grace is bestowed upon human beings according to their own merits. While Augustine gave emphasis to divine initiation, Pelagius gave his emphasis to human responsibility. The rationale for the Augustinian-Pelagian controversy rests on how they developed their idea in the concept of original sin. For Augustine, the original sin from Adam pollutes all of his posterity, however, Pelagius contradicting Augustine's thought, developed his idea affirming the denial of original sin, since he does not believe that the posterity of Adam may have any such hereditary guilt. Thus, he opened up a soteriological dispute formulating his idea that a man can earn saving grace by his deeds.

The concept that man can earn his salvation by good works is actually firmly rooted in the Pelagian philosophy. Roman Catholics indeed promoted such kind of teaching that human merits can contribute to the salvation. To this effect, they have formulated their teachings concerning sacramentalism by which saving grace is bestowed to human beings by human merits. Catholic theology affirms that the means of divine saving grace is the seven sacraments such as baptism, confirmation, eucharist, penance, extreme unction, ordination and marriage. Do catholic teach that salvation by grace through faith? Yes, they do. Nevertheless, their rationale is falsifiable when they do not add the word "alone." In doing so, they redefined the soteriological terms culminating in misinterpretation. Indeed, they never teach salvation is by grace alone through faith alone, for the glory of God alone. Their doctrine reads:

ON JUSTIFICATION: Canon XIV. If any one shall say, that man is absolved from his sins and justified, because that he assuredly believed himself to be

2 The view of Augustine popularly known as Augustinianism should be differentiated from semi-Augustinianism. Similarly, the view of Pelagius popularly known as Pelagianism is different from Semi-Pelagianism which was developed by Cassianus. Both Pelagius and Coelestius had similar views. While Pelagianism affirms the human monergistic ideas (i.e., man by his merits can earn salvation), semi-pelagianism highlights the synergistic ideas (i.e., both God and man should cooperate together in salvation). Semi-pelagian views had a great impact on James Arminius and his followers, though they did not emphasize on natural ability like semi-pelagians, they emphasized on prevenient grace. Augustinianism rightly pointed out the divine monergistic idea (i.e., God alone saves) which is grounded in the Scripture.

absolved and justified; or that no one is truly justified save he who believes himself justified; and that, by this faith alone, absolution and justification are perfected; let him be anathema.³

William Webster comments:

Roman Catholic theology does not embrace the interpretation of salvation and justification as that presented by Scripture and the Protestant Reformers. The Roman Church does teach that we are justified by grace through faith on account of Christ. What is missing, however, is the word *alone*. By omitting this word the Roman Church redefines grace, faith and justification in a way that undermines and invalidates the teaching of Scripture.⁴

According to Roman Catholic theology, they add some works that brings salvation in the life of individuals. Similarly, Jews had their belief on the concept of salvation which could be obtained by keeping the works of the law. While Jews emphasize salvation is by keeping the mosaic law, Roman Catholics went far beyond and said that salvation is obtained by keeping good works following church traditions. This teaching straightforwardly is against the pure teaching of the Bible that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone for the glory of God alone. To elucidate this truth, this paper aims to interpret Ephesians 2:4-10 exegetically in the light of Greek text with adequate background of larger as well as immediate contexts.

Historical Context

The book of Ephesians was written by Apostle Paul. Both internal and external evidences⁵ support this fact. As to the internal records, there is the explicit assertion in the book itself that Paul is the author (1:1; 3:1). The use of vocabulary,

³ *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*: Literally translated into English By Council of Trent, Theodore Alois Buckley.

⁴ William Webster, *The Roman Catholic Teaching on Salvation and Justification* [<https://christiantruth.com/articles/articles-roman-catholicism/rcjustification/>] (accessed on December 2021).

⁵ Irving L. Jensen, *Jensen's Survey of the New Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1981), 313. For a brief summary on the authorship of Ephesians, see Norman L. Geisler, *A Popular Survey of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 191; Henry Clarence Thiessen, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 240-244.

its diction and theology suggests that this epistle is written by Apostle Paul.⁶ As to the external evidence, this epistle bears Paul's name in the earlier manuscripts, and accordingly this book was accepted as Paul's letter.⁷ Moreover, the church fathers like Ignatious, Polycarp, and fathers from Irenaeus to Augustine are all who voted for Pauline authorship.⁸ This epistle also was known as one of the prison epistles (Ephesians 3:1; 4:1; 6:20), and it was written around AD 60 during Paul's imprisonment at Rome.⁹

The book was addressed to the church at Ephesus in Asia Minor. As a gateway to Asia, Ephesus was also the capital of the Roman province of Asia and it would be convenient for Apostle Paul to visit the churches he established in Asia Minor and Europe, either by road or sea.¹⁰ In fact, the city of Ephesus was so popular in New Testament times as a political, commercial and religious center. Robert G. Gromacki wrote:

The city was colonized in the eleventh century B.C. by the Athenians. In subsequent generations it was concurred by the Persians, the Macedonians, and the Romans. Destroyed by fire in 356 B.C., it was immediately rebuilt because of the pride of its inhabitants and the importance of its strategic location ... In the New Testament times it was famous as a political, commercial, and religious center. It boasted ... the temple of Diana, known as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. ... This city enjoyed the ministry of several apostolic leaders. Paul labored there for three years; his companions, including Aquila, Priscilla, Apollos, and Timothy, were involved in the work; and tradition states that the apostle John spent his last

6 Geisler, *A Popular Survey of the New Testament*, 191; D.A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 305-306.

7 Theodor Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament: Volume I*. Trans. Melancthon Williams Jacobus (Minnesota: Klock & Klock, 1977), 481.

8 Geisler, *A Popular Survey of the New Testament*, 191; Arthur S. Peake, *A Critical Introduction to the New Testament* (London: Duckworth, 1926), 53.

9 There are basically three views concerning the place and time of writing on the book of Ephesians as follows: (i) Caesarea Incarceration (Acts 24:23), (ii) Ephesians' Imprisonment (1 Cori 15:32; 2 Cori 1:8-10 cf. Acts 20:29), (iii) Roman Imprisonment (Acts 28). For a brief explanation on these views, see Compton, *Greek Exegesis of Ephesians* (Detroit: Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013) 8-9; Geisler, *A Popular Survey of the New Testament*, 192-193.

10 Merrill C. Tenney, *New Testament Times* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 277; John Drane, *Introducing The New Testament* (Oxford: A Lion Book, 1999), 319.

days in Ephesus and died in that city.¹¹

Why did Apostle Paul write this epistle? Some scholars are in opinion that there is no clear purpose to this book.¹² However scholars have set their understanding to comprehend the purpose of the writing as they diligently analyzed the book. According to Gromacki, the book actually is divided into three sections that state Paul's three major purposes in writing.

In the first section (1:1-3:21), Paul expounds the nature of the universal church, the body of Christ, by showing its sovereign calling, its composition of saved Jews and gentiles, and its eternal purpose. In the second section (4:1-6:9) he exhorts the members of this universal Church to proper conduct toward each other, the world, God, and the members of their own earthly families. The third division (6:10-24) contains an appeal to the believer to be prepared for spiritual conflict as he attempts to put into practice his blessed spiritual position.¹³

Dennis J. Mock states the purpose of Paul's writing is "to instruct believers on their position and spiritual blessings in Christ and to encourage them to practically live in light of who they are in Christ and what He has done for them."¹⁴ In nutshell, according to this writer, the purpose of writing is to make the believers in Ephesus understand the riches they have in the Lord Jesus Christ in the spiritual sense as they are foreknown, elected, called, justified, sanctified and glorified by His grace alone, not based on their human merits.

11 Robert G. Gromacki, *New Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 241-242; For the details about the information on the Ministry at Ephesus, see Craig A. Evans and others, *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (Illinois: InterVarsity, 2000), 318-321.

12 D. Edmond Hiebert, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Three Volume Collection* (Georgia: Gabriel, 2003), 265. Unlike many of Paul's other letters, Ephesians was not written to deal with any particular problem or controversy. Paul wrote the letter to instruct the Christians of Asia Minor concerning the privileges and responsibilities of those who were part of the church, the Body of Christ. Paul N. Benware, *Survey of the New Testament: Everyman's Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1990), 208.

13 Gromacki, *New Testament Survey*, 247.

14 Dennis J. Mock, *New Testament Survey* (Course Manual: Bible Training Centre for Pastors and Church Leaders-Atlanta, 1989), 146.

Literary Context

The book of Ephesians deals first with doctrinal aspect. The latter part of the book deals with practical or application. The first part informs the believers who they are in Christ. The later part informs the believers that how they have to practice the doctrine in their day to day life, having received spiritual blessings in Christ. This conveys the idea that their life in all the aspects must be in consistent with the great spiritual blessings received in Christ Jesus. In Chapters 1-3, Paul explains about their spiritual blessings as every true believer of Jesus Christ has. First, he talks about the calling of the believers who are in the Body of Christ (1:1-3:21). The chapter 1 is divided into two sections as follows: 1) The believers are called for the redemptive purpose (1:1-14). 2) The believers are called for understanding God's grace (1:15-23). In Chapter 2:1-10 he explains about the believers who are saved by grace alone (2:1-10). In this immediate context, Apostle Paul talks about Man's total depravity explaining all are dead in trespasses and sins, and separated from the fellowship of God (vv. 1-4). Thus, salvation is by grace alone through faith alone (vv.5-8), not by any good works (v.9). In v. 10 he expounds good works are not contributions for salvation but a part of God's purpose in believer's life as its fruits or signs.

The Outline of the Book of Ephesians

As mentioned above, the book is divided into two sections as the first half of the epistle is doctrinal, and the second half of the epistle is practical. The first three chapters as provided below expounds about the calling of the believers who are in the body of Christ, and the second half of the epistle expounds about how their conduct must be in view of their calling and spiritual blessings.

(A). THE CALLING OF THE BELIEVERS WHO ARE IN THE BODY OF CHRIST (1:1-3:21)

- a. The believers are called for the redemptive purpose (1:1-14)
- b. The believers are called for knowing God's grace (1:15-23)
- c. The believers are called to be saved by grace alone (2:1-10)
- d. The believers are called for the reconciliation (2:11-22)
- e. The believers are called for the gospel of God's grace (3:1-13)
- f. The believers are called for prayer (3:14-21)

(B). THE CONDUCT OF THE BELIEVERS WHO ARE IN THE BODY OF CHRIST (4:1-6:24)

- a. The conduct of the believers is to be reflected in unity (4:1-16)
- b. The conduct of the believers is to be reflected in righteousness (4:17-5:14)
- c. The conduct of the believers is to be reflected in the Spirit's control (5:15-21)
- d. The conduct of the believers is to be reflected in marriage (5:22-33)
- e. The conduct of the believers is to be reflected in His household (6:1-9)
- f. The conduct of the believers is to be reflected in Spiritual warfare (6:10-20)

(C). CONCLUSION (6:21-24)

Text and Translation

Having overviewed the contextual background, now this writer provides the translation for the selected text. The Ephesians 2:4-10 (GNT UBS4- NA27) reads:

4 ὁ δὲ θεὸς πλούσιος ὢν ἐν ἐλέει, διὰ τὴν πολλὴν ἀγάπην αὐτοῦ ἦν ἠγάπησεν

ἡμᾶς, 5 καὶ ὄντας ἡμᾶς νεκροὺς τοῖς παραπτώμασιν συνεζωποίησεν τῷ Χριστῷ,¹⁵

15 There are three textual variants here according to UBS 4th Edition, critical apparatus. The first textual variant is that the UBS text reads τῷ Χριστῷ. The second textual variant is found in some other MSS which reads συν τῷ Χριστῷ. The third type of textual variant is ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ. The UBS reading is supported by ⲛ A D F G Ψ, Uncial fragments numbered like 075 0150 and a good number of Minuscules' manuscripts numbered like 6 81 104 256 263 365 424 436 459 1175 1241 1319 1573 1739 1852 1881 1912 1962 2127 2200 2464. It is also supported by *Byz* [K L P] which is the reading of the majority of Byzantine witnesses. Here [K L P] means the most important Byzantine uncials are represented in brackets as found in Pauline writings according to *Byz* (cf. UBS 4th Edition, p. 4*). UBS reading is also supported by *Lect* which is a Lectionaries together with the lectionary text of Greek Church i.e., the text published by Apostoliki Diakonia (cf. UBS Edition, p. 22), and the support of its evidence comes from the early versions like *Lect* it^{b, d, f, o} which is old Latin manuscript, it for *Itala* mentioned here with superscript symbols; it is further supported by vg^{ww} (Wordsworth-White), vgst (Stuttgart Vulgate), slav (Old Church Slavonic from the ninth century). There is good number of evidence from the Church Fathers. In the apparatus we read as follows, Clement Origen^{lem} Ps-Athanasius Cyril-Jerusalem Didymus Didymus^{dub} Theodore^{lat} Cyril Theodoret; Jerome Pelagius Augustine//. While UBS reading has all these supports, UBS 4th Edition gives the text B rating which indicates the text is almost certain. The second type of above mentioned variant reading is συν τῷ Χριστῷ which is supported by it^{gxt} syr^{p, (h), pal} (Origen^{lat}); Hilary Jerome^{com1/4}. The third type of variant reading above mentioned is ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ supported by P⁴⁶ B 33 / 60 / 599 it^{ar, g v, r}. vg^{cl} cop^{sa, bo} arm eth geo Chrysostom; Victorinus-Rome Ambrosiaster Ambrose. In all these analysis it is interesting to note that P⁴⁶ is dated around 200 which is an one of the earliest authentications. Metzger comments on this saying that "the reading ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ (P⁴⁶ B 33 *al*) seems to have arisen from either accidental dittography of the previous -εν, or from deliberate assimilation to ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, in ver.6." Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, "Second Edition A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament: Fourth Revised Edition" (London: United Bible Societies, 1994), 533; similarly see, Andrew T. Lincoln, *Word Biblical Commentary: Ephesians* "Volume 42" (Texas: Word, 1990), 84 [Hereafter cited as WBC]. To conclude, still patristic citations like Clement (dated before 215), and Origen (dated around 252/254) validates its certainty in the UBS reading.

χάριτί¹⁶ ἔστε σεσφασμένοι 6 καὶ συνήγειρεν καὶ συνεκάθισεν ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, 7 ἵνα ἐνδείξῃται ἐν τοῖς αἰώσιν τοῖς ἐπερχομένοις τὸ ὑπερβάλλον πλοῦτος τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ ἐν χρηστότητι ἐφ' ἡμᾶς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. 8 τῇ γὰρ χάριτί ἔστε σεσφασμένοι διὰ πίστεως· καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ ἐξ ὑμῶν, θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον· 9 οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων, ἵνα μὴ τις καυχῆσῃται. 10 αὐτοῦ γὰρ ἔσμεν ποίημα, κτισθέντες ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἐπὶ ἔργοις ἀγαθοῖς οἷς προητοίμασεν ὁ θεός, ἵνα ἐν αὐτοῖς περιπατήσωμεν.

Translation of the text¹⁷ is as follows:

4 But God being rich in Mercy, because of his great love with which He loved us. 5 Even [when] we are being dead in our trespasses He made [us] alive together with Christ, [it is] by grace you have been saved. 6 And He has raised us up and seated [us] together in the heavenly [places] in Christ Jesus. 7 so that He might show forth in the eternity to come the exceeding

16 Here again there are three textual variants mentioned in the UBS 4th Edition apparatus. The first textual variant according UBS text reads χάριτί. This is supported by P⁴⁶ κ A B D² Ψ, Uncial fragments numbered like 075 0150 and a good number of Minuscules' manuscripts numbered like 6 33 81 104 263 424 459 1175 1241 1739 1852 1881 1912 1962 2200. This is further supported by Byz [K L P] which is the reading of the majority of Byzantine witnesses. Here [K L P] means that the most important Byzantine uncials which are represented here in brackets as found in Pauline writings according to Byz (cf. UBS 4th Edition, p. 4*). UBS reading is also supported by *Lect* which is a Lectionaries together with the lectionary text of Greek Church i.e., the text published by Apostoliki Diakonia (cf. UBS Edition, p. 22), and the support of its evidence comes from the early versions like vg^{ww} (Wordsworth-White), vgst (Stuttgart Vulgate), syr^h which is Syriac Harclean version (AD 616), (eth) which is Ethiopic version (from about 500), geo which is Georgian version (from the fifth Century), slav which is Old Church Slavonic (from the ninth Century). Finally the church fathers' supports are there from Didymus Theodore^{lat} Theodoret; Jerome. Hence, the UBS reading is rated for A which indicates that the text is certain. The second variant reading in the apparatus is χάριτί γαρ which is also supported by Minuscules' manuscripts numbered like 256 365 436 1319 1573 2127 (l 597 δε for γαρ) vg^{ms} syr^{pal} cop^{sa, (bo)} arm. The third variant reading in the apparatus is as follows, οὐ* χάριτι. Following this, (D* τῇ χάριτι,) is mentioned here. The asterisk (*) following a MS designation such as (D* τῇ χάριτι,) actually means that this is the original reading but that an alteration has occurred. See, J. Harold Greenlee, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 2005), 92-93. This third variant reading is also further supported by the manuscripts, early versions and patristic citations like F G it^{ar, b, d, f, g, o} vg^{cl} Victorinus-Rome Ambrosiaster Pelagius Augustine. Metzger comments on the third variant in this way "In order to identify precisely the source of the grace that saves, several witnesses, chiefly Western (D* F G al), add οὐ* ("whose"). See, Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 533.

17 All scriptural verses are author's own translation, unless otherwise indicated.

riches of His grace in His kindness over us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not from you. [It is] the gift of God. 9. Not out of works so that no one can boast. 10. For we are to be his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God has prepared ahead of time in order that we should walk in them.

Grammatical and Lexical Analysis of Ephesians 2:4-10

Andrew T. Lincoln suggests that Ephesians 2: 1-10 consists of two sentences in the Greek text, vv. 1-7 and 8-10.¹⁸ He further notes that the first part of 2:1-7 is anacoluthic¹⁹ when he writes:

The subject and the verb of which ὑμεῖς, “you,” in v 1 is the object are not introduced until vv 4,5 and only then in connection with the repetition in a slightly different form in v 5 of the notion first expressed in v 1. In this way 2:1-7 falls into two parts, the anacoluthon in vv 1-3 and the contrasting statement of vv 4-7. This syntactical division of the pericope reflects a threefold division in terms of its content. Verses 1-3 depict the sinful condition of the readers’ past existence and indeed that of all humanity. Verses 4-7 express the change occasioned for believers in Christ by God’s mercy and grace. Verses 8-10 provide a summary of the nature of the salvation achieved by God.²⁰

The summary of vv. 4-10 is, as mentioned above, that all human beings are totally depraved as they are dead in sins, and salvation belongs to the Lord as sovereign God saves his elect by His mercy and grace for His glory alone. The passage is about a spiritual resurrection by the supernatural power of God. The point in Ephesians 2:4-10 is, thus, about “a further manifestation of that power of God which was seen in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, namely, in the raising of the Ephesians themselves from the death of sin into a new life unto

18 WBC, 84; Lincoln also points out the misunderstanding of Schille who go much further and claim to have isolated an early Christian “initiation hymn” which is cited in vv 4-7, 10. See, Ibid, 88-91. Fischer who claims vv 4-7 for “baptismal liturgy” also have been refuted here. See, Ibid.

19 Syntactical inconsistencies within a sentence are known as anacoluthons.

20 Ibid, 84.

God, and that not of works but of grace.”²¹ With this backdrop in mind, the text is divided under two main headings (a) the pre-salvation requirements and (b) post-salvation requirements. The former is provided from God to the dead sinner, and the later is the fruits or sign of it in the regenerated man. In fact, there is no truly any good works can contribute to salvation. To elucidate this biblical idea, each verse of the given text is examined with the aim of determining the syntactical relationships between Paul’s words and identifying the contextually nuanced meaning of the terms he employs.

Pre-Salvation Requirements (vv. 4-8)

In order to be saved, three pre-salvation requirements (i.e., God’s Mercy, Love, and Grace) are listed in this passage. Without these pre-requisites are provided, no one can be saved or justified. Paul indeed has experienced these on the day of His salvation as Christ revived and transformed his life on the way to Damascus. Thus, Paul developed this soteriological idea with proper understanding of salvation from the teachings of Christ and his personal experience. Now, Paul appeals to the believers at Ephesus that they are saved in the same way as he was saved by God.

God’s Mercy and God’s Love (v. 4)

ὁ δὲ θεὸς πλούσιος ὦν ἐν ἐλέει, διὰ τὴν πολλὴν ἀγάπην αὐτοῦ ἣν ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς,

“But God being rich in Mercy, because of his great love with which He loved us.”

Apostle Paul here begins to return to the idea he actually began in v 1 correlating the concept of salvation. In verses 1-3, he has clearly expounded the desperate state of humanity in sin as the entire human race is painted in dark colors. The beginning words here in verse 4 ὁ δὲ θεὸς πλούσιος ὦν ἐν ἐλέει (But God being rich in Mercy) demonstrates who God is and on what basis He has

21 S. D. F. Salmond and others, *The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians: The Expositor’s Greek Testament*. Edit. W. Robertson Nicoll (New York: George H. Doran Company), 283. [Hereafter cited as TEGT].

saved His elect who are totally depraved. Here δὲ is adversative²² which actually portrays that:

the Divine grace which meets the sinful, condemned condition, and which stands over the dark background of our death by sin and our subjection by nature to the Divine wrath. God who is wrath with sin, is a God of grace. His disposition towards those who are dead by trespasses and sins is one of mercy, and this no stinted mercy, but a mercy that is *rich*, exhaustless.²³

“The adversative “but”, says Compton, “marks the contrast between what the readers’ deserved as “children of wrath” and what God did in rescuing them from wrath.”²⁴ In nutshell, it could be asserted that this adversative Δὲ establishes the reality of the condition of human posterity in God’s wrath on the account of sin and the reality of God’s saving act of mercy through love. Thus, (δὲ – but) is said in conjunction with the θεὸς πλούσιος ᾧ ἐν ἐλέει, meaning God is being rich in Mercy towards the elect who were under His wrath. The word πλούσιος here means rich or wealthy. The term denotes the idea of the rich individual who has all that is needed in the quantity of abundance.²⁵ This term πλούσιος in this context is provided as an adjective qualifying the noun θεὸς which signifies the rich God who never lacks anything, for all that is created is His. This conveys the idea that God who is abounding in His mercy, is in reality never lacks for it since He is rich God, as the idea here so firmly could be established that He is perfectly merciful²⁶ toward the spiritually dead. In New Testament literature, the same term πλούσιος is used for the rich man in Matt 27:57 ἄνθρωπος πλούσιος ἀπὸ

22 For the contrary view, See Henry Alford. *Alford’s Greek Testament: An Exegetical And Critical Commentary* “Vol. 3”, (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 92; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles To The Galatians, To The Ephesians And To The Philippians* (Columbus: Lutheran Book Concern 1937), 414.

23 TEGT, 287; Similarly Wuest notes it. See Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest’s Word Studies: Ephesians and Colossians in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 65. [Hereafter cited as WWS].

24 Compton, *Greek Exegesis of Ephesians*, 88.

25 W.F. Arndt and others, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 831; James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek New Testament* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc, 1997), s.v 4454 πλούσιος.

26 GELNT, 57:26.

Ἀριμαθαίας, “a rich man from Arimathea”²⁷ signifying what he has is perfect and in abundance. In Pauline usage, the term denoting significantly the work of God in Christ in Ephesians 2:4 context, the usage reflects the thought that the Ephesians’ church community has the forgiveness of transgressions²⁸ by His mercy through Christ’s substitutionary death on behalf of His church.

Further, LXX uses ἐλέος as tantamount to the Old Testament term רַחֲמִים; Andrew T. Lincoln similarly states it in this way:

the term רַחֲמִים which frequently denotes Yahweh’s steadfast covenant loyalty and love, including the mercy of forgiveness when Israel is unfruitful to the covenant. God’s mercy is his overflowing active compassion and is freely exercised, excluding all ideas of merit on the part of its object. It is noticeable that the notion of God’s mercy is a prominent present element in several examples of the contrast between the pre-Christian past and the Christian present (cf. Ro 11:30-32; 1 Tim 1:13; Titus 3:3-5; 1 Pet 2:10).²⁹

In New Testament literature, this term ἐλέος at certain instances, is also used for the divinely required attitude of man to man (cf. Hosea 6:6; Matt 9:13; 12:7), but God’s ἐλέος is often thought in OT sense of “faithfulness” in saving His elect to the end. This corresponds to OT expressions like רַחֲמִים³⁰ as mentioned above. The point this writer emphasizes here that this Greek term is saturated with Old Testament themes.³¹

The Greek preposition ἐν with noun ἐλέει (neuter, singular, dative) connotes grammatically as dative of sphere.³² Therefore with a good logical

27 Ibid.

28 Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Volume VI* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1995), 328-332. [Hereafter cited as TDTNT].

29 WBC, 100.

30 Ex 34:6; Nu 14:18; Ps 86:5, 15., etc.

31 Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Volume II* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1995), 483-484. [Hereafter cited as TDTNT].

32 The dative substantive indicates the sphere or realm in which the word to which it is related takes place or exists. William D. Mounce, *A Graded Reader of Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 151.

reasoning, Wuest translates, “God being in wealthy in the sphere of mercy.”³³ The rich God is abundant or wealthy in His mercy, and the mercy of God, as Wayne Grudem says, is “God’s goodness toward those in misery and distress.”³⁴ Indeed, it is “His compassion, pity, kindness, tenderness, and gentleness toward miserable sinners.”³⁵ His richness of mercy alone can bring salvation to the sinners who are dying in sin deserving God’s wrath and marching toward condemnation.

Having evaluated the first pre-salvation requirement, the question must be asked here, why did God act in His mercy towards His elect? The answer is provided in the next phrase itself ... διὰ τὴν πολλὴν ἀγάπην αὐτοῦ ἦν ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς “because of his great love with which He loved us.” Here διὰ with the accusative words τὴν πολλὴν ἀγάπην indicates emotional motivation.³⁶ Apostle Paul uses a cognate accusative expression here³⁷ to highlight his thought “because of great love with which he loved us” so as to add the emphasis to the meaning of the verb ἠγάπησεν. Andrew T. Lincoln points out, “just as the richness of God’s mercy has been stressed, so here is the greatness of his love.”³⁸ Here the term ἀγάπη is leading back to ἐλέος. In fact, God’s Mercy for the helpless sinners is portrayed in action of love for their relief.³⁹ The same word can also be used

33 WWS, 65.

34 Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Bible Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 160.

35 Rolland D. McCune, *Systematic Theology I* (Detroit: Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, Fall December 1998), 152; Hodge says ἐλέος is, *ipsum miseris succurrendi stadium*, ‘the desire to succor the miserable.’ Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 111. Eadie says “it is not mere emotion, but emotion creating actual assistance – *nimis profecto audacter et hypercritice*.” John Eadie, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (Minnesota: James and Klock, 1977), 141. Strong defines mercy in this way “Mercy is that eternal principle of God’s nature which leads him to seek the temporal good and eternal salvation of those who have opposed themselves to his will, even at the cost of infinite self-sacrifice.” Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 289.

36 WBC, 100.

37 Charles J. Ellicott, *Critical and Grammatical Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to Ephesians* (Minneapolis: The James Family, 1978), 47; Eadie, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, 141.

38 WBC, 100.

39 Frank E. Gaebelein and others, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Volume 11* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 35. [Hereafter cited as TEBC].

for men, but theologically it has a special reference to what God does in Christ for His people.⁴⁰ Wayne Grudem defines God's love as "God eternally gives of himself to others."⁴¹ Both God's mercy and love brings the spiritually dead ones to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown rightly commented "God's love was the *special* ground of God's saving us; as "rich in mercy" was the general ground."⁴² (cf. Ephesians 2:7; 1:7; Romans 2:4; 10:12). God's specific love⁴³ toward His people is grounded in His act of predestination. This specific love of God⁴⁴ is demonstrated in the love of Christ by which He went to the Cross on behalf of His people (Romans 5:8). Despite the past experience of Ephesians in vv 1-3, God's love is not conditional at any moment of their state, and in truth He does not reflect His loving character on the suitability of the objects of that love.⁴⁵ Having examined these requirements, this writer moves on to the third pre-salvation requirement which is analyzed from vv 5-9 below.

God's Grace (vv. 5-9)

GNT 4th Edition (NA-27) reads:

5 καὶ ὄντας ἡμᾶς νεκροὺς τοῖς παραπτώμασιν συνεζωοποίησεν τῷ Χριστῷ,

40 TEBC, 35; Jude 12 using the same Greek word says of primarily of Christian love, ἐν ταῖς ἀγάπαις ὑμῶν. it is the love which could be known with concern, interest; sacred meal shared by the early Church. See, Barclay. M. Newman Jr., *A Concise Greek-English dictionary of the New Testament* (Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; United Bible Societies, 1993), s.v. ἀγάπη.

41 Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 159.

42 Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* "1871" (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc, 1997), s.v. Eph 2:4.

43 This love of God implies election in Pauline thought. The context of Eph 2:4 is in essential agreement with this truth. See, Gerhard Kittel, *Theological of the New Testament* (Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; United Bible Societies, 1993), s.v. ἀγάπη.

44 McClain defines the love of God in this way, "that in God which moves Him to give Himself and His gifts spontaneously, voluntarily, righteously, and eternally, for the good of personal beings, regardless of their merit or response." Quoted in McCune, *Systematic Theology I*, 143.

45 WBC, 100.

χάριτί ἐστε σεσωσμένοι 6 καὶ συνήγειρεν καὶ συνεκάθισεν ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, 7 ἵνα ἐνδείξῃται ἐν τοῖς αἰώσιν τοῖς ἐπερχομένοις τὸ ὑπερβάλλον πλοῦτος τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ ἐν χρηστότητι ἐφ' ἡμᾶς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. 8 τῇ γὰρ χάριτί ἐστε σεσωσμένοι διὰ πίστεως· καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ ἐξ ὑμῶν, θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον· 9 οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων, ἵνα μὴ τις καυχῆσται.

The author's own translation as follows:

⁵ Even [when] we are being dead in our trespasses He made [us] alive together with Christ, [it is] by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And He has raised us up and seated [us] together in the heavenly [places] in Christ Jesus. ⁷ so that He might show forth in the eternity to come the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness over us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this [*is*] not from you. [*It is*] the gift of God. ⁹ Not out of works so that no one can boast.

Verse 7 highlights the fact that one who is saved (v.5) would see the exceeding riches of His grace in the glorified state in the eternity future. Verses 5-7 is summarized in conjunction to the previous verses as follows: “In 2:5 the word σεσωσμένοι is used in a kind of parenthesis and it supplements the statements that precede and follow. The phrase about exceeding riches (2:7) suggests what will one day be manifested as the consummation.”⁴⁶

The text manifests here that out of God's mercy, love and grace, there are threefold blessing for every true believer of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are stated in vv 5-7. (i) He made His elect alive v.5; (ii) He has raised up His elect together in Christ v.6; (iii) He seated believers together in heavenly places. All these spiritual privileges every believer of Christ enjoys in Christ. Thus, the brief exegetical analysis is necessary on these three-fold blessings so as to apprehend His sovereign act of grace.

First, He made His elect alive is analyzed. The terms ὄντας ἡμᾶς νεκροῦς τοῖς παραπτώμασιν συνεζωποίησεν τῷ Χριστῷ here described as “Even we are being dead in our trespasses He made [us] alive together with Christ.” This takes us back to verse 1 where the natural man's desperate condition is mentioned as he is dead in trespasses and sins. This verse principally conveys the idea of imparting

spiritual life supernaturally to the spiritually dead. It is God who alone can make the totally depraved individual alive. This further indicates that a dead man cannot revive himself; he needs the help of the one who is capable of performing the miracle of resurrection. God alone can do it (cf. 1 Cori 2:14), and He spiritually resurrects the spiritually dead ones into spiritual life. This is the blessing flowing out of God's mercy and love which is summarized in His grace. Second, He raised up together His elect in Christ is briefly analyzed. This phrase in v 5 ὄντας ἡμᾶς νεκροὺς τοῖς παραπτώμασιν συνεζωοποίησεν τῷ Χριστῷ is in continuation with v.6 καὶ συνήγειρεν καὶ συνεκάθισεν ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. "And He has raised us up and seated [us] together in the heavenly [places] in Christ Jesus." Paul establishes an idea that believers who are spiritually resurrected by Christ are now in Christ, and with Him they are seated up in heavenly places in a figurative sense, establishing the biblical truth – once saved, ever saved!

The statement refers to an event in process of completion and thus testifies to the triumphant character of the resurrection life in the sense of a realized eschatology. "With Christ" determines present existence. The believer was dead without Christ in sins, but has been wakened and raised up from death in Him, and with Him he is already set among heavenly creatures, viz. angelic powers, cf. Phil. 3:20. No other statement anticipates the future to the degree that this one does.⁴⁷

Paul's usage of ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, indicates that Christ as a universal personality,⁴⁸ as in Him the universal church exists. The Greek term συνήγειρεν is in a present spiritual sense, and it also expresses the idea of resurrection, particularly that of physical resurrection.⁴⁹ This emphatically implies the concept that every genuine believer attain to the salvation given in Christ Jesus with eternal glory (cf. 2 Timothy 2:10ff).

Third, He seated believers together in heavenly places is briefly analyzed. Verse 6 says that believers are seated with Christ in heavenly places. This establishes the surety of believers' exaltation in the eternity future. The term αἰῶσιν in v 7 is dative masculine plural from αἰών. It is used with the meaning of

47 TDTNT, "vol. VII", 793.

48 TDTNT, "vol. II", 542.

49 WWS, 67.

eternity future.⁵⁰ The idea is that He “made us sharers with Him in the dignity and dominion, so that even now, and in foretaste of our future exaltation, our life and thought are raised to the heavenlies where He reigns.”⁵¹ In summary, believers have the hope of resurrection and the state of exaltation/ glorification in Christ Jesus. In this exegetical process, we should be reminded to the truth that these salvific blessings are not based on the good works but by the grace alone.

Salvation is by grace alone. He made believers alive giving spiritual life, and he raised up the believers spiritually at past and physically in the future on the day of His coming. He seated the believers in heavenly places, giving the exaltation in a glorified state. All these spiritual blessings are from the sovereign Lord based on His grace alone. With this view, now the writer moves on to combine v 5c and v 8 for further insights on His grace.

In v.5, the Greek phrase *χάριτί ἐστε σεωσμένοι* is in parenthesis. Wuest notes of it by saying that in the Greek this is called a periphrastic construction.⁵² The believers are saved in the past, and the evidence of their salvation continues in the present, as Paul uses a finite verb *ἐστε* and participle *σεωσμένοι* to elucidate the state of salvation in believers. To this end, Wuest commented:

This is used when the writer cannot get all of the details of action from one verbal form. So he uses two, a finite verb and a participle. The participle here is in the perfect tense which tense speaks of an action that took place in past time and was completed in past time, having results existent in present time. The translation reads, “By Grace you have been completely saved, with the present result that you are in a saved state of being.” The perfect tense speaks of the existence of finished results in present time. But Paul is not satisfied with showing the existence of finished results in present time. He wants to show the persistence of results through present time. So he uses the verb “to be” in the present tense which gives durative force to the finished results. Thus the full translation is, “By grace you have been saved in the past time completely, with the result that you are in a state of salvation

50 The greek *αἰώνος* is mentioned in three different ways in the NT. They are, 1) In connection with God, 2) In connection with divine possessions and gifts, and 3) In connection with eschatological expectation. See, TDTNT, “vol 1”, 208-209. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament: Volume 1* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 44-47. [Hereafter cited as EDNT].

51 WWS, 68.

52 WWS, 66.

which persists through present time.”⁵³

Believers of all ages are saved by grace alone. The Greek *χάρις* is mentioned 115 times in New Testament literature, and mostly the term is employed 100 times in the Pauline epistles, and mainly in Ephesians 12 times.⁵⁴ It denotes the idea of favor, beauty, thankfulness, gratitude, delight and kindness, and all of which designate the well being of others.⁵⁵ When God shows His Grace towards His children, it purely based on His act of mercy and love, and it is unmerited favor. No one is deserved for it but still God by His grace freely has offered faith as said in v 8. *Δῶρον* means ‘gift’ which is used in 19 passages of NT.⁵⁶ The term referred in Matt 2;11; Rev 11:10 as men’s gifts given to others. Similarly, in Matt 5:23, 24; 8:4; 15:5 it is used in relation to sacrifices.⁵⁷ However, in the context of Eph 2:8, it is used as God’s gift to men, not men’s gift to God, since salvation is God’s gift to men, thus it is purely by His grace alone, and it is not men’s gift to God, thus salvation cannot be earned by good works. The word *Δῶρον* is known in the inter-testamental period with a legal usage, for Attic orators used it for “state awards” or “bequests.”⁵⁸ However, God’s gift of faith is offered freely to His people.

In the prepositional phrase *διὰ πίστεως* is in genitive case, and *δια* as the instrumental usage of genitive with *πίστεως* as the genitive of cause brings the significant translation here “by the means of,” “with,” or “through.”⁵⁹ Then the phrase “you have been saved through faith” is to be understood as “you have been saved by the means of faith.” Jesus Christ is the author and perfecter of the faith (Hebrews 12:2), and He is the author of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10). In our faith, God is fully active, as a result of that, we are passive to God’s act in us, thus

53 Ibid, 66.

54 Colin Brown, *New Testament Theology: Volume 2* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 118. [Hereafter cited as NTT].

55 NTT, 115.

56 EDNT, 365.

57 Also noted for the gifts of money in the temple in Lk 21:1, 4.

58 J. Reiskius- T. Mitchell, *Index Graecitatis in singulos oratores Atticos*, I (1828), 263, quoted in TDTNT, “vol II”, 167.

59 WWS, 66.

we believe Him as our personal Lord and savior. Salvation is only by grace alone through faith alone, not by human merits. Verse 9 reads οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων, ἵνα μή τις καυχῆσθῃται. which is translated as “not out of works so that no one can boast.” In truth, salvation is not by works so that no one can boast. It is God’s. He receives all the glory!

Post-Salvation Requirement

With this backdrop in our mind, it is necessary to have a clear picture of what Paul means regarding good works in verse 10. Should saved ones bear any fruits or signs in his faith journey with our Lord in the midst of the society? Paul writes to the Ephesians that indeed, they should!

Good Works (v. 10)

αὐτοῦ γὰρ ἔσμεν ποίημα, κτισθέντες ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἐπὶ ἔργοις ἀγαθοῖς οἷς προητοίμασεν ὁ θεός, ἵνα ἐν αὐτοῖς περιπατήσωμεν.

“For we are to be his handiwork created in Christ Jesus for good works which God has prepared ahead of time in order that we should walk in them.”

The text authenticates that the important post-salvation requirement to Christians is “good works.” While “the good works” cannot bring salvation to anyone, they are necessarily to be set forth in the life of saved person as the evidence of salvation, since these are foreordained by our sovereign God that the saved ones may reflect these in their moral characters. Marvin R. Vincent notes, “God prearranged a sphere of moral action for us to walk in. Not only are the works the necessary outcome of faith, but the character and direction of the works are made ready by God.”⁶⁰ In other words, a truly saved believer of the Lord Jesus Christ will show forth his salvation in works evidently. Today, Christianity demands a preaching of an action. The churches should be enlightened on the contradiction between word and act is actually denial of Christ. This is what Paul emphasized here in this verse as Pauline understanding of the contrast between faith and works actually makes the point clear that our post-salvation works must manifest the fruits or signs of salvation and as a matter of fact, pre-salvation

60 Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament: Volume III* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson), 377.

works in no way can contribute to saving faith. Paul emphatically says to Galatians that a man cannot be justified by the works of the Law (Gal 2:16). Isaiah wrote all our righteousness are as filthy rags (Isa 64:6). Does James teach salvation by works? No. In fact, James in his epistles expounds that faith without works is dead, dealing with post-salvation works as evidence of saving faith. His idea is, “all works which do not proceed from faith are dead, for they lead to death. Everything which does not take place in the service of living God is dead.”⁶¹

The term *ποίημα*, noun- neuter- singular- nominative meaning “a created thing/handicraft/ workmanship” denotes that God’s action as a creator and His dealings with men.⁶² *Προητοίμασεν* has a various usage of preparation or making ready,⁶³ and in the context of Ephesians 2:10 the term is best suitable for the soteriological usage. This expression is used for what God prepared ahead of time (i.e., even before the foundation of the world) is being accomplished in the life of person who is being saved, and the complete body of believers who are God’s handicraft and His new creation in Christ Jesus. The term “good” *ἀγαθος* must be taken into consideration here. By doing good works no believer actually becomes completely good. God alone is perfectly *ἀγαθος*. None other than Him could be categorized as *ἀγαθος* as He is. Nevertheless, the elect who are coming under the saving grace are partaking in such good works which bring the meaning of life to Christian. Indeed, our works do not contribute to our salvation, rather, they reflect our godly character in righteous ways that we as believers are progressing in sanctification. In truth, God actively accomplishes salvation in the life of believers (Philippians 1:6; Jude 24), and believers are passive to what God has prepared in the eternity past, being responsible and accountable for their deeds. In Romans 9:23 this term *Προητοίμασεν* is used in the sense of saved individuals’ deeds are pre-appointed. “To God’s preparation in relation to salvation belongs the fact that those who love by God are prepared for it by Him...these also belongs the fact that what they achieve in this life is previously prepared by God (Ephesians 2:10).”⁶⁴ In light of this understanding, it is important to realize that “God’s

61 TDTNT, “vol II”, 651.

62 TDTNT, “vol VI”, 458-459.

63 TDTNT, “vol II”, 705.

64 TDTNT, “vol II”, 705.

creation and preparation correspond a human preparation and preparedness in relation to God.⁶⁵ Paul emphasizes that believers are not prepared beforehand but the good works by God, and this even clarifies further that even no one can brag in their post-salvation works. Homer A. Kent, Jr notes it significantly, This verse

does not say that believers were previously prepared to walk in good works, but that the good works were previously prepared that believers might walk in them. Paul's thought is that the Christian is completely without grounds for boasting even in the good works which follow regeneration, for they are God's handiwork. It was God who long ago planned the good works He wanted us to perform. Our responsibility is to follow His blueprint for our lives, responding to the impulses of His Spirit as He prompts us to perform His will.⁶⁶

Conclusion

The biblical idea of salvation by grace alone remains the most convincing understanding of the passage. The context primarily deals with the state of human being that he is totally depraved and spiritually dead, and he is in need of spiritual life to see who God is that he may have fellowship with Him forever. God who is rich in mercy loves His people giving them spiritual life and nourishing them in good works which is preplanned by God. He gives His church the hope of resurrection in Christ, and exaltation in heavenly places. Since man is totally depraved, he cannot earn or merit salvation in anyway. Salvation is by grace alone in faith alone for the glory of God alone. Thus, human merits cannot contribute to salvation, however, the post-salvation works are the fruits or signs of salvation, as God has pre-arranged them. The source of salvation is His grace. The means of salvation is faith in Christ Jesus. The fruits or signs of salvation is good works. "Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen" (Jude 24-25, ESV)

65 Ibid, 706.

66 Homer A. Kent, Jr, *Ephesians: The Glory of the Church* "Everyman's Bible Commentary" (Chicago: Moody, 1971), 40.

THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS
FOR A
NEW TESTAMENT VISION FOR DISCIPLESHIP
THAT INCLUDES
CHRISTIANS PROVIDING SOUL CARE
BY MEANS OF THE BIBLE

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The Scriptures assume the ministry of soul care² is taking place within the context of the local church and the Scripture speaks to it extensively. In the early church and many years after, the practice of soul care was rich and vibrant and seen as a means of perseverance in the faith.³ Today, within typical evangelicalism the words “soul care” have been replaced with rigid secular counseling that is detached entirely from Scripture and the local church (at worse) or inappropriately forced onto the text of Scripture with minimal cooperation with the church (at best). Additionally, many counselors have dismissed this idea of soul care and exchanged it with strict behavioral counseling.⁴ Because of this replacement, counseling is no longer viewed as a theological ministry, but a clinical work. It is not practiced by pastors or ministry leaders, but psychologists and psychiatrists that know nothing or little of the Scriptures. Even those who often label their

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2 Soul care is the outcome of faithful biblical counseling. Throughout this essay the words, “soul care” and “biblical counseling” will be utilized to demonstrate this.

3 Heb 3:12-14 states, “Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.”

4 It was Freud that expressed the desire for “secular pastoral workers”. The aim was to offer an alternative to the work pastors and counselors in the local church and to eventually replace them altogether.

practice as “Christian” often have little theological education and commitments. Furthermore, pastors and ministry leaders at local churches have been trained and conditioned to delegate their responsibility to care for those in the local church to professional counselors with no local church commitment. Therefore, there is a growing disconnect between the pulpit teaching of the doctrine of the authority and sufficiency of Scripture and the private soul care practice of local churches. Many churches keep counseling centers on a retainer and swiftly send members of their local church to spend countless hours in therapy sessions that pull members away from Christ and the Scriptures.

Pastors and ministry leaders need to reclaim their responsibility to provide soul care for church members. As Heath Lambert explains, pastors and ministry leaders must see that “counseling is ministry, and ministry is counseling.”⁵ They must be convinced that soul care *is* counseling. They must be convinced that soul care is a theological ministry that they are equipped for, should cultivate, and practice regularly. Furthermore, it is ideal that pastors and ministry leaders labor to develop an equipping ministry in soul care so that members may share in the responsibility in a similar way to that of the early church.

In this essay, several passages of Scripture provide a biblical and theological framework for understanding the necessity of Scripture-based soul care within the context of the local church. It begins by examining the responsibility pastors have to provide biblical counsel for members. Additionally, the Scriptures assume that pastors are equipping other mature believers to provide soul care through biblical counseling. Next, this essay demonstrates that the Holy Spirit empowers believers to be obedient to God’s commands; therefore, biblical soul care is attainable for the church. Third, this essay examines some Spirit-filled qualities that should be present in the lives of those committed to soul care in the local church. Fourth, this essay demonstrates the authoritative and sufficient nature of the Scriptures in regard to soul care. Fifth, the essay examines a section of Scripture to demonstrate the value of using the Scriptures in counseling. Finally, soul care is commended as a means provided by God to warn believers of sin’s deceitfulness. There is no escaping the responsibility the church has to provide soul care for her members. By the end of this essay, it is evident that biblical soul care not only glorifies God,

5 Heath Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 21.

but is truly good for believers and can be accomplished through the ministry of biblical counseling.

Pastors Are Called To Counsel and Equip The Church
(Acts 20:17-38 and Ephesians 4:1-16)

Introduction to Acts 20:17-38

In Acts 20:17-38, Luke records Paul's farewell speech to the Ephesian elders. Commentator and theologian, Darrell L. Bock states, "[Paul's farewell speech] tells churches how to carry on now that they will minister without figures such as Paul present. Paul is concerned with more than evangelism. He seeks healthy churches."⁶ In this speech, Paul exhorts the elders on the issue of public and private soul care for the believers God has entrusted to them. If the church at Ephesus would have obeyed Paul's instructions, the church would have prospered spiritually, but modern-day readers know from Paul's epistles to Timothy that the elders did not apply these instructions faithfully. Paul's instructions to this early church should certainly serve as an example for how pastors should model biblical soul care today, because this type of patient soul care produces a healthy local church. Due to the length and repetitive nature of this speech, this section highlights several key takeaways that should be applied to soul care in the local church.

On Public and Private Bible Ministry: Acts 20:20-21

In verses 20-21, Paul writes, "How I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" This is a critical part to this passage of Scripture. The apostle Paul is reminding the elders at Ephesus that he has modeled biblical soul care for them. In the early church, Paul's public ministry in front of the Ephesian elders consisted of him speaking "in cities of significant social status"⁷ while his

6 Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 623.

7 *Ibid.*, 627.

ministry from “house to house” are the “private places of assembly.”⁸ While this account in the early church does not parallel exactly to the modern church, the principle still applies. Paul boldly professes repentance and faith in Christ in public regardless of the consequences, and he is consistent in that message in private. There is no competition between Paul’s public ministry and private ministry, which is crucial. Many pastors and churches (often unintentionally) make a competition between the public and private ministry of the Word when the two contradict each other. There is a contradiction even when the private ministry of the Word is non-existent (a sin of omission). This was not the case with Paul’s ministry, and he expected the elders at Ephesus to follow his example. Because Paul expected the church to function in this way, it is not inappropriate to import that expectation into today’s church.

On 3 Charges to Elders: Acts 20:28

In Acts 20:28, the apostle Paul states, “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.” Paul gives three specific instructions to the elders at Ephesus. First, he charges them to keep watch over themselves. Commentator Ajith Fernando explains,

We are reminded of Paul’s charge to Timothy: ‘Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers’ (1 Tim. 4:16). The biggest battle the Christian leader has is to ensure that his or her life is in order.⁹

Those providing soul care must lead through their own repentance. Pastors are privately caring for the flock by saying, “put your trust in Christ and imitate me as I follow him. By God’s grace, you can do this. I know this because I am doing it.” Biblical soul care requires both counseling with words and counseling by setting an example.

Second, this passage charges the elders to keep watch over the flock. According

8 Ibid.

9 Ajith Fernando, *Acts*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 540.

to this section in Acts, elders keep watch over their flock by guarding them from “fierce wolves” (v. 29) and men “speaking twisted things” (v. 30). This passage could summarize all the temptations and snares the enemy has set up against believers to cause them to stumble and live unproductive lives. Elders concerned about the state of people’s souls will warn against such dangers publicly and privately. They should do so by exalting Christ and the truthfulness of Scripture and its applicability for the lives of God’s elect.

The final charge in this passage is like that of the last, and that is Paul’s charge to care for the church. He puts a weightiness on the elders to remember that God obtained this precious jewel with his own blood. If pastors/elders committed to soul care gave more consideration to this truth, more time would be spent on the private instruction of God’s Word. Christ died for his church. How then can pastors and elders send people who need help and direction away to institutions that contradict sound doctrine? Elders in local churches must see the seriousness of the role to shepherd those for whom Christ died. Elders will be held accountable for how they shepherded God’s flock (James 3:1).

On Pastors Admonishing: Acts 20:31-32

The final passage from this pericope in Acts is verses 31-32, which states,

Therefore, be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. (ESV)¹⁰

In this section, Paul again calls on the elders to imitate his ministry. He uses the Greek word *nouthetōn*, for *admonish*. Bock writes that Paul’s “goal was to urge faithfulness to the living God.”¹¹ As Paul closes his final exhortation to the elders at Ephesus, he reminds them that God is present with them and that his Word builds up (Acts 9:31; Romans 16:25; 1 Corinthians 8:1; 10:1, 17:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Ephesians 1:18; 4:12-16, 29) and, as Bock continues,

10 Unless otherwise noted, all Bible quotations are drawn from the English Standard Version. Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. ©2001.

11 Bock, *Acts*, 631.

“gives them the inheritance that is the heritage of all who are sanctified.”¹² Paul’s encouragement to the elders at Ephesus should be the mission of every Christ-centered local church today. Pastors and members committed to soul care should urge and plead with fellow believers to cherish Christ and grow in his likeness. This ministry extends far beyond the pulpit. It is an all-encompassing ministry, and it will be so until Christ returns.

On Pastors Equipping: Ephesians 4:1-16

When examining the Scripture’s position on soul care as an equipping ministry, it is profitable to examine the book of Ephesians. Ephesians contains a God-centered strategy for the local church. A. Skevington Wood writes that in this particular epistle, the apostle Paul “stood aside from the conflict and contemplated God’s overall design for his church and for his world. As he did so, he came to realize as never before the breathtaking scope of God’s strategy in Christ for the fullness of time (Eph. 1:9, 10).”¹³ One of these strategies is for the members of the church to care for one another for the purpose of building up one another in Christ. In Ephesians 4, the apostle Paul highlights the responsibility undershepherds have to equip church members so that they may care for each other biblically.

In this pericope, Paul turns from a doctrinal conversation about the gospel (Ephesians 1-3:21) to practical implications of the gospel for believers (4:1-6:24), individually and corporately. The foundation by which God’s church labors for spiritual maturity and unity is *Christ*. In chapter 1 Paul communicates that the “Father selected us, the Son redeemed us, and the Spirit sealed us (1:3-14).”¹⁴ In chapter 2, Paul reminds believers that salvation for unbelievers is by “God’s grace and their placement in the heavenlies in Christ (2:1-10).”¹⁵ Furthermore, Paul asserts that the “unsearchable riches of Christ” is for the nations and worth persevering despite present sufferings (3:1-21). Ephesians 1-3 demonstrates that Paul’s charge in Ephesians 4 is tethered to the gospel God has provided in Christ

12 Ibid.

13 A. Skevington Wood, *Ephesians*, in vol.11 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 17.

14 Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 502.

15 Ibid.

Jesus. For the purpose of this section, it is vital to examine three elements of Ephesians 4:1-16. The exposition of this passage is not exhaustive. Therefore, this section analyzes several key verses to demonstrate that soul care is expected in God's church and pastors are called to equip and encourage members toward obedience and maturity in this area.

On Identifying Lay Leaders Ephesians 4:1-2¹⁶

In Ephesians 4:1, the apostle Paul charges the church of Ephesus, to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called”. Commentator, Harold Hoehner explains that this calling is not just to “individual believers but also the corporate body of believers”¹⁷ and it is grounded in the gospel of Christ and maintained by four imperatives that follow this charge from the apostle Paul. These imperatives or qualities must be present in the lives of believers who are providing soul care in the local church. The first is humility (*tapeinophrosýnēs*), which was not normally “considered a virtue by human beings.”¹⁸ The ways of God are not the ways of man. Biblical humility is God-centered and servant minded. This type of humility reflects the gospel and promotes unity within the local church. This type of humility has a Christ-centered aim to promote the spiritual well-being of a brother or sister in Christ. The second imperative is gentleness (*praútētos*), which, as Andrew Lincoln writes, involves “courtesy, considerateness, and willingness to waive one’s rights that come from seeking the common good without being concerned for personal reputation or gain.”¹⁹ This type of gentleness captures the spirit of the apostle Paul in Romans 15:1-2 when he states, “We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.” The “strong” is the spiritually mature brother or sister seeking to build up the “weak” minded believer so that he or she can be edified in Christ.

16 Further key qualities will be addressed later in this chapter under the section on the Holy Spirit, but for our purposes it is important to limit the discussion to Ephesians in this chapter for clarity's sake.

17 Ibid., 505.

18 Ibid.

19 Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1990), 236.

Third is the virtue of patience (makrothymías), which literally means “long temper.”²⁰ Paul is primarily discussing corporate building up and soul care in this particular section of Scripture. Biblical soul care requires forbearance with one another and requires making allowance for faults for the sake of the bigger calling of the gospel proclamation. This text gives a sense that believers are to labor with one another for better or worse; for the long haul. The tediousness of soul care is often where the ministry breaks down in the local church. Properly caring for one another takes time and is often complex and painful. The temptation to refer members who are habitually struggling with sin and struggles is certainly present in every church. However, Paul calls believers to have patience and God gives believers the ministry of soul care to practice the discipline of patience. Finally, the apostle Paul says that believers should be “bearing with one another in love” (anechómenoí allēlōn en agápēi). Paul understands the temptation to give up, therefore, this is an “amplification of what is meant by patience.”²¹ At the time of Paul’s writing, the church of Ephesus is being encouraged to trust in the superior power of the gospel over all falsehoods (4:25), vices (4:26; 28; 29; 31; 5:3; 4; 10; 17), and demonic powers (6:11-12). During pressures and temptations to give up, Paul exhorts believers to maintain unity through the God-centered soul care of one another.

On Intentional Equipping: Ephesians 4:11-12

One tangible way God provides for believers to be obedient to pursuing unity through soul care is by the equipping work of his undershepherds. Pastors not only provide soul care, but the Scriptures are clear that they should equip mature believers for this task too. Ephesians 4:11-12 states, “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers to *equip the saints for the work of the ministry for building up the body of Christ*” (pròs tôn katartismòn tôn hagíōn eis érgon diakonías, eis oikodomèn tou̅ sōmatos tou̅ Christou̅). The apostles and the prophets laid the foundation (Eph 2:20), promoted the gospel, and equipped the early church for the work of the ministry. Today, evangelists and shepherds/teachers work together to equip the saints so that they may practice

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

God-centered soul care.

The evangelist shares the gospel with unbelievers and the shepherd/teacher equips and edifies believers toward spiritual maturity and service. Ephesians 4 is loaded with soul care imperatives (vv.1-7). This type of careful soul care promotes unity within the local church (Eph 4:3-6). In verses 11-12, Paul exhorts shepherds to equip believers in the church so that they may be obedient in building one another up. In addition, Paul *expects* shepherds/teachers to entrust shepherding responsibilities to those within the local church. Equipping is the *only* biblical and sustainable model for church ministry. Many pastors and ministry leaders burn out when they fail to equip. A church can never hire enough people to provide adequate soul care for the whole body of Christ. In turn, pastors expand their ministry through equipping lay people with shepherding responsibilities. Some of the responsibility of shepherds related to soul care include giving instruction in sound doctrine and rebuking those who do not (Titus 1:9), reproving, rebuking, and exhorting with patience (2 Tim 4:2), and practicing hospitality (1 Tim 3:2). These responsibilities should be applied by the shepherd in both the public ministry of the Word (preaching and teaching) and the private ministry of the Word (biblical counseling and discipleship). According to Ephesians 4, those in the local church should be taught these responsibilities by an equipped pastor so that they may care for one another also. This is not the only time Paul implores shepherds to equip lay people in the church. F. F. Bruce writes, “Timothy is directed not only to pursue a teaching ministry himself but also to entrust what he has learned ‘to faithful men who will be able to teach others also’ (1 Tim. 4:13; 16; 2 Tim. 2:2).”²² Therefore, it is the role of the shepherd of God’s church to encourage and equip believers to care for one another, which is the only sustainable model for soul-care ministry. Soul care ministry cannot flourish in a local church that neglects to equip its members. However, equipping members is not the highest goal for God’s church. There is purpose behind equipping members to practice the ministry of soul care.

On the Purpose of Equipping: Ephesians 4:13

The purpose of members being equipped and edified to care for one another

22 F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 349.

is spiritual maturity in Christ Jesus. Bruce explains that spiritual maturity is

marked by “the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God.” The unity of the faith is effectively the same as the unity of the Spirit which the readers have earlier been exhorted to preserve; it is the unity which binds together those who share the common faith in Christ.²³

This common faith that believers share with one another is the basis for their unity with one another. Bruce states, “It is by faith that the people of Christ are united to him, and in being united to him they realize their own unity one with another.”²⁴ According to Ephesians 4, the shepherd/teacher *must* equip the local church to live and care for one another in response to the gospel until this type of maturity occurs corporately. Individualism is not in view. In fact, an individual faith is “a mark of spiritual immaturity.”²⁵ The phrase in verse 13, “to mature manhood” (ἀνδρα τέλειον, eis) is singular to emphasize that the local church is “seen as one new man in Christ (Ephesians 2:15).”²⁶ This type of unity is the objective because it has Christ as its highest aim. Paul uses the language, “of the fullness of Christ” (τοῦ πλήρωματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ) to demonstrate that perfect spiritual maturity is one that is Christocentric. An equipping soul care ministry in the local church is gospel saturated and will be so until Christ grants perfect unity. Peter T. O’Brien writes, “Those given by Christ as ‘ministers’ (v. 11), along with the ‘saints’ (v. 12), render their service so that God’s people might reach this objective [unity in Christ through spiritual maturity], and they are to continue serving until it is attained.”²⁷ This objective has eschatological implications. Caring for one another in the local church is expected to occur until Christ returns and the early church understood this.

23 Ibid., 350.

24 Ibid.

25 Wood, *Ephesians*, 59.

26 Ibid.

27 Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1999), 305.

An Example of an Early Church Competent to Counsel (Rom 15:14)

It should be evident that spiritual maturity takes place within the context of the local church. This section examines several qualities that the believers in the early Roman church exemplified that caused the Apostle Paul to assert that they were competent to counsel one another. These qualities can and should be modeled today if believers expect to honor the Lord in a modern-day soul care ministry capacity. While other passages can be examined, this text is sufficient to demonstrate some needed character qualities and abilities for spiritually mature believers counseling other believers toward spiritual maturity in Christ.

Romans 15:14

Believers should exude certain Spirit-filled qualities as they are committed to soul care in the church. These qualities are commended and encouraged by the apostle Paul in Romans. In Romans 15:14 the apostle Paul states, “I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another.” Before a believer can provide soul care through the ministry of biblical counseling, she or he must have certain character qualities and abilities. Paul uses the Greek word *agathōsýnēs* for *goodness* and intends to commend the church in Rome for their “uprightness in conduct or, more specifically, kindness and generosity toward others.”²⁸ Those committed to providing soul care in the local church should pursue this reputation for exalting Christ. A Christian with a poor reputation is not only a contradiction but useless in the ministry of soul care for spiritual maturity. Therefore, a biblical counselor’s conduct and reputation must be well thought of. Paul also uses the phrase, *peplērōménoi pásēs tês gnōseōs* to communicate the thoroughness of the church in Rome’s biblical knowledge. Thomas R. Schreiner, professor at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, supports this when he states, “It is unnecessary to limit “knowledge” to salvation history, edification or even the gospel. No attempt is made to circumscribe the term. Indeed, Paul says they are full of *all* knowledge, suggesting that the word should be understood

28 Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 888.

comprehensively.”²⁹ Therefore, according to this passage, there is this reputation of goodness toward others and a thorough understanding of the Scripture that makes the church in Rome “able to instruct one another.” An understanding of the neediness of goodness and knowledge should motivate believers committed to soul care to be intentional in both areas so that their ministries may be practiced in a way that honors the Lord and edifies believers in the local church. By God’s grace cooperation with the Holy Spirit produces these types of qualities and enables believers to provide soul care through the ministry of biblical counseling.

Soul Care Is Possible because God Deposited His Holy Spirit within Christians (John 14:15-31)

John 14 takes place immediately after The Feast of the Passover (13:1) where John indicates that God has given Christ all things (13:3). Here, Christ washes the disciple’s feet (13:4-5) and explains his desire for them to emulate his humility (13:14-17). Afterward, Jesus tells of Judas’ betrayal (13:21-30) and the need for believers to glorify God by loving one another (13:31-35). John concludes this look into Christ’s last supper with the apostles by recounting Jesus’ prophecy of Peter’s denial of him (13:36-38). In this context, Jesus comforts his believers (14:1-7) and instructs “greater works” (14:12) from his disciples upon his departure. Colin G. Kruse states,

In light of his imminent departure Jesus promised not to leave his disciples desolate, but to come to them again in the person of the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit. The first promise of the Counsellor appears in this passage and is bracketed by two statements by Jesus that those who keep his commands are those who love him (15, 21).³⁰

This section demonstrates that Christ expects obedience in all areas of life and has provided believers with his deposited Holy Spirit so that they may be

29 Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 765.

30 Colin G. Kruse, *John*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 303.

faithful to serve each other as Christ loved and faithfully served the church.

On Love and Obedience: John 14:15; 21-24

The apostle John quotes Jesus in John 14:15 when he states, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” Colin Kruse writes, “Jesus prefaced his promise of the Counsellor with the words *If you love me, you will obey what I command*. Love for Jesus is not sentimental, but is expressed by keeping his commands.”³¹ Christian obedience is consumed with a love for Christ, which is at the heart of biblical soul care. Obedience apart from Christ is temporal and legalistic and makes righteousness its highest aim. It seeks to *earn* eternal life as a wage. Those who spend time counseling from the Scriptures should cooperate with the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures by helping counselees develop a love for Christ that manifests itself in obedience to his commandments. Later in John 14:21-24, Christ goes on to say,

In that day, you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him. Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world? Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mind but the Father’s who sent me.

Kruse explains that love for Christ

does involve heartfelt appreciation of him (cf. 21:15-17; Luke 7:36-50) and should express itself in concern for his pleasure (28), but what Jesus himself stressed was that those who love him are those who obey his commands. This means responding to his teaching with obedience and faith.³²

Love for Christ expressed in obedience is a reciprocal love. It is made possible only because God in Christ first loved believers (1 John 4:19). The case

31 Ibid. Emphasis original.

32 Ibid., 308.

can be made that Jesus is speaking of a believer's union with him. The life of a believer is so closely identified with Christ that the commands of Christ are *internalized*. Commentator and theologian Leon Morris states:

The man who loves Christ is the one who "has" His commandments and keeps them. To "have" commandments is an unusual expression and does not seem to be exactly paralleled (though cf. 1 John 4:21). The meaning appears to be to make the commandments one's own, to take them into one's inner being.³³

Obedience to God is a distinguishing mark of the love a believer has for Christ according to John 14:21-24. This is such a distinguishing mark that Christ identifies his elect by their love for his commands.

On Obedience and the Paráklēton: John 14:16-17; 25-31

Jesus continues in John 14:16-17, "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you." The context of John 14 is crucial. The disciples are grieved that Christ is departing and Christ is charging them to emulate what he has done in their presence in his absence. This is a tall order. Therefore, the Father sends "another Helper" (Paráklēton). Bill Mounce explains that this word is "often translated as "counselor or advocate."³⁴ This Greek word "literally means one who is called to someone's aid"³⁵ This "Helper" is the Holy Spirit (v. 25). The Holy Spirit is further described as "the Spirit of truth" (τὸ Πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας). Morris writes:

It is interesting to see the Spirit associated with truth, for we have just had Jesus describe Himself as "the truth" (v. 6), and those who worship the Father must do so "in truth" (4:23f.). Clearly truth is regarded as very

33 Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 653.

34 Bill Mounce, ed., *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 332.

35 *Ibid.*, 139.

closely associated with the Godhead. This expression probably means “the Spirit who communicates truth.”³⁶

The work of the Spirit is significant for the early church and has ramifications for believers committed to soul care today. Believers have an ability to understand the unchanging truth of God’s Word because the Spirit has given believers the ability to do so. The Spirit is a gift that John makes clear that the world (*kósmos*) does not possess. Therefore, it is God’s will for those providing soul care to remind fellow believers of the power of the Holy Spirit within them to pursue righteousness and holiness in response to what God has accomplished for them in Christ. Jesus expects obedience from believers. Obedience is one of the reasons why the Holy Spirit indwells every person God saves.

Later, Jesus goes on to state in John 14:25-31,

These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. You heard me say to you, I am going away, and I will come to you. If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe. I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me, but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.

Here, Jesus gives further details to his disciples regarding the Holy Spirit and he says that the Holy Spirit will come in his name. Scholar D. A. Carson states, “If he [the Holy Spirit] is sent in Jesus’ name, he is Jesus’ emissary (not simply his substitute, contra Brown, 2. 653; Franck, p. 41). Just as Jesus came in his Father’s name (5:43; 10:25), i.e. as his Father’s emissary, so the Spirit comes in Jesus’ name.”³⁷ This truth should have assured the believers of the equality of the Holy Spirit as they understand the equality Christ has with the Father.

36 Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 649-50.

37 D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 505.

Understanding that the Holy Spirit *is* God assures believers that Christ has not left them to manage things on their own. Believers are not orphans (John 14:18). God is present with them and dwells within them. Because God dwells in believers, he comforts them during grief (John 14:1; 27) and provides real tangible, permanent help (John 14:16). Jesus further assures the disciples that the Holy Spirit will teach them all things (didáxei pánta) and bring to their remembrance all that he has said to them (hypomnései hymâs pánta hà eîpon hymîn egô). Apart from the Spirit's illuminating work, the disciples had a difficult time understanding many of Jesus' teachings and works (John 4:27; 6:7-9; 6:30; 60; 9:2; 11:11-16; 13:8). Commentator Merrill C. Tenney writes, "The function of the Spirit is teaching. He instructs from within and recalls to memory what Jesus taught. The Spirit will, therefore impress the commandments of Jesus on the minds of his disciples and thus prompt them to obedience."³⁸ The Holy Spirit in this section of Scripture helps the disciples understand the significance of the crucifixion and resurrection and he does so with believers today. Apart from the Spirit of God, it is not possible to comprehend the truth of God's Word, the gospel of grace, or live a life of obedience to the commands of God. By God's grace, believers do not live without the Spirit of God. Therefore, the gospel is knowable, memorable, and the commands of God are doable with the Holy Spirit's help. Soul care cannot be administrated biblically apart from understanding a believer's utter dependence upon the Holy Spirit of God.

God's Word Is Authoritative and Sufficient for Soul Care (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

This essay has examined the need for pastors to provide soul care within the local church *and* equip members and ministry leaders to provide soul care for one another. Furthermore, this essay has concluded that believers *can* be obedient to Christ's expectation to provide soul care through the ministry of biblical counseling because of the indwelling Holy Spirit. It is now profitable to examine another resource God has provided for believers: Scripture. Scripture must be

³⁸ Merrill C. Tenney, *John*, in vol. 9 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 148.

reliable, otherwise, there is no anchor of truth. A believer's understanding of God's unchanging nature is tied to the Scripture itself. This section examines why believers can trust and utilize the Bible to provide biblical counseling within the context of the local church.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

By the time 2 Timothy is written, the apostle Paul is in prison in Rome (1:16-17; 2:9) and he knows that his fate is probably death (4:6-8). Therefore, he is writing on the same matters as addressed in 1 Timothy, but in a more urgent way because of his imprisonment and potential execution. Paul's concern is for Timothy to faithfully minister to the church in Ephesus by contending for the truth against false teachers (1 Timothy 1:3; 7; 6:3). Fee explains that it is apparent from

2 Timothy 3:6-9, and further supported by 1 Timothy 2:9-15 and 5:3-16 (esp. vv. 11-15), that these teachers had found a most fruitful field among some women, apparently younger widows, who had opened their homes to them and even helped to spread their teachings.³⁹

This subscription to false teaching influenced the moral behavior of those within the church of Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:8-11; 2:9-15; 3:2-5; 8-13; 4:1-5; 5:15; 6:3-5; 2 Tim 2:16-17; 19; 22; 3:2-9; 4:3-4). Much of Paul's ministry is being sabotaged by these false teachers and he writes Timothy to encourage him to persevere in God-centered ministry amidst the confrontations he is facing in Ephesus.

Paul's remedy for combatting false doctrine and immorality is for Timothy to *preach*⁴⁰ the Word (2 Timothy 4:2) publicly and privately⁴¹ and to have confidence in it because it is sufficient. Scripture is sufficient because it is the very Word of God. The flagship passage for this claim is documented by the apostle Paul when he reminds Timothy, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-

39 Ibid., 8.

40 The word *kérussó* could be better translated "proclaim" or "herald" and thus extends beyond the pulpit and beyond the pastorate.

41 We must not forget that Paul would have set this example for Timothy. See Acts 20:17-38 and my notes on them earlier in the essay.

17). When analyzing soul care in the local church, it is important to understand that God's Word is sufficient for this high calling and believers must be intentional about applying God's Word to other believers being cared for. In this passage, the apostle Paul does not seem to be teaching young Timothy that God's Word is "breathed out by God." Timothy has always been taught this. Many pastors and ministry leaders are already convinced of this. Instead, Paul seems to be pressing Timothy to *apply* this doctrine in the local church context. He is saying, "Because Scripture is breathed out by God, it is profitable. Therefore, apply it." Commentator, Donald Guthrie agrees with this interpretation:

One explanation is that it is the profitableness not the inspiration which Paul is pressing on Timothy. . . . Timothy is not therefore being informed of the inspiration of Scripture, for this was a doctrine commonly admitted by Jews, but he is being reminded that the basis of its profitableness lies in its inspired character.⁴²

The Greek word for profitable is *ōphélimos* and can be translated as "valuable or useful."⁴³ The fact that Paul is urging Timothy to remember the profitableness of the Scriptures demonstrates that Scripture really is practical and tangible for soul care.

Paul goes on to demonstrate the practicality of Scripture by communicating that it is sufficient for teaching (*didaskalian*). Gordon Fee explains that Timothy's main job is to use the "Scriptures to give sound instruction in the gospel to God's people (cf. 1 Tim. 4:6, 13, 16; 6:3)."⁴⁴ The temptation is to isolate this application to the pulpit only; however, pastors must *apply* the doctrine of the authority and sufficiency of Scripture to all aspects of ministry. If pastors do not see the usefulness of teaching the Scripture in various ministries in the church other than the pulpit, then every other aspect that the Scripture may be used for will be neglected, which is a common disconnect in many churches. Many churches

42 Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary, vol. 14 (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2009), 182.

43 John R. Kohlenberger III and James A. Swanson, eds., *The Strongest Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 1654.

44 Gordon D. Fee, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 279.

affirm the authority and sufficiency of Scripture, and many pastors preach this doctrine passionately from the pulpit, though these same churches farm out the soul care part of ministry to parachurch (best case scenario) and secular (worst case scenario) organizations. Churches communicate that “Scripture is sufficient and authoritative for preaching and teaching in the pulpit, but if life gets too messy, we need to look outside the Scripture.” A doctrine does not matter if it is not applied. Pastors and churches must repent from a low view of Scripture. Their repentance must manifest in understanding that Scripture really is useful for teaching in the pulpit *and* in the counseling context. Furthermore, pastors must train other ministry leaders to understand the sufficient nature of the Scriptures for soul care.

Once believers understand the usefulness of instructing in many different contexts, every other characteristic Paul mentions in this passage is an extension of that. Paul says the Scriptures are useful for reproof (elegmón). Some translations translate this word as “rebuke.” This certainly means rebuking false doctrine, but also refers to “correcting or setting right . . . conduct.”⁴⁵ The Word of God is sufficient and authoritative for calling one to forsake wickedness and pursue Christ. Scripture can be used to inform one’s thinking and conscience so that he or she may please God. Every brother and sister in Christ will forget his or her identity in Christ at some point. When believers forget their identity in Christ, they are on a dangerous path. Scriptures are useful for reminding believers of the serious nature of sin and the life-giving path of pursuing Christ. God’s Word is also profitable for correction (epanórhōsin), which literally means “restoration to an upright position or a right state.”⁴⁶ God’s Word can take the individual that is twisted and broken, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, redeem him. Correction is the positive side of rebuke. Biblical rebuke warns the believer of their wicked path, and correction sets the believer on a Christ-centered path that pleases God.

God’s Word is also profitable “for training in righteousness” (pròs paideian tèn en dikaiosýnēi). A clearer development in this aspect of God’s Word can be found in Titus 2:12, where the apostle Paul states, “Training us to renounce

45 George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 449.

46 Ralph Earle, *2 Timothy*, in vol. 11 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 410.

ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.” God’s Word, and faithfulness in its application, produces a Christ-centered righteousness in the life of a believer. How could this task be delegated to organizations outside of the local church?

It is imperative to note that the apostle Paul does not end his exhortation to Timothy with the four applications of God’s Word. He gives purpose to it and the purpose is similar to the outcome of the Ephesians 4:13 mentioned earlier, that pastors and shepherds should equip, using the Word, “until [all believers] attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” The goal is a Christ-centric spiritual maturity. Fee states,

By continually nurturing his own life in the Scriptures that he is to use in his ministry, Timothy will be thoroughly equipped (“able to meet all demands,” BAGD) for every good work, which here means not only Christian behavior but the ministry of the gospel as well, and especially points forward to 4:1-5.⁴⁷

Faithfully applying the doctrine of the authority and sufficiency of Scripture is good for the one applying it in his life and ministry. In applying this doctrine, a believer is thoroughly equipped to please God in life and in ministry.

Although Paul is writing to a specific pastor in a specific church, this charge can and should be imported into modern day soul care. A ministry of soul care is concerned about the theological beliefs and practices of those in the local church. Theological beliefs inform behavior. Those committed to soul care must understand that believers act according to what they believe is true, and sin is deceitful (Heb 3:12-14). It is the role of the pastor and other believers within the context of the local church, to take seriously the charge of the apostle Paul by faithfully utilizing the Word of God in both public *and* private ministry.

An Old Testament Example of Soul Care That Christians Can Model Today (Psalms 42&43)

This essay thus far has demonstrated that there is an assumption that God’s Word is being applied in more than just a Sunday morning teaching context. This

⁴⁷ Fee, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 280.

section demonstrates the hope that knowing God's Word can have on someone who is deeply discouraged and depressed. There are many people in the local church that are depressed and discouraged. This depression and discouragement is normal because of sin. Personal sin, the sin of someone else, thistles and thorns of life, or the physical broken down body can all be a contributing factor in depression and discouragement. The good news is that the Scriptures give hope. This particular psalm is written by David during a particular time of depression.

Psalm 42 and 43

Regarding Psalm 42 and 43, commentator Gerald H. Wilson explains,

Several factors suggest that these two psalms should be read as a unified composition. (1) Psalm 43 has no heading to separate it from Psalm 42 . . . this may indicate that . . . there was a tradition for reading [these] psalms together. (2) This idea is confirmed by a number of ancient manuscripts of Psalms that do write these two psalms as one. (3) The two psalms share a repeated refrain that appears regularly in a combined composition (42:5, 11; 43:5). (4) [There is a close] parallel between 42:9, where the psalmist cries out to God, "Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?" and the similar passage in 43:2, "Why have you rejected me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?"⁴⁸

The context of these two psalms are not widely agreed upon by scholars. Plummer writes,

The Syriac says this is a Psalm of David sung when he was an exile, and desired to return to Jerusalem. The Arabic calls it a prayer for the Jews who had fallen, or backslidden. Luther and Hengstenberg think the best insight is gained by duly regarding God as sometimes hiding his face and then clearly revealing himself in mercy as a light and deliverer.⁴⁹

Whatever the specific context of this passage, it is clear that the Psalmist is struggling with deep discouragement either from his present circumstances and/or

48 Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms*, The NIV Application Commentary, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 668.

49 William S. Plummer, *Psalms*, Geneva Series of Commentaries (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1975), 495.

a feeling that God has abandoned him. Psalm 42 and 43 is an “individual lament.”⁵⁰ Similar to the psalmist, people in the context of the local church are struggling with adversity and with feelings of abandonment in similar ways. Because of the neglect of soul care in the local church, these depressed feelings are managed at a surface level and often with prescription drugs alone. This begs the question, “was the Scripture insufficient for the Psalmist to overcome his depressed state?” Scriptures offer so much more than prescription drugs for depression however helpful some prescription drugs may be. Those committed to soul care have the wonderful opportunity to take the discouraged and downtrodden to these psalms of lament and offer it to them for the purpose of giving them a Christ-centered perspective on their circumstance(s)/feelings.

For ease of use, the biblical counselor can lean into the big picture flow of this psalm in order to help the counselee or discouraged believer easily grasp the central theme of these two psalms. Peter C. Craigie and Marvin E. Tate explain that the psalms can be divided “into three sections, each concluded with a refrain: 42:2-6 (a) lament (vv 2-5) (b) refrain (v 6); 42:7-12 (a) lament (vv 7-11) (b) refrain (v 12); and 43:1-5 (a) prayer (vv 1-4) (b) refrain (v 5).”⁵¹ This flow can provide immense encouragement to believers in desperate circumstances and can be used as a template for them to model. The main takeaway from Psalm 42 and 43 should be the God-centered approach the psalmist has in his wrestle with his present circumstances. The Psalmist reminds himself of truth when he declares, “Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God” (Psalm 42:5, 11; 43:5). There is an eternal perspective in this statement. The psalmist is essentially declaring, “Wait hopefully for God.” There is an evident discipline in the way the psalmist self-counsels by reminding himself of the truthfulness of God’s Word. The psalmist remembers that he serves a living God (v. 2) that is his salvation and hope (42:6; 12; 43:5). Furthermore, he acknowledges that the Lord “commands his steadfast love” (42:8). He calls God his “rock” (42:9), vindicator and defender (43:1), refuge (43:2) and the sender of “light and truth” (43:3). The psalmist also longs to go to God’s “holy hill” (43:3), to his “altar” (43:4). and

50 Peter C. Craigie and Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 1-50*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 19 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 325.

51 Ibid.

acknowledges that God is his “exceeding joy” (43:4). These psalms are a battle plan for the discouraged psalmist and it is sufficient to encourage even the most depressed believer. It could certainly be beneficial to make Psalm 42 and 43 an area of study of several sessions of counseling. This psalm could even be assigned to a struggling believer for meditative⁵² purposes.

God Uses His Local Church to Prevent Christians from Being Deceived by Sin (Hebrews 3:12-14)

This essay clearly identified the expectation God has for local churches to provide soul care for every member through the ministry of biblical counseling. Furthermore, this chapter demonstrated that God has provided believers with everything they need to be obedient to this task. This last section is a helpful word on the deceitfulness of sin and how God uses believers who point one another to Christ as a means of perseverance in the faith.

On the Seriousness of Sin: Hebrews 3:12-14

The author of Hebrews warns the Hebraic church in Hebrews 3:12-14:

Take care brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

In this section of Scripture, the author is using the rebellious Israelites as an example of what not to do as a believer in Christ (as seen from his usage of Psalm 95:7-11 in Hebrews 3:7-11). F. F. Bruce states, “The judgement of the wilderness days befell the Israelites who rejected Moses. But just as Christ is greater in glory than Moses (v. 3), so the loss incurred in rejecting Christ is greater.”⁵³ Rebellion

52 The biblical practice of meditation is to be distinguished it from the eastern religious approach to meditation.

53 F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 99.

to the commands God gave Moses resulted in the rebellious Israelites not entering the promised land, but a rejection of Christ will result in eternal damnation.

The author of Hebrews is not saying that one can lose salvation. On the contrary, all of God's elect will persevere (John 10:28). However, believers today see through a mirror dimly (1 Corinthians 13:12) and cannot see the eternal state of professed believers. Good works are an indicator of the genuineness of someone's profession of faith (Matt 7:17-20; John 15), but only perseverance to the end will reveal the true condition of the soul. It is in this spirit that the Hebrew author gives his warning. How does the author say believers are to flee sin's deceitfulness? Through one another soul care centered on the person and work of Christ. The aim is a mutual building up of one another in Christ Jesus. William L. Lane suggests, "The avoidance of apostasy demands not simply individual vigilance but the constant care of each member of the community for one another."⁵⁴ Peter T. O'Brien affirms,

Hebrews makes it plain that God himself gives both promises and warnings to assist his people in their pilgrimage so that they will persevere in faith and reach their final rest. As the congregation and its members heed this injunction to keep on admonishing and encouraging one another, they not only follow the example of the author but also imitate the pater of God himself speaking to them. They may be confident, then, that he will use their encouraging and exhortatory ministry of his word to help their brothers and sis avoid the perils of unbelief and disobedience.⁵⁵

It is in the context of the local church that this type of watchfulness over souls occurs. A believer living in intentional isolation is a contradiction and will not persevere in his confession. Therefore, the local church must be intentional and vigilant. Soul care through Sunday morning preaching, teaching, and singing the Word, biblical counseling ministries, small group ministries, and addiction recovery ministries are all great, tangible ways to remind believers of the deceitfulness of sin and the magnitude of the gospel. Believers must be strategic about exposing themselves to the truthfulness of the gospel. George Guthrie

54 William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 47a (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 87.

55 O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, 148.

states,

Practically speaking we must, therefore, expose our lives meaningfully to God's Word and adjust our thoughts and lifestyles accordingly. This means hearing the Word preached and asking honestly, "What do I need to confess and from what do I need to repent?" and "How should my life be lived this week based on what I have heard?"⁵⁶

God has designed perseverance to happen in a corporate, Christ-centered setting. Local churches must be mindful of their purpose in edifying and spurring believers on (Heb 10:24) for the glory of God.

Conclusion

This essay demonstrated that local churches must have a holistic approach to soul care. Counseling really is the birthright of the church.⁵⁷ This type of ministry includes the equipping of lay counselors in the congregation and staff counselors for larger ministry contexts who are concerned about both the public and private administration of the Scripture. Providing soul care publicly and privately captures the New Testament vision for ministry best and should therefore be pursued.

56 George Guthrie, *Hebrews*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 145.

57 While I cannot remember exactly, I believe I first heard this statement from Dr. Jay Adams.

A PURITAN PRIMER (PART 2)

TIMOTHY GOAD¹, D.D.

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. A purely factual history of these godly men, however, reveals them to be something of far more positive than negative significance in the formation of America as a country as well as in the development of her deep religious roots.

In part one of this series, our focus was on John Knox. As noted in that article, Knox's tremendous influence in Scotland had both an undeniably dramatic effect on changing religion in England but also empowered other faithful men to seek the same success. Among these faithful men were many who will forever be remembered collectively as the Puritans.

As I noted at the close of my first article in this series, no meaningful discussion of the Puritans can commence without at least a cursory examination of the church from which they emerged: the Anglican Church. This will be our focus in this second installment of my Puritan Primer.

The Anglican Church

An examination of the formation of the Anglican Church is not only relevant to a meaningful discussion of Puritanism but foundational. Upon its establishment,

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the Anglican Church was not so much intended to be a unique institution as it was the reaction of England's King Henry VIII to particular Roman Catholic doctrines with which he disagreed. Henry, who ruled England from 1509 to 1547, was, by all accounts, a very colorful character. As Cairns notes:

He was a handsome, generous, strong, cultured prince, who knew theology, was a good musician, and could speak Latin, French, and Spanish, as well as English. He enjoyed the chase, archery, and tennis, sports that helped to make him more popular with the English people than his parsimonious father Henry VII had been.²

Henry's father, desiring to relate his line to the most important families in Europe, arranged each of his children's marriages exclusively to his benefit. His daughter Margaret, for example, married James of Scotland. His son Arthur married Spanish princess, Catherine of Aragon. Not long after this union, Arthur died. Not wanting to lose Catherine's considerable dowry, in 1503, Henry VII persuaded Pope Julius II to grant a special dispensation allowing Arthur's younger brother, Henry, to take Catherine as his wife. Henry and Catherine had one child, a daughter named Mary, who would later rule as Mary Tudor.

Following his father's death in 1509, the younger Henry succeeded his father as king. To perpetuate his lineage, He needed a son who could rule England during what were rather turbulent times, namely, the seemingly never-ending battles with France and Scotland. When it became clear that Catherine would not be able to provide him with a suitable heir, he began to look elsewhere for a wife who could, in fact, give him a son. In 1518, Henry began an affair with Elizabeth (Bessie) Blount, who, one year later, gave birth to Henry Fitzroy. As Henry VIII's illegitimate son, however, he could not inherit the crown. Instead, he was made Duke of Richmond.

In 1521, Henry VIII received the title of "Defender of the Faith" from Pope Leo X for his opposition to Martin Luther and the Reformation that Luther had begun in Germany. Four years later, Henry began an affair with Mary Boleyn, the sister of Anne Boleyn, the lady in waiting to Catherine of Aragon. One year later, Mary gave birth to Henry's second son. He, too, was not recognized as a

2 E.E. Cairns, *Christianity Through the Centuries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 322.

legitimate heir to the throne. It was at this same time that Anne Boleyn won the young king's heart and yet another affair commenced. From approximately 1526 to 1529, Henry worked feverishly to secure a divorce from his wife, Catherine, so he would be free to marry Anne. Creating this union, however, proved to be a near-impossible task. Henry ordered his adviser Cardinal Wolsey to negotiate with Pope Clement VII for a divorce from Catherine.

According to Cairns, however:

Clement VII was unable to grant this request because in 1527 he was under the control of Catherine's nephew, the powerful Charles V, the ruler of Spain and the emperor of Germany. Henry accused Wolsey of high treason when he failed to get the divorce, but Wolsey died before Henry could execute him.³

When it became clear that Henry would get nowhere with the Pope, he decided to take matters into his own hands by convincing the English clergy that it would be in their best interest to persuade Parliament to grant him the divorce he sought. He did this by setting himself up as head of the church in England and persuading Parliament that any future communications from Rome in the form of papal decrees, bulls, encyclicals, etc. must be approved by himself prior to their adoption or enactment. In 1533, Parliament granted Henry a divorce from Catherine and he married a pregnant Anne Boleyn that same year.

The year 1534 ushered in the most significant step in the separation of the church in England from Rome in the form of the *Act of Supremacy*. This act declared that the king was the only supreme head of the Church of England thereby solidifying the English church's break with Rome. Further reforms in the church soon followed. For example, in 1536, Parliament ordered the closing of all monasteries with less than two hundred pounds annual income. In the final tally, 376 monasteries were closed, and the crown confiscated their property. It was also in 1536 that Henry made the decision to rid himself of Anne Boleyn because of her inability to produce the male heir that he still desperately wanted. This desperation led to Henry's falling in love with Jane Seymour, who would become his third wife. Before this could happen, however, Henry would be required to

3 Ibid., 322.

secure a divorce. Given the difficulty he had experienced in his divorce from Catherine, it was determined that perhaps there was another way to rid himself of Anne.

On May 2, 1536, Henry ordered Anne's arrest on charges of adultery, incest, and high treason against the king. Whether any of these things actually happened remains a mystery. Nevertheless, on May 17, 1536, following an unusually speedy trial, Anne was beheaded for her alleged crimes against the crown. Only thirteen days later, Henry VIII and Jane Seymour were married. On October 12, 1537, Henry was finally given a son, Edward VI, but it cost him dearly, as only twelve days later, Jane Seymour died following complications from childbirth. It is important at this point to note that, in terms of reformation, while Henry had indeed broken the ecclesiastical ties between the church in England and Rome, nothing had changed in terms of doctrine. In fact, in 1539, Parliament passed the *Six Articles*, which reaffirmed the uniquely Roman Catholic doctrines of transubstantiation, celibacy, and confession with the priest as mediator. As Cairns notes, "In theology the Church of England remained true to Rome."⁴ It was actually Henry's son, King Edward VI, who initiated the Protestant phase of Reformation in England. Since he was only nine at the beginning of his reign, Edward Seymour, the Duke of Somerset (Jane Seymour's brother) was appointed as regent. The Duke was very influential in that it was his Protestant sympathies that led to the young king's institution of various changes in the area of doctrine. It was under the Duke's tutelage, for example, that the boy king ordered all worship services to be conducted in the native tongue rather than in Latin. Ultimately, in 1549, the *Act of Uniformity* was passed which subsequently ushered in the use of Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer's *Book of Common Prayer*. Only three years later, in 1552, church authorities replaced this work with an even more Protestant edition that reflected the church's adoption and application of Calvinistic doctrine.

Shortly after the publication and dissemination of the newly revised Book of Common Prayer, Cranmer, with the help of various theologians, including John Knox, began to draw up a new creed for the Church of England. The resulting creed was originally known as *The Forty-two Articles* and would later be reduced

4 Ibid., 323.

in number and renamed *The Thirty-nine Articles*. The Anglican Church adopted this document in 1553 as their primary doctrinal statement.

Following this period of Reformation in England were the Counter-Reformation antics of Edward's successor to the throne, Queen Mary (daughter of Henry VIII by Catherine of Aragon). According to Cairns, Mary, a staunch Roman Catholic, with the help of Cardinal Reginald Pole, "forced Parliament to restore religious practices in England to what they were at the death of her father in 1547 and to repudiate the changes that had been made under Edward."⁵ Approximately 800 English clergymen refused to accept Mary's sweeping changes and, as a result, lost their churches. Many, but not all of them fled to places like Geneva, Switzerland and Frankfurt, Germany to avoid the intense persecution that Mary initiated against all who stood in opposition to her changes. In the end, more than 275 Anglican faithful would be martyred for their beliefs. Following her atrocities, Mary would forever be known by many as "Bloody Mary."

Thankfully, Mary's reign lasted only five years (1553-1558). She was succeeded by Queen Elizabeth I, a Protestant. It was under Elizabeth's reign that authorities reduced the aforementioned *Forty-two Articles* by three to the *Thirty-nine Articles* and reinstated them, along with the *Book of Common Prayer*, as the church's official theological documents. These changes, of course, resulted in considerable tension with the Pope (Pius V) who quickly issued a papal bull, not only excommunicating the Protestant Elizabeth but freeing her subjects from her rule. Elizabeth responded in kind with an act of her own in which she declared that she would not be deterred. Her defiance led to the Anglo-Spanish War in 1588 where Philip of Spain sought to recover England for the Roman Catholic Church. Having gathered his Spanish Armada, he set sail for England in hopes of winning a decisive victory for the papacy. His hopes, however, were quickly dashed. As recounted by the professorial staff at History.com:

Just after midnight on July 29, the English sent eight burning ships into the crowded harbor at Calais. The panicked Spanish ships were forced to cut their anchors and sail out to sea to avoid catching fire. The disorganized fleet, completely out of formation, was attacked by the English off Gravelines at dawn. In a decisive battle, the superior English guns won the day, and the devastated Armada was forced to retreat north to Scotland.

5 Ibid., 323.

The English navy pursued the Spanish as far as Scotland and then turned back for want of supplies. Battered by storms and suffering from a dire lack of supplies, the Armada sailed on a hard journey back to Spain around Scotland and Ireland. Some of the damaged ships foundered in the sea while others were driven onto the coast of Ireland and wrecked. By the time the last of the surviving fleet reached Spain in October, half of the original Armada was lost and some 15,000 men had perished. Queen Elizabeth's decisive defeat of the Invincible Armada made England a world-class power and introduced effective long-range weapons into naval warfare for the first time, ending the era of boarding and close-quarter fighting.⁶

While Elizabeth deserves considerable credit for returning England back to Protestant ideals, any rest she might have envisioned following her victory in the struggle with Rome was prevented by another, more persistent foe. This time, however, the unrest came from within the Anglican Church itself in the form of Puritanism.

Puritanism actually sprang from the desire that many within the Anglican Church had expressed for even further reform than they had realized during the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI. Granted, the establishment of a new church after breaking away from the Roman Catholic Church was certainly a considerable step in the right direction (regardless of Henry VIII's selfish and sinful motives), however, as noted previously, it soon became quite apparent that the Anglican Church was little more than a copy of the Roman Catholic church, having retained a great deal of its erroneous doctrine and unscriptural ceremonialism. Those labeled as "Puritans" simply desired further reformation within the Anglican Church, favoring Knox's Presbyterian model or the Congregational model over the Roman Catholic model upon which the church had been fashioned. As Lloyd-Jones observed, "That, surely, is the essential and most characteristic note of Puritanism – the feeling that the Reformation had not gone far enough."⁷ As Cairns writes, "The Puritans contended that too many 'rags of popery' were still in the Anglican Church; and they wanted to 'purify' the Anglican Church in accordance with the Bible, which they accepted as the infallible rule of faith

6 History.com Staff, *1588: Spanish Armada Defeated* (Retrieved from <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/spanish-armada-defeated>)

7 Lloyd-Jones, D. M., *The Puritans* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 242.

and life.”⁸ Among the things rejected by the Puritans were the continued use of liturgy, the popish vestments that were still worn by the clergy, the observance of saints’ days, clerical absolution of sin, the sign of the Cross, the recognition of godparents, etc.

How successful were the Puritans at promoting further, sustained reformation within the Anglican Church? Unfortunately, they enjoyed very little success. Although the teachings and influence of Puritanism continued to expand and their numbers began to multiply quite rapidly, in 1593, Elizabeth, no doubt troubled at the very real threat posed by the Puritans against Anglicanism, issued her unambiguously named *Act Against Puritans*. According to Cairns, “This act gave the authorities the right to imprison the Puritans for failure to attend the Anglican Church.”⁹ This act was but the beginning of an extended period of persecution, much of which the writer considers under a different heading in this paper.

The reign of the staunchly Anglican Elizabeth ended in 1603. Her cousin, James, succeeded her on the throne. During the reign of King James (1603-1625), who was quite amenable to Calvinism, the Puritans enjoyed a relatively peaceful period in which the Anglican Church saw many Reformation gains. Following James’ death in 1625, however, things took a decidedly unfavorable turn with the coronation of Charles I. As Bremer notes, “Indeed, it seemed that King Charles I was dismantling what advances [the Puritans’] fathers and grandfathers had made.”¹⁰ This lack of success at further reform led many of the Puritans to consider setting sail for the New World, an idea which quickly gained traction and soon thereafter led to what is known as “The Great Migration” (1629-1640). According to Vaughan, by 1640 it is believed that there were as many as 40,000 Puritans in America.¹¹ At this point, a further word of clarification must be offered to correct what is often easily misunderstood concerning Puritan identity. Simply stated, contrary to popular belief, the Pilgrims and the Puritans did not comprise the same

8 E.E. Cairns, *Christianity Through the Centuries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 328.

9 *Ibid.*, 328.

10 Bremer, F. J., *First Founders: American Puritans and Puritanism in an Atlantic World* (Lebanon, NH: University of New Hampshire Press, 2012), 5.

11 Vaughan, A. T., *The Puritan Tradition in America, 1620-1730* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1972), 63.

group of early American religious freedom-seekers. The Puritans sought reform within the Anglican Church while the Pilgrims advocated complete separation. As Hodgson expressed concerning celebrated Pilgrim William Brewster:

The dominant intellectual fashion in Cambridge, ever since the ideas of the Reformation first arrived in England from Europe, was Protestantism, and in particular the more radical ideas of those who became the English Separatists. We know from the books in Brewster's library later in life, as well as from what we know of his declared opinions, how deeply he was influenced by Protestant ideas. At the heart of them was the conviction that the Protestant Reformation had not been carried far enough, that the Elizabethan Settlement was a cowardly political compromise, and that the church must go further in the direction of reform if it was to be purged of the corruptions and distortions introduced by the medieval period, with its papacy and its bishops, its ceremonial and vestments, its hierarchy and its worldly wealth.¹²

While it is indeed true that the Pilgrims and Puritans shared many common beliefs and goals, the Pilgrims deemed complete separation from the Anglican Church the only opportunity for the true church to return to her scriptural moorings. With beliefs firmly rooted in the theology of the Protestant Reformation, both Pilgrim and Puritan alike saw the "New World" as a place where those escaping the religious tyranny of an increasingly oppressive Anglican theocracy could establish a country in which their God could be worshiped without fear of persecution and in accordance with His inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word.

With this fresh beginning in the New World, the Puritans also saw a wonderful opportunity to make a tremendous impact on those who would follow. As early Puritan settler and Governor John Winthrop famously wrote in 1630 while aboard the *Arbella* awaiting passage into the New World:

We must knit together, in this work, as one man. We must entertain each other in brotherly affection. We must be willing to abridge ourselves of our superfluities, for the supply of others' necessities... We shall be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all the people are upon us so that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause him to withdraw his present help from us, we shall be made a story and a byword

12 Hodgson, G., *A Great and Godly Adventure: The Pilgrims and the Myth of the First Thanksgiving* (New York, NY: Public Affairs Books, 2006), 25-26.

throughout all the world.¹³

Although Winthrop's optimism is certainly admirable, unfortunately, persecution of the Puritans continued even in the new world for which he had developed such high hopes and aspirations.

The Puritans and the Anglican Magisterium

Before discussing the persecution endured by the Puritans in greater detail, it is helpful, from a historical point of view, to understand what is known as the "magisterium" and how it related to Puritan belief and practice. Normally, the magisterium refers to the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic church and the authority they possess to establish official (and indisputable) church doctrine and tradition. Given that the Anglican Church was originally little more than an offshoot of the Roman church, the tendency toward maintaining the church's magisterial authority continued among many in the Anglican hierarchy. This continuing dedication to magisterial practice meant that, in the social order of things, the Anglican Church (and her head, the monarch of England) served as the lone authority in what was undeniably a church-state system. For example, many Anglican bishops were full voting members of the House of Lords in Parliament, Parish Wardens were authorized to impose punishments on private individuals in the form of fines, fees, etc. for failing to appear for worship in the Anglican Church, and the king reserved the power to relieve priests and bishops of their duties whenever expedient.

This understanding is critical in establishing the necessary context for any investigation into Puritan belief and practice because, while the Puritans remained dedicated to the Anglican Church (i.e., they weren't separatists like their pilgrim counterparts), their desire to purify the church did include a desire for the separation of church and state. The Puritans did not, however, believe that the state was to remain wholly secular. As Morgan (1967) noted:

Church and State had both been created by God to enforce His will on earth. These institutions had different roles to play and were given different

¹³ Winthrop, J., *A Model of Christian Charity* (Retrieved from <http://religiousfreedom.lib.virginia.edu/sacred/charity.html>)

tools and methods to do their jobs, but both had a divine task. Puritans still believed State should enforce compliance with the one true religion (Puritanism).¹⁴

It must be understood that, while this was indeed the prevailing sentiment among most of the Puritans early on following the establishment of the first American colonies, it was a belief based largely on the utopian ideals that were envisioned concerning the New World. As reality began to set in, many began to sense the futility of a church-state system because, in the end, it looked very much like the system they had left behind.

Puritan John Cotton, like many, had come to the conclusion that the two institutions (church and state) should be separate but equal, both seeking to promote the good of men and God's glory. According to Hall, "He believed that both religious power in state hands and civil power in church hands were wrong."¹⁵

One of the most vocal proponents of a complete separation of church and state was Roger Williams. Williams was among the approximately 1,000 men, women, and children who, under the spiritual leadership of John Winthrop, formed the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630. Having declined an offer to serve as a minister in the Boston church on the grounds that it was not committed to the proper worship of God, Williams quickly found himself at odds with the leaders of the colony. As Barry writes:

Williams did not differ with them on any point of theology. They shared the same faith, all worshipping the God of Calvin, seeing God in every facet of life and seeing man's purpose as advancing the kingdom of God. But the colony's leaders, both lay and clergy, firmly believed that the state must prevent error in religion. They believed that the success of the Massachusetts plantation depended upon it. Williams believed that preventing error in religion was impossible, for it required people to interpret God's law, and people would inevitably err. He therefore concluded that government must remove itself from anything that touched upon human beings' relationship with God. A society built on the principles Massachusetts espoused would lead at best to hypocrisy,

14 Morgan, E. S., *Roger Williams: The Church and the State* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton and Company, 1967), 127.

15 Hall, D. D., *A Reforming People: Puritanism and the Transformation of Public Life in New England* (New York, NY: Random House, 2011), 124.

because forced worship, he wrote, “stincks (sic) in God’s nostrils.” At worst, such a society would lead to a foul corruption—not of the state, which was already corrupt, but of the church.¹⁶

Williams eventually accepted an offer to minister at the church in Salem, Massachusetts and was able to attract many who were of like-mind, which upset the Bostonian leadership considerably. According to Barry (2012), “In October 1635, the General Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony banished him, ordering him to leave the colony within six weeks. If he returned, he risked execution.”¹⁷ Given that winter was setting in, Williams’ banishment was initially postponed until Spring, but Williams found himself unable to stop preaching. Constituting a violation of the agreement to postpone his banishment, the authorities sent soldiers to arrest him and put him on the next ship to England.

If not for the intervention of John Winthrop, who considered the punishment of Williams excessive, things would have indeed gone according to plan. Winthrop warned Williams of the plan to arrest him, and he fled the Boston area, never to return. He ended up settling in an area that he would call Providence, which would later become the capital of the state of Rhode Island.

As Barry notes, according to Williams:

The government [of this new settlement] was to be utterly mundane in the most literal sense, in that it dealt solely with the world. Unlike all other English settlements, this one neither set up a church nor required church attendance. Indeed, later it would decree that a simple “solemn profession [had] as full force as an oath” in court. All this was revolutionary.¹⁸

In Williams’ opinion, the state would do little more than corrupt the church, much as was evidenced by the expansion and power of the Roman Catholic Church in England. In other words, a church-state system did not guarantee adherence to purely biblical principles but, most often, accommodated gross error in the name of expediency and pragmatism. It was for this reason that Williams

16 Barry, J. M., *God, Government, and Roger Williams’ Big Idea* (Retrieved from <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/god-government-and-roger-williams-big-idea-6291280/>)

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

advocated complete freedom of religion as opposed to a state-sanctioned or state-ordered religion. Williams eventually published these revolutionary ideas in what many refer to as his masterpiece entitled *The Bloody Tenent, of Persecution, for Cause of Conscience, Discussed, in a Conference Between Truth and Peace*. As Barry observes, “The 400-page book... led Williams to divorce the material world from the spiritual world, and to draw conclusions about politics that led him to formulate a strikingly modern, democratic theory of the state.”¹⁹ As Barry also reports, according to Vernon Parrington, a leading historian in the early 20th century, Williams’ theory of the Commonwealth “must be reckoned the richest contribution of Puritanism to American thought.”²⁰ Over time, Williams’ ideas began to be accepted among many of the Puritans who themselves began to see the necessity of separating the pure church from the invariably corrupt state. This sentiment would eventually prevail and approximately 150 years later come to full fruition with the passage of Thomas Jefferson’s

(1786) *Bill for Religious Freedom*. This bill reads, in part:

...no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever...nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinion in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities.²¹

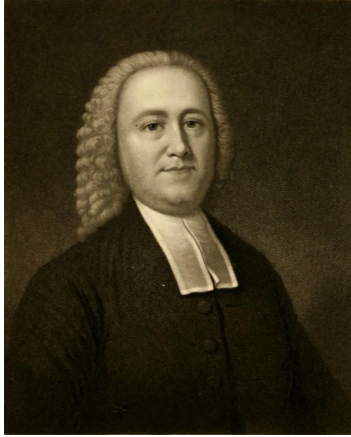
In my next article in this series, I will be discussing the various other sources of Puritan Persecution in both England and the New World.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

21 Jefferson, T., *An Act for Establishing Religious Freedom, 16 January 1786* (Retrieved from <http://www.virginiamemory.com/docs/ReligiousFree.pdf>)

THE LOG COLLEGE MEN:
GILBERT TENNENT — THE GREAT AWAKENER
JOHN McDONALD, TH.D.¹



*Portrait of the Reverend Gilbert Tennent
as found in “Sketches of the Log College.”*

“...the greatest preacher of this land in any age.” – Thomas Murphy²
 “...one of the most earnest and seraphic men who ever proclaimed the Gospel of
 Jesus Christ.” – Charles Spurgeon³
 “He is a Son of Thunder, and does not fear the Faces of Men.” – George
 Whitefield⁴

1 Dr. John McDonald currently serves as President of The Log College & Seminary. A direct descendant of Scottish 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 Thomas Murphy, *The Presbytery of the Log College: The Cradle of the Presbyterian Church in America* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1889), 80.

3 Charles Spurgeon, Sermon 2663, “A Leap Year Sermon,” in *Spurgeon’s Sermons*, vol 46. Christian Classics Ethereal Library, <https://ccel.org/ccel/spurgeon/sermons46.viii.html> (accessed February 6, 2022).

4 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), 35.

Of all the Log College Alumni, Gilbert Tennent is undoubtedly the most prominent figure. A celebrated Awakening preacher, ministry associate and close friend of George Whitefield, and one of the first trustees of the College of New Jersey, Gilbert Tennent was a zealous and industrious servant of Christ who may be said to have “taken Heaven by storm.”⁵ In writing of heroic Colonial Christians, Hitt describes Gilbert as a “Stern prophet, foe of spiritual complacency, evangelist, scholar, gadfly for righteousness - Gilbert Tennent was all of these. In riper and perhaps wiser years he diligently pursued peace and unity, but not, however, until he had opened up the floodgates of the Great Awakening and brought vitality to the greater part of the Colonial church.”⁶

Early Life

Gilbert was the first child of William and Katharine Tennent. He was born at midnight on February 5th, 1703, in County Armagh, Ireland, and was named after his maternal grandfather, the Rev. Gilbert Kennedy, an Irish Presbyterian minister of some renown. Regretfully, nothing is known of Gilbert’s childhood except that he was baptized shortly after his birth in 1703. Gilbert was fifteen years old when his family sailed to America in 1718. It was around this time that Gilbert first began to seriously consider the state of his soul and wrestle with a strong sense of his own sinfulness and depravity, eventually finding rest in the Gospel.

Gilbert first intended to study medicine. However, after becoming more fully assured of his interest in the gospel, he set his heart upon the ministry.

5 The following words from Gilbert’s 1735 sermon “The Necessity of Religious Violence” are a fitting description of the life and character of this great man. “These who are truly convinc’d of Sin, of Righteousness and of Judgment labour to take Heaven by Storm and will not stick at any cost to obtain it. These seek with importunate vehemence, like *Jacob* of old, and will not cease until they obtain the blessing. These put a force upon their corrupt Nature, are willing to perform the hardest Services, and undergo the severest sufferings, in order to obtain the great Salvation. ...I shall first endeavour to confirm the Truth of the general Proposition, which I think is very evident from the various Metaphors in Scripture, representing the Christian Travels to the *New Jerusalem*, such as these following, *viz.* of Running, Wrestling, Fighting. Now do not every of these clearly and emphatically hold forth the utmost Necessity of Pains and Vehemence in the Service of the most high God?” Gilbert Tennent, “The Necessity of Religious Violence in order to obtain Durable Happiness” (New York: William Bradford, 1735), 2,27. <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/N03262.0001.00> (accessed August 23, 2022).

6 Russell T. Hitt, *Heroic Colonial Christians* (J.B. Lippincott, Philadelphia, 1966), 149.

He received his academic and theological training solely from his father and therefore may be considered the first of the Log College men. In the year 1725, Gilbert was awarded an honorary Master of Arts degree from Yale. This was the same year that his father was under serious consideration as a candidate for the Yale rectorship. Also, this same year Gilbert Tennent was licensed to preach with great approbation by his presbytery.⁷ It would appear that for the next year Gilbert assisted his father in teaching responsibilities at his newly opened school in Neshaminy, soon to become popularly known as The Log College.⁸

In 1726 Gilbert was presented a call from the Presbyterian congregation at New Castle where he had preached several times previously. Records show that Gilbert accepted the call but later rescinded his commitment to serve as their pastor. George Gillespie conducted an investigation into the matter and reported that he had personally observed a letter that Gilbert had sent to the congregation informing them of his acceptance of the call. It is not known why Gilbert later declined the call, but it is certain that he received strong rebuke from both the New Castle Presbytery and the Synod as a consequence of his abrupt decision.

First Pastorate

In early 1727 (or late 1726)⁹ Gilbert received a call from the Presbyterian congregation at New Brunswick which he did accept and was subsequently ordained. Gilbert would minister at New Brunswick for the next sixteen years (regretfully the early records of this church were lost or destroyed during the Revolutionary War). A single letter written by Gilbert to Thomas Prince of Boston

7 The presbytery's enthusiastic approval of Gilbert demonstrates that they did at this time readily acknowledge the academic and theological training Gilbert received from his father, proving that men could be equipped for ministry apart from the traditional university setting. This is significant as we find the presbytery and synod later questioning such training as the Log College grew in influence.

8 Alexander is the only source to include this historical detail. Alexander refers to certain documents he had in his possession as the basis for this information although he does not identify these documents. Archibald Alexander, *Biographical Sketches of the Founder, and Principal Alumni, of the Log College* (Princeton: J.T. Robinson, 1845), 36.

9 In a letter, Gilbert notes that he arrived in New Brunswick about seven years after Frelinghuysen. Frelinghuysen arrived in New York in January of 1720 and preached his first sermon in the Raritan Valley on January 31st, 1720. This lends credibility to an early 1727 date.

is the only source of information pertaining to these years. The first year of his ministry was not as successful as Gilbert had envisioned, and to make matters worse Gilbert fell seriously ill. The illness brought Gilbert into a season of deep introspection and reflection. Gilbert mourned that he had done so little for the Kingdom and pleaded with God to grant a half year extension of life that he might have the opportunity to refocus and reform his ministry labors. His prayer was granted, and Gilbert set out to make good on the blessing. He writes in the letter that after his restoration to health:

I did then preach much on original sin, repentance, the nature and necessity of conversion, in a close examinatory and distinguishing way; labouring in the meantime to sound the trumpet of God's judgments and alarm the secure by the terrors of the Lord as well as to affect them with other topics of persuasion: which method was sealed by the Holy Spirit, in the conviction and conversion of a considerable number of persons, at various times, and in different places, in that part of the country, as appeared by their acquaintance with experimental religion, and good conversation.¹⁰

It was also at the beginning of his ministry at New Brunswick that Gilbert met German-born yet Dutch Reformed pastor Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen, whom some consider to be the “Father of the Great Awakening” (i.e. from a human perspective of course). The two would become good friends and ministry associates. Frelinghuysen’s Dutch Reformed pietism had a significant impact on Gilbert’s ministry. While some would argue that it was Frelinghuysen’s influence that was largely responsible for molding Gilbert’s ministry philosophy, it must be remembered that Frelinghuysen’s Dutch Reformed Pietism actually coincided with William Tennent’s Puritan Pietism. As Maxson comments, “The Pietism of Frelinghuysen but fanned the Puritanism of the Tennents.”¹¹ Indeed, the Tennent corpus is replete with Puritan references. It should also be noted that Frelinghuysen himself was greatly influenced by the Dutch Puritans.¹² These

10 Alexander, 101-102.

11 Charles Maxson, *The Great Awakening in the Middle Colonies* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1920), 27.

12 James Hastings Nichols, review of *The Forming of an American Tradition: A Re-examination of Colonial Presbyterianism*, by Leonard J. Trinterud, *The Journal of Religion* 30, no. 4 (1950): 285.

two streams of Dutch Pietism and Puritan Pietism, combined additionally with William Tennent's Ulster Presbyterianism¹³, was what ultimately coalesced to form Gilbert's particular pietistic perspective. Fishburn asserts, "...Tennent's life and theology were influenced more by his Ulster Scot heritage and by New England Puritans than by the ministries of George Whitefield and Theodorus Frelinghuysen."¹⁴ At the same time, finding a kindred spirit like Frelinghuysen was undoubtedly encouraging to Tennent and further ignited his passion for revival.

The next few years of Gilbert's ministry would be marked by signs of a growing awakening movement among Colonial Presbyterians, most notably in his Staten Island congregation where he often preached as a supply. It should be remembered that these "sparks" of revival preceded the 1734 Northampton revival and were completely independent of it. Murray notes, "The three Tennent brothers had all witnessed awakenings in local congregations a few years previous to the work at Northampton, though it was not until the 1740's that notice of these revivals appeared in print."¹⁵ Interestingly, after the Northampton Revival, Jonathan Edwards traveled to New Jersey to visit with the Tennents, demonstrating that he viewed these men with great esteem.¹⁶ It has even been alluded that Edwards may have borrowed his famous spider illustration used in his 1741 sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" from Gilbert's 1735 publication *A Solemn Warning to the Secure World*.¹⁷

Gilbert's first pastorate did not end his Log College work. In 1728, his

13 "Some of the dramatic behavior of the Tennents that has intrigued scholars can be better understood when their lives are viewed as an adaptation of an Ulster Scot spirituality to life in a new world.... Old Side men like John Elder likened them to the Covenanters and Seceders who had challenged orthodox practices in the Scottish church." Janet F. Fishburn, "Gilbert Tennent, Established 'Dissenter.'" *Church History* 63, no. 1 (1994): 35. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3167831> (accessed August 24, 2022).

14 Fishburn, 31.

15 Iain H. Murray, *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography* (Carlyle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1988), 124.

16 Murray, 124.

17 Cheryl Ann Rickards, "Gilbert Tennent: An Analysis of His Evangelistic Ministry, Methods and Message During the Great Awakening" (DMin diss., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2003), 27-30.

brothers John and William Tennent, Jr., moved to New Brunswick after completing their theological studies under their father, William Tennent Sr., for additional study under Gilbert. Before the rise of seminaries, pastoral apprenticeships were the concluding element of ministerial training. As noted previously, Gilbert had briefly served as an assistant to his father in teaching responsibilities at the Log College. Now Gilbert would serve as its first remote mentor. It would be safe to assume that Gilbert shared his new ministry emphases with his brothers and concomitantly served as the ideal model of revival preaching. Gilbert would later serve as a mentor for John Rodgers, and in an informal capacity, Samuel Davies.

While Gilbert was a dedicated pastor, he was also a dedicated churchman and was actively involved in the life of the presbytery and synod. In 1729 Gilbert, along with William Tennent Sr., signed the Adopting Act making the Westminster Standards the official doctrinal confession of the colonial Presbyterian church.¹⁸ In 1734, Gilbert introduced two overtures to the Synod. These two overtures required ministers to actively inquire as to the spiritual state of their members as well as introspectively examine their own spiritual state as pastors. These overtures reveal Gilbert's experiential convictions and his desire to promote vital godliness in the synod and its churches. The overtures were unanimously approved. Gilbert was also concerned with current events and developments in the Scottish Church and maintained correspondence with the Erskines.

The Great Awakening

As stated previously, Gilbert had witnessed instances of "awakening" beginning as early as 1728. Over the next decade, New Brunswick would become the spiritual and geographical center of revival activity in the middle colonies.¹⁹ The New Brunswick men had followed the accounts of revival in Great Britain

18 Chapters 20 and 23 of the Westminster Confession were unanimously renounced by the Synod. These chapters contained elements of Erastian ecclesiology. This action by the Synod shows their commitment to the doctrine of the spirituality of the church and was an important step in the development of American Presbyterianism's most prominent characteristic.

19 "By 1740, Gilbert Tennent's sphere of influence extended in a parallelogram, with Staten Island and Freehold as its eastern borders, and Pennington (west of Hopewell) near the Delaware River in the southwest, with Basking Ridge in the Northwest." Rickards, 36.

and enthusiastically welcomed the arrival of its most distinguished laborer, the great George Whitefield. Gilbert met Whitefield in 1739 in New Brunswick as Whitefield was traveling from Philadelphia on his way to New York. As the two conversed, they were greatly encouraged to discover that their theological and ministry commitments were essentially indistinguishable. Their friendship was readily formed, and it would be difficult to find two ministers more akin in mission, method, and motivation. Alexander comments, "Indeed, it is probable, that he [Whitefield] never met with a man of a more perfectly congenial spirit with his own."²⁰ Although Gilbert was ten years Whitefield's senior, an instant camaraderie was formed as the two men joined forces for the Awakening cause. Whitefield warmly accepted Gilbert's offer to accompany him to New York, considering him a "worthy brother and fellow-labourer."²¹ Gilbert was of great assistance to Whitefield during this tour as he was familiar with sympathetic ministers as well as localities ripe for spiritual harvest. But this was not all Gilbert had to offer Whitefield. The preaching of Gilbert Tennent had a striking effect upon Whitefield, who wrote in his journal, "I went to the meeting house to hear Mr. Gilbert Tennent preach, and never before, heard I such a searching sermon. He went to the bottom, indeed, and did not daub with untempered mortar. He convinced me more and more, that we can preach the gospel of Christ no further than we have experienced the power of it in our own hearts.... Hypocrites must either soon be converted or enraged, at his preaching. He is a Son of Thunder, and does not fear the Faces of Men."²² Gilbert's homiletical methods may have even led Whitefield to modify his own style.²³ In 1741, the *Boston Weekly News-Letter* reported that during Whitefield's visit to New York "...a roughness was noticed by his hearers which was said to have been lately acquired."²⁴ But Whitefield would also prove to be a great help to Gilbert and the New Side party.

20 Alexander, 45.

21 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), 35.

22 Ibid.

23 The role and influence of Gilbert Tennent in Whitefield's life has not been sufficiently acknowledged.

24 *Boston Weekly News-Letter*, 5 June 1740.

Whitefield's messages attacking dead orthodoxy helped sway the Presbytery of New York to embrace the Awakening cause. Whitefield also appeared to have a mutually dynamic effect upon Gilbert as his messages seemed to embolden Gilbert's efforts to expose carnal ministers, prompting his famous sermon, "The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry."

The "Nottingham Sermon," as it was sometimes called, was delivered in the vacant pulpit of the Nottingham Church on March 8th, 1740. The vacant church, long neglected and desperate for pastoral care, intentionally violated the synod's itineracy act when it had previously invited the nearby Samuel Blair to fill its pulpit. The Donegal Presbytery then requested that Blair's presbytery (New Castle) discipline him for this intrusion. Now the Nottingham congregation had invited Gilbert Tennent to its pulpit. Anticipating the presbytery's call for disciplinary measures, Gilbert intended to make a strategic public statement that would appeal to the rights and duties of the laity. "By preaching on the nature of the ministry, Tennent caught the anti-revival group on their weakest side, and also gave himself the opportunity of stating fully what the entire Log College group had often declared, in briefer form, was the real issue in the controversy over revival."²⁵ Serving as both pastoral counsel for ministerial candidates and vacant churches seeking ministers, the sermon's most pointed application perhaps was its scathing rebuke of many of the Old Side ministers who opposed the Awakening movement. Gilbert proclaimed that carnal ministers posed a threat to the spiritual health of the church and that such men had no business in the pulpit. The message was a watershed moment for the already building tensions between the New Side and Old Side parties.

Just a few months later, Gilbert (along with Log College alumni John Rowland and Samuel Blair) preached multiple sermons on Society Hill and at the Presbyterian meeting house during the intervals of the Synod meeting. It is estimated that near eight thousand attended one of Gilbert's Sunday sermons. The *Pennsylvania Gazette* reported, "Never did people show so great a willingness to attend sermons.... Religion is become the subject of most conversations. No books are in request but those of piety and devotion; and instead of idle songs and ballads, the people are everywhere entertaining themselves with Psalms, hymns,

25 Leonard J. Trinterud, *The Forming of an American Tradition: A Re-examination of Colonial Presbyterianism* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1949), 89.

and spiritual songs.”²⁶

In the fall of 1740 Gilbert completed a short but successful revival tour through southern New Jersey, Delaware, and upper Maryland. Upon his return, Whitefield and several New England ministers encouraged Gilbert to undertake a three-month evangelistic tour throughout New England to carry on the work of revival initiated by Whitefield. Gilbert accepted the invitation and set out alone in the chills of one of the worst winters on record at that time. Alexander comments, “Mr. Tennent must have been inflamed with a very ardent zeal, situated, as he was, the pastor of a church. . . .to set off in the depth of winter to preach to a strange people, among whom he probably had not a single acquaintance, either among the clergy or the laity. But invincible resolve was a prominent trait in his character.”²⁷ Gilbert wrote of his decision:

I was informed before I left home by divers persons worthy of credit, that there has been in most places of New England, for some considerable tract of time, a lamentable decay of the power of godliness, both among ministers and people; so that there has been little to be heard, of a work of conviction and conversion carrying on in them: and this divers worthy persons among the ministry as well as the laity of New England have acknowledged in my hearing, to be a truth bitterly to be bewailed. . . .The occasion of my travels was not a notion of any superior qualifications in me for the carrying on of that good work which God has more remarkably begun of late in this land. . . .Having been through much importunity prevailed with, to travel some journeys to the Southward, having seen much of the Divine power in those travels, to the awakening of a great number of persons, and hearing of the success of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield’s labours in New England, and being much urged by him, and divers other ministers in those parts where I live, to come this way, as well as earnestly invited by several pious ministers of New England, to come over to their Macedonia and help them. After I had been tossed up and down on the billows of distrustful fears, reluctance, and contrary reasonings, through frequent supplications to the Father of Lights, both myself and with others for direction, I found a willingness notwithstanding of my mean qualification of mind, and cold constitution of body, to face the Northern gusts, and commit myself into the hands of the Great God, in order to make an attempt for the promoting of

26 *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 12, 1740.

27 Alexander, 46.

His Kingdom by traveling.²⁸

During this tour Gilbert would often preach as many as three sermons daily. The preaching tour was marked by great success with many reported conversions. Samuel Hopkins reported that the students at Yale were more impressed and affected by Gilbert's sermons than of those preached by Whitefield, particularly because of Gilbert's focus on the heart and spiritual state.²⁹ Over half of the students there were converted under his preaching, and many of these would later become ministers in the Presbyterian church.³⁰ Hopkins described Gilbert as "...a remarkably plain and rousing preacher" and that by his ministry "Thousands... were awakened."³¹ At the same time, and much like Whitefield, Gilbert met with contingents of opposition, especially by ministers. In fact, this same year marked the beginning of the "social media" campaigns in which multiple pamphlets and articles were written attacking Whitefield and the revival movement, and countered in turn by pamphlets and articles defending Whitefield and the revival. Despite such "mainstream" attempts to discredit the revival cause, by the beginning of 1741 awakening movements were evident in every colony north of Virginia.

The Great Schism

Whitefield had become the face of the Awakening and brought together its various streams, but in his absence Gilbert was considered the leader of revival work. Gilbert's friendship and fervent support of George Whitefield, combined with the excitement surrounding the Great Awakening's most soaring phases, led to considerable controversy with the Synod's Old Side party, contentions that would regretfully culminate in a division of the colonial Presbyterian church.

28 Gilbert Tennent. "Response to the Author of the Letter in the Post-Boy, of the 28th of December last." *The New England Weekly Journal*, Tuesday 27, 1741, Numb. 719.

29 Rickards, 43.

30 David Brainerd was a student at Yale at this time and was greatly impacted by Gilbert's preaching. James Sproat, the third pastor of Second Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, was also then a student at Yale and dated his conversion to this preaching tour. Another Yale student, Samuel Hopkins, was so impressed by Gilbert's preaching that he determined to study theology with him after graduation (but later decided to study with Jonathan Edwards).

31 Rickards, 43.

The Schism of 1741 is undoubtedly one of the darkest periods of Presbyterian history, and certainly with respect to American Presbyterianism. The growing animosity between the Old Side and New Side parties certainly hinted at the possibility of a real separation. The New Side party did not seek separation but rather sought *reformation* within the Synod. The Old Side party, while uncomfortable with the particular perspectives of the New Side party, wanted only conformity to the Synod's decisions. This was at least the case until Gilbert's "Nottingham Sermon." While the Old Side party made no attempts at recrimination during the immediately following 1740 Synod meeting, the Nottingham Sermon, fortified by Gilbert's and Samuel Blair's direct denunciations during the Synod meeting, and later amplified by Samuel Finley's scorching sermon "Christ Reigning and Satan Raging,"³² was the watershed that ended the Old Side's reluctant toleration and began a shift toward political maneuvers intended to squelch the activities of the New Side party. The urgency for such actions was especially felt as new congregations favoring the New Side were currently in formation.

The two great issues at the center of the Old Side/New Side controversy were itinerancy and the examination of ministerial candidates. Gilbert and the New Side party saw itinerancy as the best answer to the constant requests for pulpit supply made by the expanding Presbyterian congregations.³³ Hart notes, "In fact, many of the earliest Presbyterian ministers in America engaged in itinerancy for a living because clergy were few and Presbyterians were scattered

32 This sermon was also preached at Nottingham in January 1741, just a few months before the 1741 synod meeting.

33 "They felt, as did the apostles, and first reformers, that they were called to go every where preaching the gospel, without regard to prescribed limits of presbyteries or congregations; especially, as they observed, that many pastors neglected to inculcate on their hearers, the necessity of a change of heart, and that the people were as really perishing for lack of knowledge, as they were under Jewish or Popish instructors. They felt themselves bound, therefore, to preach far and wide, wherever the people would hear them; and although there was irregularity, judging by human and ecclesiastical rules; yet I doubt not, that in the main, their zealous and exhausting labours have met with a large reward. Weak enthusiasts, or fierce fanatics may abuse the principle on which they acted; but the same thing occurred at the time of the blessed reformation from popery. We must not neglect to do all the good we can because some may pervert our example, to sanction their own lawless proceedings." Alexander, 70.

over large areas.”³⁴ Fishburn asserts, “...There was never a time in the middle colonies when there was even one pastor for every congregation. There were many small congregations visited by itinerating pastors no more than three or four times a year. For that reason, itinerating and the importance of sacramental seasons were deemed necessary by some Presbyterians.”³⁵ In fact, the Synod had no regulations regarding ministers preaching beyond their own presbyteries until the year 1738.³⁶ The New Side party also maintained that examination and ordination were the peculiar rights of presbytery (and even stated as such in the Old Side’s beloved *Directory*) and that the synod had no authority to interfere with the peculiar rights of presbytery. Besides, in this particular context, there were no ministers in the synod who might be considered to actually excel the Log College men in scholarship (with the possible exceptions of Jonathan Dickinson and Dr. Francis Alison, the latter described as “the best Latin Scholar in America”).³⁷ Interestingly, Ashbel Green speculated that the real origin of the synodical examination act was at least partly to be found in Francis Alison’s jealousy of William Tennent, Sr.³⁸ Synod member George Gillespie later declared that the examinations act was not formed due to any real educational concerns but was rather a scheme developed to assist the Old Side’s quest for power.³⁹ The New Side maintained that itineracy and examination had not been considered actual issues until the rise of the Awakening movement, calling into question the Old Side party’s sudden concern. In this light, the Synod’s subsequent determinations seemed more like control measures rather than actions designed to resolve real problems in the church. When the Synod approved the Special Examinations

34 D.G. Hart, *Colonial Presbyterianism: Old Faith in a New Land*, ed. S. Donald Fortson, III (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2007), 169.

35 Fishburn, 40.

36 The itineracy act was repealed by the 1740 synod. During this meeting the synod clarified that the itineracy act was designed to prevent division within congregations but not intended to hinder itinerant preaching itself. E.H. Gillett, *History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1873), 1:74.

37 Robert Ellis Thompson, *A History of the Presbyterian Churches in the United States* (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1895), 35.

38 Trinterud, 82.

39 Trinterud, 97-98.

act during its meeting in 1738 and then reaffirmed it in 1739, such suspicions led Gilbert to reportedly cry out that the act was intended to “prevent his father’s school from training gracious men for the ministry.”⁴⁰ Indeed, the act appeared to target the Log College to prevent it from flooding the Synod with New Side ministers.⁴¹ The response of the New Side party was not only to enter a protest, but ignore the examination and impractical itineracy acts altogether.⁴² This was especially evident by the New Brunswick Presbytery’s subsequent licensure of John Rowland and their sending him to preach within the (largely Old Side) Presbytery of Philadelphia.

The Synod met on May 27th, 1741 at Jedediah Andrew’s meetinghouse in Philadelphia. The New Side appeared in the splendor of success. The people favored them. Personal and societal transformation testified to their labors. But the Old Side appeared in power as the majority party, a power they had previously

40 Frederick W. Brink, “Gilbert Tennent, Dynamic Preacher,” *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society* 32, no. 2 (1954): 101. Alexander believes that the real cause of the schism was the existence of the Log College itself. “We have seen that a great schism was produced in the Presbyterian body, by a difference of opinion among the ministers of the synod, respecting the great revival which pervaded many of the churches. But though this was the proximate cause of the division, by those who attentively consider the history of that time, and especially the ‘Records’ of the synod itself, it will be seen, that this event was actually produced by the LOG COLLEGE. At first view, this will seem very improbable, but when all the documents are read, and all the circumstances of the church weighed and compared, it will appear exceedingly probable, that the erection of this school of the prophets was, innocently, the cause of the breach which took place in 1741.” Alexander, 57.

41 “The Tennent group undoubtedly were confirmed in their analysis of the act on the education of ministers by another action of the synod. Gillespie presented to synod a protest against Donegal Presbytery’s failure to discipline John Thomson’s son-in-law, [Richard] Zanky, for plagiarizing his ordination sermon. Moreover, the presbytery had omitted from their minutes any word about Zanky’s plagiarism. The ruling party in the synod, however, passed a resolution stating that Zanky had given signs of deep repentance, etc., and that he might now be ordained. The manner in which the antirevival party thus overrode all objections in order to spare Thomson’s son-in-law, together with the manner in which they were shortly to ordain John Hindman, and Thomson’s own son, is clear evidence of how little sincerity or moral earnestness lay behind this professed concern over the educational weaknesses of the Log College.” Trinterud, 74-75.

42 “Going uninvited into a church that was under a regular pastor, trying to preach in his pulpit, or setting up a rival congregation, was not done by the Tennent group.” Trinterud, 73.

used and were prepared to effectively use again.⁴³ The first four days of Synod were consumed by the events surrounding Alexander Craighead's suspension. The abnormal docket procedures made Gilbert suspicious of the synod's intentions. The synod adjourned at noon Saturday to reassemble on Monday at three in the afternoon. Colter notes that the Old Side was aware of Samuel Blair's intention to present a protest against David Evan's "Wonderful Wandering Spirit" and that this protest would clearly expose the reprehensible conduct of the Old Side. Fearing such exposure, the Old Side was further compelled to take radical action against the New Side.⁴⁴ On Monday, June 1, when the Synod had reassembled, a protestation was presented and read by Robert Cross. A total silence fell over the meeting. The Protest enumerated the Old Side party's grievances with the New Side and declared (without charges or trial) that all members who had formerly protested against the Synod's acts, having forfeited their right to sit and vote by their principles and actions, were excluded from synod membership. The protest was then placed on a table and several men added their names to the document. The New Side party proceeded to present a defense, but the meeting quickly deteriorated into total discord and chaos as Jedediah Andrews had left the moderator chair and the crowd present at the meeting shouted forth their various opinions. Some detested the protestation as containing complete lies, others warned that the elders present were being called to judge matters they had not sufficiently heard or considered, and the galleries shouted for the protestors to be cast out. Finally, Blair demanded that a count be made to determine what party actually held the majority vote. Since the Presbytery of New York was absent, there was the possibility that the New Side party, joined by those members startled by the violation of due process, might outnumber the protestors. The roll was counted, and the Old Side was found to be in majority.⁴⁵ An official vote was never taken or recorded. The excluded members then withdrew (although by

43 The Old Side took full advantage of their majority status during the 1738 synod meeting which produced the controversial measures of itineracy and special examinations.

44 Milton J. Coalter, Jr., *Gilbert Tennent, Son of Thunder: A Case Study of Continental Pietism's Impact on the First Great Awakening in the Middle Colonies* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986), 82.

45 "Only twenty-five out of the forty-seven ministers of the Synod were in attendance, and the measure was carried by a vote of twelve to ten, three not voting." Thompson, 33.

their own account they did not withdraw until the concluding prayer of the synod meeting), followed by a sympathetic large crowd. The political machinations of the Old Side party had prevailed. The “champions of order” had committed an “act of supreme disorder.”⁴⁶ Hodge remarks, “...the protest not merely presented charges, it declared the persons implicated to be guilty and determined the punishment” and that “...not even the forms of an ecclesiastical, much less of a judicial proceeding, were observed at this crisis. There was no motion, no vote, not even a presiding officer in the chair. It was a disorderly rupture....The course then, adopted by the protesting brethren, in 1741, is certainly liable to the grave objection, that it was unconstitutional.”⁴⁷ Gilbert was convinced that given the carefully written and detailed nature of the protest, Cross and other signers had planned the protest prior to the synod meeting, and even George Gillespie, a fair-minded minister notwithstanding some Old Side sympathies, admitted that it was the Old Side that appeared “hottest for division.”⁴⁸ Confirming Gilbert’s suspicions, a letter written in 1746 to President Clap of Yale by several synod members (Cross, Alison, Evans, and Griffith) clearly states that the Tennent party had already been disowned as members of synod before Gilbert had undertaken his New England tour (Dec. 13th, 1740-March 2nd, 1741).⁴⁹ Gilbert was right. The entire synod meeting of 1741 was a ruse.⁵⁰

In retrospect, the New Side party faced a terrible dilemma. If they had ventured to voluntarily separate from the synod, they could be charged with schism – a most grievous act in the minds and hearts of these men who genuinely sought the peace (and purity) of the church. Furthermore, if they voluntarily separated from the synod, any hope of seeing reformation take place within the synod would be lost. Therefore, instead of voluntarily separating from the

46 Coalter, 82.

47 Charles Hodge, *The Constitutional History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (Philadelphia: William S. Martien, 1840), 2:188, 191-192, 194.

48 Coalter, 84.

49 Trinterud, 107.

50 “The two groups in the Church had come to the parting of ways, not over dogmas, Church government, or educational standards, but because of ‘a determined resolution to endeavour to awaken the Presbyterian Church from a state of great declension in vital piety.’” Trinterud, 108.

synod, the New Side party adopted a position of “mutual forbearance.” While the actions of the New Side party are open to debate, it is certain that the Old Side, to use their own terminology, should not have “disowned,” “rejected,” “ejected,” “excluded,” or “cast out” fellow ministers without due process or trial. Hindsight, of course, always has the unique advantage of perfect discernment. It should be remembered that while a separation did occur and may be referred to as a schism in the colonial Presbyterian church, Presbyterianism in the colonies was not a fully established church by any means, and at best was a loosely organized group of Presbyterian congregations and pastors with diverse ethnical and theological backgrounds. Essentially, two streams of Presbyterianism converged in colonial America - Scottish Presbyterians met Ulster-Scot Presbyterians. Along with this convergence, a third yet minor stream was also in development – New England Presbyterianism (i.e., Congregational churches that joined with the Presbyterians). The definitive character and identity of the colonial Presbyterian church was still yet to be determined.⁵¹

While some would charge Gilbert and the New Side party with having a cavalier spirit toward ecclesiastical polity, this would be a gross misperception of the New Side ecclesiastical perspective. As Fishburn notes, “Gilbert Tennent distinguished himself from his peers in his ability to adapt old world theology, ministry practices and polity selectively to a very different set of circumstances in a new world.”⁵² The New Side always maintained that they had clear Scriptural grounds for their “defiant” actions.

The New Side did not want schism and attributed all such events to the stratagems of Satan. Not to be outdone by the Adversary’s recent attempt to disrupt the Awakening cause, the New Side committed itself to continued polity for continued labors. On June 2nd, the day after their exclusion, the New Side party met and formed two “Conjunct” presbyteries. The New Brunswick Presbytery remained the same with the addition of the congregations of Richard

51 “American Presbyterianism is to be understood...not as the church of Scotland transplanted but as the child of English Puritanism reincarnate in the Great Awakening. The Scots, and especially the Scots-Irish, did constitute the large body of Presbyterians by the end of the eighteenth century. But these immigrants had been evangelized in the Awakening, so that the spirit and finally the constitution of American Presbyterianism was not Scottish.” Nichols, 285.

52 Fishburn, 36.

Treat and William Tennent, Sr. The Londonderry Presbytery consisted of the congregations of Samuel Blair, Alexander Craighead, David Alexander, Charles Tennent, and George Gillespie. One of their first acts was to write a defense of the allegations made against them in the protestation resulting in this “forced rupture.” Gilbert was tasked with answering the protestation, and Samuel Blair was appointed to present a summary of the differences between the two parties. Blair’s work was published as the “Declaration of the Conjunct Presbyteries” and Gilbert’s published as “Remarks on the Protest.” Strangely, on the same day that the Conjunct Presbyteries were formed, nineteen congregations from New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia sent petitions for pulpit supply. Many of these congregations were already provided with settled pastors as they were under the care of the Presbyteries of Philadelphia, Newcastle, and Donegal. This concerted request may have been originally intended to be presented at the synod meeting.⁵³ The New Side party had much work to do as it entered this new era of its existence. But it would soon receive help. After several years of pursuing reconciliation between two parties, the sympathetic New York Presbytery would join the Conjunct Presbyteries to form the Synod of New York in 1745. The rupture of the colonial Presbyterian church would not be mended until 1758, and Gilbert Tennent would play a significant role in bringing about this great reconciliation.

Second Pastorate

In May 1743, Gilbert received a call to pastor a pro-revival congregation that had been meeting in Whitefield’s “New Building” in Philadelphia. This congregation was formed from converts of Whitefield’s earlier preaching tour and they intentionally set out to find a pastor of like mind and heart.⁵⁴ They could not have selected a better candidate than Gilbert Tennent, Whitefield’s close friend and ministry associate, leader of the New Brunswick Brethren, and celebrated evangelist. Gilbert would spend the

53 Richard Webster, *A History of the Presbyterian Church in America, from its Origin until the Year 1760* (Philadelphia: Joseph M. Wilson, 1857), 184-185.

54 The grandparents of the celebrated Presbyterian theologian and Princetonian Charles Hodge were members of this new congregation. The Hodge family would remain a vital part of the membership for several generations.

next twenty years (indeed, the rest of his life) ministering to this congregation that would eventually be named the Second Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia. These were relatively peaceful years for the aging Tennent and a strong contrast with the more turbulent years of controversy associated with the Awakening and Old Side/New Side tensions.⁵⁵ Here Gilbert went from the country to the city, from the farmer to the governor, and Gilbert naturally adapted his ministry to accommodate his new audience.⁵⁶ It was also here that many of Gilbert's works would be published by Franklin and Bradford and made available to a wider audience.

Gilbert entered this new ministry role with the same vigor and zeal exerted in his first pastorate. He found that the populace was still deeply affected by Whitefield's ministry. In a letter to Thomas Prince, Gilbert shared that "...there were so many under soul-sickness in this place, that my feet were pained in walking from place to place to see them."⁵⁷ The Philadelphia congregation appeared to be solid in profession yet lacking discipleship. In this same letter, Gilbert remarked, "Since I have come here, my labours seem to be chiefly serviceable to instruct, and establish the great truths of religion, and to comfort pious people."⁵⁸ This explains the obvious shift in the subject matter of Tennent's sermons. After coming to Philadelphia, Tennent's sermons were primarily focused on topics of doctrinal importance. This reflects Gilbert's Ulster-Scot convictions of the importance of both evangelism and the discipleship of the evangelized. During revival seasons, Ulster-Scot pastors were diligent not only to seek new converts but also to instruct these new converts in the fundamentals of the faith.

In less than ten years after accepting the call, the church would increase from 140 members to requiring a new meeting house built to accommodate the ever-growing membership, an ornate building project that Gilbert closely superintended and for which he almost exclusively secured the funding. Many public officials were part of the membership, including the governor. It must

55 These years demonstrate that while Gilbert did indeed possess a zealous spirit, he did not possess a *contentious* spirit, and that the past controversies in which he engaged himself were based solely upon principle.

56 By the 1750's, Philadelphia was the largest city in the colonies.

57 Alexander, 104.

58 Alexander, 105.

be noted that Gilbert's ministry carried out here in what would become the very epicenter of a newly developing national identity and nation is of great significance. Not only had the Log College men laid the foundation for the growth and success of the American Presbyterian church, but their positions on the nature of the civil magistrate and the right of national self-defense were instrumental in the development of American national independence. As early as 1747, Gilbert had preached on topics of national security promoting a "just war" doctrine. In fact, the "Association for Defence" was organized this same year at a rally in Gilbert's church where he had preached a sermon on the right of defensive warfare. Samuel Davies in his 1756 sermon "The Curse of Cowardice" pressed civilians to take up arms if needed and defend their country. Gilbert's "Defensive War" sermon would do more than just inspire. When the British invaded Philadelphia in 1778, the patriots were in short supply of paper to make cartridges. Ironically, 2,500 copies of Gilbert's "Defensive War" sermon were found in a location formerly used by Franklin as his printing office and were readily used to wrap cartridges, enabling the important victory at Monmouth.

Although removed to a prominent city and congregation, and having laid aside his great coat and leather girdle for the powdered wig and dress of polite society, Gilbert never lost his passion for revival work. He kept close ties to the New Side churches and a close watch on New Side opportunities for expansion. He was especially attentive of the labors of the Log College graduates. In December of 1743 Gilbert visited Neshaminy to preach Charles Beatty's ordination sermon. In 1745 Gilbert, accompanied by Samuel Finley, traveled to Virginia in defense of John Roan. Roan had been proceeded by William Robinson who had blazed the path for the New Side's southern expansion. Roan's preaching in Hanover County so agitated the Anglican establishment there that they used their civil connections to bring him to trial. Gilbert and Finley's efforts proved successful, and the indictment against Roan was dropped. In 1757, Gilbert was particularly encouraged by an awakening movement at the College of New Jersey and was invited there to observe and preach. In 1762 the New Brunswick Presbytery commissioned William Tennent, Jr. to conduct a preaching tour in North Carolina, and the following year tradition holds that he officiated the first communion service held by the Grassy Creek Presbyterian Church, a Granville County congregation formed by migrating members of Samuel Davies' Hanover

congregation.⁵⁹ Gilbert even kept an eye on awakening developments outside of the Presbyterian church. In 1759, when the congregation of Christ Church in Philadelphia expressed interest in having William McClenachan, a disciple of Whitfield, serve as an assistant to their aging minister, Gilbert and seventeen other New Side Presbyterian pastors addressed a letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury in support of his appointment. Opposition, led by Anglican William Smith and his colleague at the College of Philadelphia, Old Side Presbyterian Francis Alison, was successful however in preventing the appointment. Alison went on to press the matter in synod with the aim of soliciting a statement that Gilbert and his associates had acted improperly in the matter.

While these were relatively more peaceful years for Gilbert, his zeal for truth and orthodoxy continued as made evident in his campaign against the Moravians. Gilbert had met Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf in 1741 and immediately detected theological deviations that were of great concern. While their conversation was conducted in Latin, Gilbert was able to clarify several important points pertaining to their principles. Samuel Finley also met with Zinzendorf and discovered similar doctrinal aberrations. While Gilbert considered the Moravian desire for awakening to be commendable, their theology, which included elements of universalism, antinomianism, and perfectionism, necessitated confrontation. In 1742, Gilbert published *The Necessity of Holding Fast the Truth*, a 110-page critique of Moravian doctrine. At the same time, Gilbert urged Whitefield to break ties with the Unitas Fratrum. While Whitefield was not in agreement with certain aspects of Moravian theology, he did not see the urgent need to break fellowship with them. This prompted Gilbert to confront Whitefield in a letter. Gilbert wrote his esteemed friend, “Your high opinion of the Moravians and attempts to join with them Shocks me Exceedingly and opens a scene of Terror and distress. Oh my dear brother! I believe in my Soul You never did anything in all your Life of such dreadful Tendency to the Church of God as your favouring that Sect of Enthusiastical Hereticks.”⁶⁰ Despite Gilbert’s efforts, Whitefield could not be convinced. It was a painful exchange that left Gilbert

59 William Henry Foote, *Sketches of North Carolina, Historical and Biographical, of the Principles of a Portion of Her Early Settlers* (New York: Robert Carter, 1846), 219.

60 Coalter, 111-112.

dismayed and perplexed. Whitefield's support of Moravian efforts was later used by his critics to identify him as a Moravian. This controversial support, along with the recent excesses of beloved friend James Davenport, threatened to discredit the entire Awakening cause, a matter deeply troubling to Gilbert. But these events also forced Gilbert to reassess his own actions, affirmations, and affiliations, and led him to a greater appreciation for the seemingly "dead" orthodoxy of his Old Side adversaries. Gilbert wrote a letter to Jonathan Dickinson in February 1742 sharing his recent reflections and his remorse for the "excessive heat of temper" that sometimes marked his conduct.⁶¹ Hope for reunion was kindled.

A most bizarre episode in Gilbert's life occurred on July 14th, 1745. While working in his study that afternoon, Gilbert was struck by lightning. The bolt knocked Gilbert to the floor, melting a steel buck on his shoe and scorching both feet. The chimney and floor of the room were also damaged by the strike. While the Moravians took opportunity to interpret this event as a sign of God's displeasure with Gilbert's attacks on their theology, Gilbert responded with a sermon entitled "All Things come alike to All" to explain the event in terms of God's providential use of afflictions in the life of the believer.

The gloomy clouds that had recently gathered around Gilbert's life were soon to give way to brighter days. In September of 1745, the Presbytery of New York united with the Conjoint Presbyteries to form the Synod of New York.⁶² The Presbytery of New York was intentionally absent from the ill-boding Synod meeting of 1741. Perceiving a heated confrontation between the two parties, the Presbytery of New York did not want to be forced to take sides as it valued qualities in both parties. The extreme measures enacted by the Old Side party however were quite unexpected and appalling to the Presbytery. It immediately set out to reconcile the two parties, but after three failed attempts to secure the restoration of the excluded brethren (spanning the Synod meetings of 1742, 1743, and 1745), in which the obstinacy of the Old Side party was made quite evident,

61 This letter would later be printed without Gilbert's consent (and presumably without Dickinson's) in two newspapers in an obvious attempt to discredit Gilbert's ministry. Gilbert was compelled to publish a reply explaining that while his letter did indicate faults in his *performance*, it did not imply faults in his *positions*.

62 "In that union the genius of an American Presbyterianism was to be shaped....With the founding of the Synod of New York, the destiny of American Presbyterianism was determined, and the creation of a new order became possible." Trinterud, 118, 121.

the Presbytery requested permission to form a separate synod. The peacemaking labors of the Presbytery and its eventual decision to unite with the Conjoint Presbyteries were undoubtedly great encouragements to Gilbert and served to vindicate the New Side cause.

The year 1746 brought to pass the lamentable death of William Tennent, Sr., a spiritual father and mentor to most of the New Side men, and marked the end of the Log College, although the new academies established by Samuel Blair and Samuel Finley faithfully carried on its work. For the men of the Conjoint Presbyteries, these academies were deemed adequate and capable. But the men of the Presbytery of New York longed for a more permanent institution. Already concerned with the failing health of William Tennent, Sr. and the imminent demise of the Log College (and not entirely satisfied with its location or limited scope), four pastors and three laymen of this presbytery began work on an ambitious plan to establish a college for the middle colonies.⁶³ Without consulting Gilbert Tennent or other pastors of the Conjoint Presbyteries, they sought to obtain an official charter from Governor Morris of New Jersey. Knowing that the Anglican governor would not approve a “Presbyterian/dissenter” institution, the New York men sought to establish a “non-denominational” college open to all. The proposal was presented to Morris, but he rejected it fearing potential backlash from the Bishop of London. Then, in May of 1746, Governor Morris unexpectedly died, and was succeeded by interim governor John Hamilton. Hamilton’s advisors convinced him to sign the charter, which he did on October 22, 1746. The seven organizers became the first trustees of the new college and were obliged to appoint five additional members. The favor and support of the Conjoint Presbyteries, having considerable influence with the Pennsylvania and New Jersey populace, was crucial to the survival of the new institution. Hence, Dickinson set out to recruit Gilbert Tennent, William Tennent, Jr., Samuel Blair, Samuel Finley, and Richard Treat - all New Side Presbyterian ministers. Seeing the prospects of such an institution, and being men zealous for truth and knowledge, they accepted Dickinson’s offer. Gilbert’s concern for the public good undoubtedly helped guide

63 Dickinson and Pemberton, having been appointed to serve on the synod committee, had already been involved in the much earlier attempt to establish a synodical seminary in 1739.

his decision to embrace the new institution.⁶⁴ Regarding these first members of the board, Hageman notes, “A glance at these trustees will show that they were the most solid and influential men in the country; that the ministers were all leading Presbyterians and worthy to be the guardians of an institution of learning and religion.”⁶⁵

Perhaps Gilbert’s greatest contribution to the new college was a fundraising campaign in the old country.⁶⁶ In 1753, Gilbert was requested by the College of New Jersey to travel to Great Britain to secure funds for the construction of a building to house the new college (the now famous Nassau Hall). This he did with the Reverend Samuel Davies, a graduate of Samuel Blair’s Nottingham school.⁶⁷ Whitefield had already solicited funds for the college in Scotland in 1748, but was convinced that a visit from a college representative would be necessary if substantial funds were to be obtained. Gilbert was a prime candidate as his fame as a prominent Awakening figure, as well as some of his published works, were well known in England and Scotland. Gilbert had recently lost his second wife as well as his mother, so the opportunity to travel must have been a welcome interruption. Davies, a great champion of religious toleration in Virginia, had important connections with the English dissenting community and was likewise a prudent choice for the mission. The two men departed for London on November 18th. The care that Gilbert exercised toward his younger colleague as they journeyed led Davies to consider Gilbert as his “spiritual father.”⁶⁸ They arrived in London on Christmas Day and soon joined Whitefield for a brief meeting. According to Davies, Gilbert seemed depressed upon their

64 Gilbert’s support would become more guarded in time due to subsequent changes to the college’s charter allowing more provincial/government involvement.

65 John Frelinghuysen Hageman, *History of Princeton and Its Institutions*, vol. 2, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1879), 238.

66 His ability to secure funds had been amply demonstrated in his church’s new building project.

67 Samuel Blair was a Log College graduate and his school at Nottingham was most likely the intended successor to the original Log College.

68 In his diary, Davies refers to Gilbert as his “father and friend.” Hitt, 145.

arrival, but after meeting with Whitefield, Gilbert's spirit was refreshed.⁶⁹ The task before them was a considerable challenge. The vast area to be covered, and the state of the Presbyterian church as found there, were formidable obstacles. The Presbyterians were divided into two camps, the Unitarians (Presbyterian in name only), and the Evangelicals. The unitarian camp gave the men a cold reception, and the evangelical camp was troubled by reports sent to them from colonial Old Lights who claimed that the new college was established to promote the awakening cause. Copies of Gilbert's "Nottingham Sermon" and *Remarks upon a Protestation* were conveniently included. At this point, the two men made a strategic decision. Gilbert would travel to his native Ireland, and Davies would continue on the mainland. Given the current situation, this plan appeared to offer the best prospects. The plan worked. Upwards of £3000 was received as a result (approximating one million dollars in today's US currency) and the fourteen-month mission celebrated as a tremendous success. The building was constructed in 1756 at the cost of £2900. It measured 176 feet in length and was 54 feet wide, the largest stone building in the colonies as well as the largest academic building in the colonies.

Just one year later, these new halls would be home to revival. However, the beginning of this on-campus student awakening movement was rather unique in comparison to previous revival movements. This revival started with the reading of books devoted to practical theology. Both Gilbert and his brother William were invited to come and observe the evidences of religious concern and vital piety among the seventy students. Gilbert would deliver several sermons in hopes of advancing the awakening. These sermons reflected Gilbert's more fully developed pastoral and theological perspectives, and formed a seam between the old guard of revivalist ministers and the newest generation of Presbyterian clergy. A similar awakening movement would occur at the college in 1762 under Samuel Finley's presidency.

If 1757 was a year of revival for Gilbert, 1758 was a year of reunion. The French and Indian War had made the colonies sensible to their great need of moral reform if God's protection and blessing could be expected, and both the Old and New Side parties were united in labors for moral transformation. This fraternal

69 Coalter suggests that Gilbert anticipated a more celebrated reception upon his arrival. *Gilbert Tennent, Son of Thunder*, 148.

spirit gave hope for the development of more substantial unity. But the Old Side had another vested interest to entertain reunion. In the years following the schism, the Old Side party was barely able to maintain its numbers while the New Side experienced rapid growth. By 1758, the Synod of Philadelphia numbered only twenty ministers⁷⁰, while the Synod of New York numbered seventy-three.⁷¹ C. Van Rensselaer remarks, “Thus did the Providence of God set its seal upon animated orthodoxy.”⁷² The steady decline of the Old Side and their failure to establish a seminary signaled the need to revisit the possibility of reunion. In 1756, the Synod of Philadelphia removed the greatest obstacle to reunion by declaring that the 1741 *Protestation* had been the act of a few synod members and did not represent the entire synod and thus could not be considered a synodical act.⁷³ The gesture was well received by the Synod of New York, and the following year a joint commission of conference was organized to begin work on a plan for reconciliation. Gilbert, William Tennent, Jr., and Samuel Finley were among those who served on the joint commission. It was determined that both Synods should meet at the same place and time for their 1758 assembly and if matters still proved favorable, that the reunion would be made official. The Synod of New York thus met in Philadelphia on May 25th. The Synod of Philadelphia was already in session. The plan of reunion was presented to both assemblies and unanimously approved by both. On May 29th, the two synods were officially reunited and became the Synod of New York and Philadelphia.

Gilbert’s leadership and influence exerted in reconciling the two parties should not be underestimated. From the time of rupture until reunion, he labored diligently in the pursuit of reconciliation. As early as 1742 Gilbert had communicated to

70 At the time of the schism in 1741, the Old Side party numbered twenty-two ministers.

71 “But the reunited church of the 1760’s was over 80 per cent the product or the party of the Awakening. And the constitutional reorganization of 1788 established, as against the Scottish party, the ‘New Side’ position on the crucial issues.” Nichols, 286.

72 C. Van Rensselaer, “Biographical Sketch of Gilbert Tennent”, *Home, the School, and the Church, or the Presbyterian Education Repository*, Vol. 4, 1854, p. 169

73 “The...declaration respecting the protest is historically correct. It was not a synodical act, but the act of certain members in their individual capacity. It was never officially adopted or sanctioned by a vote of the synod; though it was often spoken of with approbation.” Hodge, 334.

the Synod of Philadelphia his willingness to retract previous statements if peace and unity could be restored, but the offer was refused. Throughout the following years Gilbert would preach often on the subject of reconciliation. Sermons such as “Brotherly Love” (1748) and “Irenicum Ecclesiasticum” (1749) were aimed at promoting unity within the church. He even published a large pamphlet entitled *The Pacificator* in which he pleaded strongly for reunion. In a sermon presented to the Synod of Philadelphia just prior to the reunion, Old Side minister Francis Alison cordially acknowledged that “Gilbert Tennent...has written more and suffered more for his writings, to promote peace and union, than any member of this divided church.”⁷⁴ Fittingly, Gilbert was elected to serve as the first moderator of the reunited synod.

Just a few years after the reunion, Gilbert’s health began to decline and frequent requests for pulpit supply were made by his congregation. In October of 1762 the church determined that their ailing pastor required an assistant. Gilbert was open to the suggestion, but supposing his ailments as only temporary, he envisioned only a temporary assistant. This could be easily achieved by calling a younger man without a settled position. During the congregational meeting to explore such a call, Gilbert discovered that his congregation had a more permanent position in mind, as well as a particular candidate - George Duffield, New Side pastor of Carlisle and Big Spring churches, whose extemporaneous preaching style allured the attention of many in the Philadelphia church. A vote was held, the numbers skewed by the help of some nonvoting members, and George Duffield was chosen to become Gilbert’s new permanent assistant. As if his sickness were not troublesome enough, the congregation’s decision was a devastating blow to Gilbert.⁷⁵ He later remarked, “I was very far from expecting such...as had hap[pen]ed, the sight of which astonished and distressed me, for it look’d like burying me while I was alive in a House under which God I had built.”⁷⁶ Gilbert opposed the call and made his case before the two presbyteries involved, noting the unconstitutionality of a fraudulent vote and the impropriety of seeking such a

74 Coalter, 156.

75 One may recall the treatment of Jonathan Edwards by his Northampton congregation after twenty years of dedicated service.

76 Coalter, 161.

permanent assistant without his consent, especially in light of the many sacrifices and labors he had endured to see the success of this church. Gilbert's objections persuaded both Duffield and the presbyteries not to move forward with the call. The dispute left a wake of awkwardness and grief, but providence would spare Gilbert much of this pain as he was called to glory on July 23rd, 1764. To honor his sacrifice and labors, his Philadelphia congregation laid his body to rest in a tomb located in the center aisle of the sanctuary bearing the following inscription written in classic Latin by his good friend Dr. Samuel Finley⁷⁷:

Under this marble are buried the remains of Gilbert Tennent, first Pastor of this Church; by whose agency chiefly, this building, sacred to God, was erected. The son of William Tennent; born in Armagh, Ireland, on February 5th, 1702, elected Pastor at New Brunswick, in 1725; then called to Philadelphia, in 1743; he died on July 23^d, 1764, in the 62nd year of his age. He was a prudent, experienced, venerable man; in manners and piety eminent; as a Husband, Brother, Father and Friend, among the most excellent: a bold, learned, faithful, successful Defender of true religion; and finally, a Christian without guile. The congregation, his former hearers, have caused his name to be commemorated by this eulogy.⁷⁸

When the church was remodeled, Gilbert's remains were placed in a private vault. In 1853, Elizabeth Tennent Smith requested that the remains of her grandfather Gilbert be removed to the Abington Presbyterian Church cemetery. There the remains of Gilbert and Samuel Finley were interred in a plot where Cornelia Tennent Smith, Elizabeth's mother, had also been buried. In 1866, Elizabeth, the last member of Gilbert's immediate family, would also be laid to rest in the same plot.⁷⁹

Family

Gilbert was preceded in death by his first two wives. Strangely, the name of his first wife, the date of their marriage, and the exact date of her death are not recorded. All that is known about her is that she died in the year 1740 before

77 Finley also delivered a memorial sermon, "The Successful Minister of Christ Distinguished in Glory" on September 2nd, 1764 in Philadelphia.

78 Coalter, 162-163.

79 Mary A. Tennent, *Light in Darkness: The Story of William Tennent Sr. and the Log College* (Greensboro, NC: Greensboro Printing Company, 1971), 95.

Gilbert set out for his brief preaching tour through southern New Jersey, Delaware, and upper Maryland.⁸⁰ Whitefield notes in his journal, “My soul was also much refreshed with the sight of dear Mr. Gilbert Tennent and Mr. Cross. The former has lately lost his wife, and though dear unto him, yet he was enabled with great calmness to preach her funeral sermon, whilst the corpse were lying before him.”⁸¹ Gilbert married Cornelia Bancker (de Peyster) Clarkson on February 9th, 1741 in Somerset, New Jersey. She was a wealthy widow almost ten years older than Gilbert with ten children from her previous marriage, although several of these children died young or were married by this time. Gilbert was especially fond of her daughter Anna.⁸² Cornelia died on May 25th, 1753. Gilbert was survived in death by his third wife, Sarah Spofford, whom he married November 26th, 1755. She was the widow of a royal naval captain and had one child from her previous marriage, Sarah.⁸³ Mrs. Spofford was the mother of Gilbert’s only biological children: Gilbert, Jr. (b. December 24th, 1758), Cornelia (b. December 20th, 1760), and Elizabeth (b. August 29th, 1763). Gilbert, Jr. was lost at sea. Cornelia married Dr. William Smith. Elizabeth died at only thirteen years of age on January 6th, 1777. A recent discovery has brought even more information to light regarding Gilbert’s family – his 1726 family Bible printed by John Baskett, Edinburgh. Notes written in Sarah’s hand indicate that Gilbert and Sarah also had two other children, Anna (b. October 30th, 1756; may have died in infancy), and Catherine (b. February 4th or 9th, 1758; died in infancy).⁸⁴

80 “Since his wife’s decease, Mr. Tennent has been in the West Jerseys and Maryland, and told me how God remarkably worked by his ministry in many places.” George Whitefield, *A Continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield’s Journal, From a few Days after his Return to Georgia to his Arrival at Falmouth*, 2nd ed. (London: W. Strahan, 1744), 61.

81 Ibid.

82 Anna Clarkson married Gilbert’s friend and Log College graduate Samuel Finley. She was his second wife and outlived him forty years, much of that time being blind. She was a member of the party accompanying William Tennent, III, on his return from Freehold, New Jersey to Charleston, when he died en route near Stateburg, South Carolina, in 1777.

83 In 1772 Sarah would marry Rev. John Woodhull, the successor of William Tennent, Jr. as pastor of “Old Tennent” Church.

84 To the author’s knowledge, information regarding Anna and Catherine has never been documented or published before this article.

Personality and Character

Gilbert was recognized for his earnestness, authenticity, and honesty. Hypocrisy was completely repulsive to him and he addressed the topic frequently in his sermons. Socially, he was kind, gentle, and calm in spirit. He was always concerned for the public good, but especially for the eternal good of their soul. He was a man of indefatigable fortitude and resolution with an unwavering zeal for truth. There was an industrious pattern to his life as he sought diligently to be a “good and faithful servant” and a man who takes “heaven by storm.” Perhaps the best description of Gilbert’s personality and character may be found in a memorial sermon delivered by Dr. Samuel Finley, a close friend and fellow Log College alumnus:

In his manners, at first view, he seemed distant and reserved; yet, upon nearer acquaintance, he was ever found affable, condescending, and communicative. And what greatly endeared his conversation was, an openness and undisguised honesty; at the greatest remove from artifice and dissimulation, which were the abhorrence of his soul, while he lived. Besides, he was tender, loving, and compassionate; kind and agreeable in every relation; an assured friend to such as he esteemed worthy of his regards; and a common patron to all whom he apprehended were injured or distressed. He was of a truly public spirit, and seemed to feel the various cases of mankind in general: but sensibly partook of all the good or ill that befell his country. He needed no other motive to exert himself, than only to be persuaded that the matter in question was an important public good, and in such cases, he was much regarded, not only because of his known integrity, but his generous and catholic disposition. For although he was a great lover of truth, and very zealous for its propagation; yet he was so far above a narrow, party spirit, that he loved and honoured all who seemed to have “the root of the matter in them,” and made it their business to promote the essentials of religion, though they were, in various points, opposed to his own sentiments.⁸⁵ He was, moreover, an example of great

85 This description of Gilbert by Dr. Finley is interesting for two reasons. First, it sheds light on why Gilbert was so supportive of establishing the College of New Jersey, although he personally preferred private academies (this he states in his famous sermon, “The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry”). Gilbert’s concern for the public good was probably the driving force enabling him to set aside his own preferences, even those pertaining to education. Secondly, Finley’s description of Gilbert’s generous disposition reflects his character generally exhibited during his long pastorate in Philadelphia where there is no record of any public controversy with the exception of his campaign against the Moravians. It would appear then that the zeal exhibited in his earlier years was truly based upon conscientious principle and did not stem from a quarrelsome spirit.

fortitude, and unshaken resolution. Whatever appeared to him subservient to the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom, the salvation of souls, or the common good of mankind, he pursued with spirit; and what he did, he did with his might. If the end seemed to be attainable, great obstructions and difficulties in the way, were so far from dispiriting, that they animated him in his efforts: nor would he give up the point, while one glimpse of hope remained. Hence, he accomplished many important matters, which one less determined and enterprising, would presently have relinquished as desperate. He would go through honour and dishonour, through "evil report and good report"; and though he had sensibility with respect to his character, as well as other men; yet, if preserving it, seemed at any time to require the omission of duty, or sinful compliances, he readily determined to expose himself to all risks; and if adhering to the will of God should be accounted "vile," he resolved that he would be "yet more vile." A great part of his life was a scene of unremitted labour. He studied hard, travelled much, and preached often, while his health and other circumstances permitted. He was "instant in season and out of season": always about his Master's business. They who have journeyed or been often with him in company, could not but observe his constant endeavors to do good by his conversation; to introduce some convincing or edifying topics; and his watching for proper opportunities for speaking for God. And very faithful was he in warning sinners of their danger, and persuading them to seek salvation in earnest. Thus, he showed how much religion was his element, and promoting it the delightful business of his life. How benevolent towards mankind he was, and how precious immortal souls were in his esteem, were evident from this, that every advantage accruing to them he reckoned clear gain to himself; nor were they "who divide the spoil," ever more joyful than I have known him to be, on occasion of the hopeful conversion of sinners, whether by his own, or the ministry of others. And, often, has his "soul wept in secret places" for the pride and obstinacy of those who refused to be reclaimed.⁸⁶

Finley's description represents the high esteem Gilbert held in the hearts of his fellow Log College men. For a more objective, yet still equally admirable perspective, one may turn to the description given by Rev. Thomas Prince of Boston who had welcomed Gilbert to his pulpit during his 1740 preaching tour:

In private conversation, I found him to be a man of considerable parts and learning; free, gentle, and condescending, and from his own various experience, his reading the most eminent writers on experimental divinity, as well as the Scriptures, and from his conversing with many who had been

86 Alexander, 38-40.

awakened by his ministry in New Jersey, he seemed to have as deep an acquaintance with the experimental part of religion, as any I have conversed with.⁸⁷

Theology and Pastoral Ministry

Gilbert Tennent fully affirmed and embraced the Westminster Standards. He, as well as his father, signed the Adopting Act of 1729 making the Westminster Standards the official statement of faith for the colonial Presbyterian church. After its exclusion, one of the very first actions of the Presbytery of New Brunswick in which Gilbert served as its most prominent leader, was to assert its commitment to the Westminster Standards. In the 1743 “Declaration of the Conjunct Presbyteries of New Brunswick and New Castle” the following statement is found:

We think it proper, for the satisfaction of all concerning us, and as a due testimony to the truth of God, to declare and testify to the world our principles and sentiments in religion, according to which we design, through divine grace, ever to conduct ourselves, both as Christians and as Ministers and Ruling Elders. And first, as to the doctrines of religion, we believe, with our heart, and profess and maintain with our lips, the doctrines summed up and contained in the Confession of Faith, and Larger and Shorter Catechisms, composed by the reverend Assembly of Divines at Westminster, as the truths of God, revealed and contained in the holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments; and do receive, acknowledge, and declare the said Confession of Faith and Catechisms to be the confession of our faith; yet so as that no part of the twenty-third chapter of said Confession shall be so construed as to allow civil magistrates, as such, to have any ecclesiastical authority in Synods, or Church judicatories, much less the power of a negative voice over them in their ecclesiastical transactions; nor is any part of it to be understood as opposite to the memorable revolution, and the settlement of the crown of the three kingdoms in the illustrious house of Hanover.⁸⁸

While his Old Side adversaries may have disagreed with his ministry philosophy and interpretation of the Directory for Worship, they never once questioned or challenged his commitment to the Standards.

Although fully committed to the Presbyterian/Reformed faith, Gilbert was also known for his ecumenical spirit. When the first church building of his

87 Alexander, 43.

88 Hodge, 197.

Philadelphia congregation was erected, Gilbert stated during its dedication, “All Societies, who profess Christianity, and retain the Foundation-Principles thereof, notwithstanding their different Denominations and Diversity of Sentiments in smaller Things, are in Reality, but One Church of Christ, but several Branches (more or less pure in Minuter Points) of one visible Kingdom of the Messiah; whose Honour and Interest rightly understood, is one and the same.”⁸⁹ This ecumenical spirit was shared by the New Side Presbyterians in general.

Gilbert was a powerful preacher, aided by a strong voice and cogent reason. His earnestness and passion in the pulpit was greatly admired by his hearers. Alexander remarks that, “Indeed, in the vigour of his age, few preachers could equal him.”⁹⁰ Mr. Prince related that Gilbert’s preaching was “. . . as searching and rousing, as ever I heard.”⁹¹ His effect on hypocritical professors was a peculiar characteristic of Gilbert’s preaching. His sermons seemed to forcibly rip off their deceptive masks and rob them entirely of any hope of salvation apart from faith in Christ. Even the majestic Whitefield was impressed by the power of Gilbert’s preaching, and noted the following description of Gilbert in his journal:

He and his associates, are now the burning and shining lights of this part of America. . . . I went to the meeting house to hear Mr. Gilbert Tennent preach, and never before, heard such a searching sermon. He went to the bottom indeed, and did not daub with untempered mortar. He convinced me more and more that we can preach the gospel of Christ no further than we have experienced the power of it in our own heart. Being deeply convicted of sin, and driven from time to time off his false bottom and dependencies, by God’s Holy Spirit at his first conversion, he has learned experimentally to dissect the heart of a natural man. Hypocrites must either soon be converted or enraged, at his preaching. He is a Son of Thunder, and does not fear the faces of men. He is deeply sensible of the deadness and formality of the Christian church in these parts, and has given noble testimonies against it.⁹²

Alexander adds that “A higher testimony, and from higher authority could not be given, upon earth. It is doubtful whether Mr. Whitefield has ever expressed

89 Trinterud, 132.

90 Alexander, 37.

91 Alexander, 43.

92 Whitefield, *Embarking after the Embargo, to his Arrival at Savannah*, 34-36.

so high an opinion of any other preacher, of any denomination.”⁹³

The law/gospel dynamic was a major thematic feature of Gilbert’s revival preaching. The holiness and justice of God, as well as the realities of death, judgment, and hell torment, were greatly emphasized. It was in this context of the “bad news” that Gilbert diligently applied the “good news” of the gospel. While there has been much attention given to Gilbert’s emphasis on the “terrors of the law,” it should be noted that Gilbert’s use of the law in preaching was for the purpose of gospel proclamation. For Gilbert, the good news of salvation in Christ would be unintelligible without the bad news of sin and condemnation. Thus, Gilbert’s sermons actually display a remarkable balance of law and gospel. Far from being all “fire and brimstone,” the gospel was equally proclaimed, as Finley remarks:

The atoning blood of the Redeemer, that only sovereign balsam, was applied to their recent or festering wounds. For while, at one time, when he thundered the terrors of the law, the heavens seemed to gather blackness, and a tempest of wrath appeared ready to be hurled on the heads of the guilty; at other times, when he exhibited the riches of the grace and provisions of the gospel, the heavens seemed to smile, the clouds were dispelled, and the sky became serene. The almighty God was shown to be their refuge, and underneath were the everlasting arms. Then his exhilarating words dropped upon them as the dew.⁹⁴

The need for regeneration was another thematic element of his revival preaching, but this was of course common to all of the revivalist ministers, including Frelinghuysen and especially Whitefield. Gilbert’s sermons, including those that might be considered more fitted for revival purposes, are all expositively based and display a good measure of doctrinal substance appropriately illustrated and balanced with skillful pastoral applications pointedly aimed at life transformation. Direct address, rhetorical questions, and the use of personal interrogative (especially in his applications, which he styles “improvements”) were his common practice.

Gilbert preached without a manuscript before his pastorate in Philadelphia.

93 Alexander, 45.

94 Alexander, 41.

However, after accepting the call to serve the Philadelphia Church, he began to preach using a manuscript and read his sermons. This change led many to observe a noticeable lack of force and unction in contrast to his former days. The transition to a more formal setting of ministry as well as his intention to focus on doctrinal topics for the benefit of his largely undisciplined Philadelphia congregation are likely the reasons behind this shift.

Gilbert was not only a gifted preacher, but also a true pastor. Both his theological education and spiritual experience helped mold him into a very capable shepherd. As a counselor, Gilbert was well equipped for soul care. Finley remarks, “His great reading, with his various and long experience of the workings of both grace and corruption in the heart, made him a wise and skillful casuist, who could resolve perplexing exercises of mind with clearness, [and enabled] him to comfort with those consolations, wherewith he in like cases had been comforted by God.”⁹⁵ Gilbert would often visit the homes of his congregants and examine them individually as to their Christian experience.

Gilbert was also a committed churchman. This is especially true with regard to his concern for the expansion of the New Side movement, but most importantly the spiritual health of its pastors and congregations. Finley states:

He was a faithful attendant on the judicatories of the church, as was natural for one so anxiously concerned for the interest of religion, as he was. And having observed the effects of a lax and negligible government in some churches, he became a more strenuous assenter of due and strict discipline. But above all other things, the purity of the ministry was his care; and, therefore, at the hazard of the displeasure of many, and in the face of reproach, he zealously urged every scriptural method by which carnal and earthly-minded men might be kept from entering it, and men of piety and zeal, as well as learning, introduced.”⁹⁶

Conclusion

Whitefield’s “Son of Thunder” appellation, while certainly memorable and fitting, highlights only one aspect of Gilbert’s personality and character. The key to understanding his conduct in the various occasions and settings of his life may be more accurately found in his two most prominent moral traits - a passion for

95 Alexander, 40.

96 Alexander, 40-41.

truth, and a passion for godliness. His passion for godliness led him to champion the Awakening cause and set him against the dead orthodoxy so prevalent in the colonial church as well as fostering his ecumenical charitableness. His passion for truth set him against the Moravians and other Revival extremists and later evoked a new appreciation for the Old Side's doctrinal fidelity.

On the other hand, Gilbert's tendency to "offend when offense was needed" is a trait desperately needed in the American Church today where political correctness and cultural accommodation have wreaked havoc within the congregations of this land. His unflinching spirit, willing to confront sin and heresy wherever and in whomever it might be found, would be a welcome attribute in today's preaching – and potentially, by God's grace and power, the beginning of a "Greater Awakening."

REVIEW OF ROBERT L. DABNEY'S
SACRED RHETORIC

ANDREW UNDERHILE, PH.D.¹

Dabney's *Sacred Rhetoric* is an absolute homiletical masterpiece! It is a full course on preaching, covering everything from exegetical questions to homiletic concerns; from structure and logic, to word choice; from elocution to hand gestures.

What distinguishes this volume from other books on preaching is that one never gets the impression that Dabney's "rules" are merely his personal preference. None of his rules seem arbitrary. Everything, from study habits, to sermon preparation, to delivery, is rooted in his definition of the preacher as God's "herald." The practical implications of this are numerous and vitally important.

First of all, it impacts exegesis by forcing the preacher to work as hard as he possibly can to get at the Holy Spirit's intended meaning. Dabney would rightly, I believe, charge a man with blasphemy for putting words into God's mouth if he ventured to obtrude a foreign meaning into the text – or even to preach a right doctrine, but from the wrong text.

Second, as God's herald, everything the preacher does must be done with a view to preserving God's honor in the church. This injunction would cut out the levity which is prevalent in many modern pulpits.

Thirdly, faithfulness to the text raises the authority of Scripture in the estimation of the congregation. Any strained interpretations, esoteric applications, or allegorizing, are ruled out. By nature they cause one or both of two evils: They engender confusion in the congregation and/or belittle the value and authority of Scripture. In the first case, we must ask how faithful a herald a man is when the recipients of his message have no clue what he's talking about. And in the latter case, devotion to Scripture and desire to read/study is killed because the congregation feels as if there is no possible way they could ever figure out what

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.

Scripture means. The devotional duty of reading Scripture is thus discouraged by the man who is actually tasked with proclaiming it.

Fourthly, in direct opposition to current ministerial philosophy, Dabney would forbid the preacher from mentioning himself (for good or bad) in his sermon. Contemporary ministerial philosophy holds that a minister is more successful if he is vulnerable with his congregation, and evidences this vulnerability by detailing his own failures and foibles from the pulpit in his sermons. Dabney calls this “arrogant coxcombry.” Based on the preacher’s office as herald, any mention of himself is ruled out. First, because God has not sent us His heralds to proclaim themselves, and secondly the habit of obtruding yourself into the pulpit depreciates the authority of Scripture in the eyes of the congregation. The normative authority of God’s Word stands on its own. The pastor’s success or failure to comply with Scripture is irrelevant to God’s authority to command whatever He has willed to command.

Fifthly, Dabney absolutely forbids bringing politics and current secular fads (for us this would be top-sellers, movies, TV shows, etc.) into the sermon. This is an amazing position because Dabney was chaplain and Chief of Staff to Stonewall Jackson. But again, this is entirely in keeping with his definition of the preacher as herald. The message is God’s, not the preacher’s. With regard to politics, his warning is that by taking up contemporary “hot topics,” the preacher is betraying a desire to build a name for himself by cashing in on the heat of a current event. He would be doing his job better, and serving his congregation better if he worked to turn them back to things of eternal value, rather than goad them their jaded hearts in the pursuit of worldly passions. He actually says that when you introduce the secular into your pulpit, you have taken “the first steps toward backsliding, apostasy, damnation.”

There are a few issues Dabney addresses which are no longer relevant. For instance, he gives elaborate instructions on projecting one’s voice. All of his concerns are no longer live issues due to the advent of sound systems. A preacher now uses microphone, and hence no longer needs to worry about projecting his voice loud enough to be heard by those in the back rows.

The only instructions he gives which I found hard to understand or accept have to do with the writing and delivery of the sermon. Dabney stresses the importance of writing well. He stresses the need to revise with ruthlessness, to

leave no section of the sermon unexamined. He wants to preacher to write his first draft of the sermon in a “stream of consciousness” sort of manner. Only after it has been written, should he stop to address various turns of phrases and word choices. So it appears that the written sermon is his choice, but then he berates anything but extempore preaching. He notes that there are many very, very good preachers who write their sermons at about 2/3 actual length, and because they have studied so well, they are comfortable with using their manuscript, without actually reading it, and are yet free to add new thoughts which present themselves during the actual delivery of the sermon. But strangely, this is not what he recommends.

He also dislikes the memorized sermon, because of the possibility of an artificial delivery and the preacher being more concerned with not forgetting a line than with the actual content. And he absolutely rejects reading sermons. His description, however, of extempore preaching fails to distinguish itself from the first method. He demands strict study habits, deep and long meditation on both the content and structure of the sermon. Nothing he says about his preferred method differs from the first method, except that one does not take paper with his into the pulpit. But then again, we find a problem that is clearly no longer relevant. His image of a manuscript or of notes, is handwritten. Granted, losing one’s place in certainly more likely when using handwritten notes or manuscripts than when using a computer printed manuscript.

Sadly, some of his better points are casualties of the passage of time as well. One of his rules is that the sermon should be defined by its “Scripturalness.” In order to do this, he recommends using the actual phraseology of Scripture. However, because he is thinking exclusively of the King James version, the rhetorical effect of his injunction is somewhat blunted. In his day, because the King James version was the standard for home, school, and church, its phraseology was familiar to everyone. Any expression lifted from Scripture would be instantly recognized as Scripture. This is no longer the case. Too few people, in or out of church, are familiar enough with the language of the King James to recognize that a statement made in the pulpit is a Scripture citation. And related to this is Dabney’s view that by accommodating this language of Scripture, one’s own vocabulary and oratorical style will be improved. Again, sadly, with the demise of common usage of the King James, his injunction would fail to achieve the desired effect.

The work concludes with instructions on the preacher's public prayer. Dabney argues that the preacher should put the same work into his public prayers as he does his sermons. But he also warns the preacher to remember to Whom the prayers are addressed. Praying for effect is prayer to the congregation, not to God.

On the whole, I cannot recommend this book highly enough. Though it was written for seminarians who had yet to minister regularly in the pulpit, it contains nuggets of wisdom that can benefit even the most veteran preacher.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK:

As we complete this second installment of *Theolog*, We again hope that you find it to be instructive, challenging, edifying, and thought-provoking as you strive to live out the Christian faith in this fallen world. This editor is also coming to see how this journal is beginning to form a body of practical and ecclesiastical divinity. In this edition, there are essays in exegetical theology, worship, homiletics, soteriology, and historical theology. We deal with the questions dealing with matters like the work of the church in caring for the soul of the hurting Christian to the significance of the gathered Assembly in worship. Adding these articles to those of the previous edition, *Theolog* is clearly making a meaningful contribution to the well-being of the Church.

While many of these articles represent the works of those of us on the Oversight Board, we wish for this journal to be a reflection of the thought of the whole of LCS: Oversight Board, Mentors, and Students alike. If you are working toward a Masters' Degree or a Doctorate, we especially encourage you to rework one of your best papers in an article format to benefit the body as a whole. If you are an approved Mentor, again, we hope that you will consider contributing articles to this journal. We cannot produce a journal like this without well-written articles from a solidly Biblical and Reformed perspective.

As we look to the future, it is our hope to see *Theolog* become a bi-annual journal, and in time, even a quarterly one. In time, it is our vision to see *Theolog* as a standard theological journal amongst Reformed and evangelical academia. Yet, it is not just academia that we are hoping to serve within the pages of this journal. We hope that Elders and leaders of local churches will read this journal and be edified by its contents. It has been said that Christians no longer ponder the deep things of God's word like they used to do in ages gone by; our prayer is that God uses *Theolog* as a tool to correct that trend.

LCS exists to serve the local church within the church's own local context by training up ministers and church leaders where they live through a mentor-driven process. Although donations are always welcome, we commit that we will never charge a dime for that service. We are grateful for the many hours of volunteer work by many people that allow us to accomplish that end. We do what we do not for the glory or praise of men; we do what we do because we are committed publicly and privately to the glory of God and to the building up of Christ's Kingdom. Please join us in that endeavor.

Dr. Win Groseclose
Chief Editor, *Theolog*
The Log College and Seminary

The Editor would like to extend his thanks to the Oversight Board as well as to Reverend Allen Davis for their editorial assistance in the production of this journal.

"The Preacher sought to acquire words of delight and so he wrote honestly words of truth. The words of the wise are like goads — like fixed nails are the gathered sayings; they are given by one Shepherd. Over and above this, my son, be warned. Of the making of many books there is no end and of much study there is exhaustion of the flesh. The last word as the whole has been heard: God you shall fear and his commandments you shall keep, for this is the whole of man. For every work, God will bring into judgment along with every hidden thing — if it is good and if it is evil."

(Ecclesiastes 12:10-14)