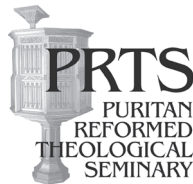


Puritan Reformed Journal

JULY 2014



Volume 6 • Number 2



Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary
2965 Leonard St. N.E.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49525

PURITAN REFORMED JOURNAL
Edited for Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary

Joel R. Beeke, *Editor*

Michael Barrett, *Associate Editor of Old Testament*

Jerry Bilkes, *Associate Editor of New Testament*

David Murray, *Associate Editor of Pastoral Theology, Contemporary and Cultural Issues*

William VanDoodewaard, *Associate Editor of Historical Theology*

Michael Haykin, *Associate Editor*

Jonathon Beeke, *Book Review Editor*

Ryan McGraw, *Assistant Book Review Editor*

Kate DeVries, *Copy Editor*

Gary and Linda den Hollander, *Typesetter/Proofreader*

Puritan Reformed Journal is published semi-annually. The subscription price per year for individuals and institutions is \$20.00 in the United States, \$30.00 in Canada (payable in U.S. funds), \$35.00 in foreign countries (surface mail). Back issues may be purchased at \$10.00 per copy.

Please address all *PRJ* communication as follows:

Business, subscriptions: Mrs. Ann Dykema, *PRJ* Administrative Assistant, 2965 Leonard St. N.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49525; telephone 616-977-0599, x135; e-mail: ann.dykema@puritanseminary.org

Editorial, manuscripts (preferred length: 3,000–6,000 words): Dr. Joel R. Beeke, 2965 Leonard St. N.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49525; telephone 616-977-0599, x123; e-mail: jrbeeke@puritanseminary.org

Book reviews: Jonathon Beeke, 1438 Edith Ave. N.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49525; telephone 215-316-6766; e-mail: jonathon.beeke@puritanseminary.org

© Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary. For a free seminary catalog and DVD, write: Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Attn.: Mrs. Ann Dykema, 2965 Leonard St. N.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49525; ann.dykema@puritanseminary.org; web: www.puritanseminary.org

ISSN #: 1946-8652

Cover artwork by Caffy Whitney and design by Amy Zevenbergen: John Calvin (1509–1564)—the premier exegete and theologian of the Reformation, top right; William Perkins (1558–1602), “the father of English Puritanism,” bottom left.

POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO: *Puritan Reformed Journal*, Attn.: Mrs. Ann Dykema, 2965 Leonard St. N.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49525

Table of Contents



From the Editors 1

BIBLICAL STUDIES

The Danger of Heartless Religion: An Exposition of Isaiah 1:2–18
MICHAEL BARRETT 5

The New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31–34) — MICHAEL BORG 16

SYSTEMATIC AND HISTORICAL THEOLOGY

Calvin on Predestination — ARTHUR MISKIN 37

John Bunyan: His Life, Writing, and Influence
GEOFF THOMAS 53

Innate Knowledge in the Thought of Wilhelmus à Brakel
TODD D. BAUCUM 65

Jonathan Edwards on the Justice of God — PETER AIKEN. 88

Jonathan Edwards’s Reshaping of Lockean Terminology into a
Calvinistic Aesthetic Epistemology in his *Religious Affections*
HYUNKWAN KIM 103

“A System of Holiness”: Andrew Fuller’s Evangelical
Calvinistic Theology of Virtue — RYAN P. HOSELTON 123

EXPERIENTIAL THEOLOGY

Experiencing Our Only Comfort: A Post-Reformation Refocus
in the Heidelberg Catechism — JAN VAN VLIET 149

Assurance of Salvation: The Insights of Anthony Burgess
JOEL R. BEEKE AND PAUL SMALLEY 171

PASTORAL THEOLOGY AND MISSIONS

The Mouth of the Morningstar: John Wycliffe’s Preaching
and the Protestant Reformation — CALEB CANGELOSI 187

Knowing God from the Heart: Samuel Davies on the
Means of Grace — JOSEPH C. HARROD 216

Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones’s Principles of Evangelism with
Application for Producing Evangelistic Church Members
SIMON J. GREEN. 258

“Seeds of truth planted in the field of memory”: How to Utilize the Shorter Catechism — ALLEN STANTON	270
Fifteen Pointers for Preachers — BRIAN G. NAJAPFOUR	284

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

A Type of the Marriage of Christ: John Gill on Marriage MATT HASTE	289
Critique of the Cult of the Jehovah’s Witnesses IAN C. MACLEOD	303
A Theology of Sleep — DAVID P. MURRAY	318

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ARTICLE

Reading the Puritans — JOEL R. BEEKE	331
--	-----

BOOK REVIEWS

Jordan J. Ballor, David S. Sytsma, and Jason Zuidema, eds., <i>Church and School in Early Modern Protestantism: Studies in Honor of Richard A. Muller on the Maturation of a Theological Tradition</i> RYAN M. MCGRAW	359
Erik A. de Boer, <i>The Genevan School of the Prophets: The Congregations of the Company of Pastors and their Influence in 16th Century Europe</i> JAN MARTIJN ABRAHAMSE	363
John Harris, <i>Mammon or, Covetousness the Sin of the Christian Church</i> RYAN HURD	366
Erroll Hulse, <i>One in a Thousand: The Calling and Work of a Pastor</i> DAVID MURRAY	367
Michael J. Kruger, <i>The Question of Canon: Challenging the Status Quo in the New Testament Debate</i> — PIETER DE VRIES	369
Glenda Mathes, <i>Little One Lost: Living with Early Infant Loss</i> WILLIAM BOEKESTEIN	371
Brian S. Rosner, <i>Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of God</i> PIETER DE VRIES	372
Catherine J. Stewart, ed. <i>Letters to Pastors’ Wives: When Seminary Ends and Ministry Begins</i> — RYAN M. MCGRAW	375
Guy Prentiss Waters, <i>How Jesus Runs the Church</i> RYAN M. MCGRAW	376
Christopher J. H. Wright, <i>The Mission of God’s People: A Biblical Theology of the Church’s Mission</i> — IAN MACLEOD	377
Contributors	383

From the Editors



Academic journals in theology have a distinguished history, going back to Reformed and Presbyterian journals in the nineteenth century that sought to disseminate scriptural knowledge, keep abreast of theological developments, and understand and defend the faith. Consequently, the *Puritan Reformed Journal* is in good company. This issue is no exception to the rich biblical and theological articles that have marked the journal since its inception.

The first article by Michael Barrett elaborates the biblical necessity of heart religion by looking at Isaiah's critique of heart-less religion. Michael Borg then takes a fresh look at the much-debated passage dealing with the new (or renewed) covenant in Jeremiah 31, arguing against dispensationalist and Baptist perspectives on this text and presenting the case for a traditional Presbyterian and Reformed understanding.

Then follow a series of six articles dealing with historical theology. Arthur Miskin provides an excellent overview of John Calvin's doctrine of double predestination and stresses that Calvin derived his teaching on this challenging subject from God's infallible Word. Geoffrey Thomas helps us appreciate the ministry and thought of the English Baptist, John Bunyan. The epistemological response of the Dutch theologian Wilhelmus à Brakel to Cartesianism is the subject of the following paper by Todd Baucum, an important issue since the thinking of Descartes gave a deeply subjective turn to Western reflection on the nature of knowledge and truth. The thought of Jonathan Edwards is the subject of two papers: one by Peter Aiken that examines the thinking of the American divine in an area similar to the one by Miskin on Calvin—what did Edwards think about God's just judgments and why? Hyunkwan Kim then traces the way Edwards used the philosophical thought of John Locke, though not without significantly modifying it to set forth his convictions about spiritual knowledge. The final paper in this section is on the Edwardsean theologian, Andrew Fuller: Ryan Hoselton discusses the way that Fuller uses a theology of virtue to refute the Enlightenment errors of Deism and Socinianism.

Experiential theology is the focus of the next section of essays. Here, Jan van Vliet compares the commentaries of Zacharias Ursinus and William Ames on the Heidelberg Catechism and shows that the latter misses elements of the inner coherence of this catechism with significance for the development of later Puritan thought. A selection from Anthony Burgess's *Spiritual Refining* (1652), edited by Joel Beeke and Paul Smalley, rounds out this section.

The first of the next set of essays, addressing pastoral theology, reminds us especially of the importance of preaching in the life of God's people. Though many in the late medieval era gave little thought to the absence of preaching in the life of the church, Caleb Cangelosi rightly shows that John Wycliffe considered it to be absolutely necessary for both reformation and renewal. Though Samuel Davies was one of the greatest preachers of the eighteenth century (the opinion of Martyn Lloyd-Jones), yet his thought has been curiously overlooked. Joseph Harrod seeks to begin setting matters right by examining Davies's thinking about the means of grace. Lloyd-Jones himself is the subject of the next essay by Simon Green: an examination of "the Doctor's" conviction that evangelism is the great *raison d'être* of the church. Allan Stanton helpfully shows us how to best use a catechism in family worship. Finally, Brian Najapfour brings us back to the subject of preaching with his fifteen guidelines for preachers to always bear in mind as they prepare to preach and then as they convey the Word of God to His people.

One of the most massive issues of our day undoubtedly is the nature of marriage. Matt Haste provides a helpful outline of the way the great Baptist divine, John Gill, viewed this matter in his day—also a day of turmoil about marriage. Ian Macleod critiques the thinking of the so-called Jehovah's Witnesses and David Murray provides us with a unique subject: a theology of sleep and why thinking about this subject is so important. Our final essay is a bibliographical piece by Joel Beeke on how to read the Puritans. It is a good way to conclude this issue's helpful selection of essays, for Beeke not only gives some great hints on how to read the Puritans and which ones to read, but also what these authors have meant to him personally. *Tolle lege!*

Biblical Studies



The Danger of Heartless Religion: An Exposition of Isaiah 1:2–18

MICHAEL BARRETT



A guide has multiple responsibilities. Not only does he lead the way and explain points of interest along the way, but he also assumes responsibility for the safety and welfare of those he leads. Usually before the adventure begins, the guide briefs his followers about any pitfalls that may lie ahead or about potential dangers that may lurk in unexpected places. It is always good to know before going into something what the risks and hazards are.

The Bible is our guide to worship that is both acceptable and pleasing to the Lord. It is not surprising, then, that along with the instructions that we are to follow, there are also warnings that we are to heed. It makes sense to start with the warnings.

In one of His frequent exchanges with the Pharisees, the Lord Jesus said, “In vain they do worship me” (Matt. 15:9; Mark 7:7). The sad danger is that vain worship is possible. Worshipping in vain is worshipping without purpose or result, in emptiness and deception. Two factors mark this worthless worship. First, it abandons God’s directives in favor of man’s traditions: “Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your traditions...teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:6, 9; see also Mark 7:7–8). Second, it is talk without heart: “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me” (Matt. 15:8; Mark 7:6). That Christ quotes this indictment from Isaiah 29:13 indicates that it was not just a Pharisaical flaw. Heartless religion was possible in the Old Testament dispensation; it was rampant in the days of Christ’s earthly incarnation; unhappily, it pervades even the best of churches today. If we can learn anything from Christ’s appeal to Isaiah in His exposé of first-century Pharisaical hypocrisy, it is this: God has never been and will

never be satisfied with heartless worship. Heartless worship is a major pitfall to avoid.

Tragically, the notion seems to be deeply ingrained in man that formal acts of worship—whatever form they take—constitute legitimate worship that will by its very performance be accepted by God. Men tend to form their opinions of God from their estimations of themselves. Because they satisfy themselves with outward acts of ritual, they assume that God must be satisfied as well. Many people today who are without Christ assume that going to church and keeping the golden rule will somehow balance to their favor in the end. Even many who profess Christ allow their pious religious routines to substitute for private devotion and a sincere heart. To estimate God in this way is either to question His omniscience—that He is able to see the heart—or His moral perfection—that He cares about the heart. In contrast to all this human reasoning is the divine preference for heart obedience over manual religion: “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice” (1 Sam. 15:22).

Nonetheless, so convinced are some that their “worship” works that they cannot fathom the notion it does not. The Lord’s incontestable indictment of Israel’s heartless religion recorded in Micah 6 illustrates this unfounded confidence. The nation defended itself against God’s accusation by arguing that if God was not satisfied with what they were doing, it was His fault for not making His expectations clear. They claimed that they were willing to offer any sacrifice He wanted; all He had to do was ask.

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? (Micah 6:6–7)

Their self-justifying questions concerning how to approach and satisfy God reveal both the false conception that external religion is enough to please Him and the frustration as to how much is enough. This dilemma always plagues those who assume that outward displays of religion or personal deprivations please God. Since there can never be any certainty that enough has been done, the cyclic solution is to do more and more. Their quandary is evident in the intensification of their offers ranging from the best of the animal sacrifices (calves

of a year old) to the exaggerated quantities of sacrifices (thousands of rams and ten thousand rivers of oil) to the desperate abomination of child sacrifice. Their willingness to stoop to heathen practice in order to reach the heights of God reveals their total ignorance not only of what God wants but of who God is. Ironically, rather than defending itself, Israel further incriminated itself by assuming He wanted things rather than hearts.

Because heartless religion is so offensive to God and constitutes such a dangerous impediment to biblical worship, I want to focus our attention on a representative text from the opening of Isaiah's prophecy and let the Bible speak for itself.

Before this Old Testament evangelist declares any of his magnificent messianic pronouncements, he elaborates on the danger of vain worship. Isaiah's logic is faultless. This prince of old dispensation preachers addressed the visible covenant community, warning them that being Israelites—notwithstanding the privileges and advantages—was not sufficient to make them acceptable before God. Unhappily, Isaiah's message to the covenant sinners of his day has too much relevance to the church-ed sinners of our day. Now as then, would-be worshippers must learn the folly and danger of heartless religion and consider that the only cure to heartless religion is a spiritual relationship with God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing less or other will satisfy God. While exposing the deplorable spiritual condition of the people, Isaiah both reveals the problem of and offers the solution to heartless worship. Three themes are on the surface of his argument.

The Problem of Spiritual Insensitivity

External religion breeds spiritual insensitivity by making the “worshipper” oblivious to his real spiritual condition. The moral depravity of the nation magnified the worthlessness of their outward religion. In spite of the Lord's special interest in Israel—evident by His father-like care and provision for them—they rebelled against Him, defying and resisting His rightful authority (v. 2). In order to demonstrate the absurdity of Israel's attitude and behavior and to highlight the degree of their spiritual stupidity and insensitivity, the prophet contrasted the people's irrational ignorance to the apparently rational behavior of dumb beasts: “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider”

(v. 3). Oxen and donkeys are not particularly bright animals, but they exercise better sense than thoughtless worshippers. The dullness of these animals in contrast to the special enlightenment of Israel makes the comparison extremely pointed. Whereas the dumb ox and donkey never fail to know their owner or the place of their sustenance, Israel failed to know. The Hebrew concept of knowing is much more than simple mental awareness or understanding; it conveys the notion of willful acknowledgment and recognition. Israel's ignorance consisted in the failure both to acknowledge the Lord as master and to recognize Him as the source and sustainer of life. The last verb of verse 3, *consider*, continues the condemnation by stressing the failure to give attention to what they should be thinking about. Unaware of their privilege, they were not worshipping perceptively or properly. Since true worship flows from the knowledge of God, it follows that improper thinking about God contaminates and invalidates any act of worship.

The Cause of Spiritual Insensitivity

Although Isaiah 1:4 is a worst-case scenario, it illustrates how far the distance can be between God and those who are professedly worshipping Him. The prophet expresses his grief (woe) over the lamentable state of the people by making it unmistakably clear that their spiritual ignorance and insensitivity was related to their depraved condition and behavior. Piling four unflattering epithets (“sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters”) on top of three verbal clauses without using any conjunctions (“forsaken..., provoked..., gone away backward”), the prophet, in grammatical rapid-fire, depicts the nation's spiritual plight. All together, the sevenfold combination warns us that “worshippers” can in actuality be alienated from God, active in sin, and confirmed in guilt. Religion, ironically, can make a person oblivious to sin, but it cannot solve the problem of sin.

The three verbal clauses, particularly, address the root of the matter: alienation from God. Each of these verbs expresses what the people really thought about God. Although their involvement in ritual gave the impression that they were drawing near to the Lord, the opposite was in fact true. And God knew it. First, they forsook the Lord. In the Old Testament, forsaking the Lord is the comprehensive expression of apostasy: they abandoned Him. That the LORD is the

stated object of this forsaking makes it even worse. This is the personal name of God associated inseparably with the covenant. Therefore, to abandon the LORD was to reject that special relationship with all of its corresponding responsibilities. Second, they provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger. More literally, they despised and irreverently disdained Him. This particular form of the verb (the iterative use of the *piel*) suggests this contempt to be deliberate and sustained. Again, the stated object of this disrespect—"the Holy One of Israel"—intensifies the violence of the act. Whereas His holiness demanded the reverent recognition of His unique distinction, they callously regarded Him as though He was nothing special at all. Third, they turned away backward. The verb is reflexive (*niphal*) and thus it underscores the self-determination and self-interest involved in this estrangement. They alienated themselves. Notwithstanding their religious routines, their heart and thoughts drew them away from the Lord.

Three of the four descriptive epithets synopsize the behavior of the nation that exhibited their alienation from God, and the remaining one pronounces the necessary consequence of such behavior. Significantly, the three statements describing the nation's sinful activity boldface the endlessness of the transgressions by using participles, grammatical forms that in Hebrew emphasize the habitual performance of the stated condition. Sin was a way of life. First, their behavior was marked by sin ("sinful nation"). Their purpose as a nation set apart as God's special possession was "to keep all his commandments" and to be "an holy people unto the LORD" (Deut. 26:18–19). But tragically, they were constantly missing the mark or goal that God had set for them: they were habitually falling short of the glory of God (cf. Rom. 3:23). Second, they were a group whose common attribute was the doing of evil ("a seed of evildoers"). Outside of the moral and ethical sphere, the word "evil" refers to calamity or disaster, expressing a disorder in the regular arrangement of circumstances. In the moral sphere, it conveys the disruption or violation of the orderly standards and rules of God. They were guilty of disorderly conduct with calamitous consequence to both self and society at large. Third, they were a class of people whose behavior was ruinous, corrupt, and destructive ("children that are corrupters"). Perpetual sin against God, self, and society are not behaviors you might expect from those worshipping God.

The fourth unflattering caption of the nation declares the consequence of sinful practices: they were a people encumbered with guilt (“a people laden with iniquity”). The terseness of Isaiah’s language paints a vivid picture of a people bowed down with a dreadful burden (literally, “a people heavy of iniquity”). The term “iniquity” simply means twisted or crooked and, when referring to sin, presents it as perverseness, a twisting away from the proper path. However, this word not only designates the act of sin but by metonymy also refers to sin’s consequences in terms of punishment or guilt. Indeed, it is the principal word used in the Old Testament to designate guilt as the consequence of sin. The fact that this epithet does not use a participle to express habitual behavior, as do the other three expressions, would suggest the consequence of guilt to be in view rather than the commission of some sort of perverse behavior. The Lord had them pegged for what they really were; the fact that they were in the church only intensified the guilt.

The Callousness of Spiritual Insensitivity

God always deals with sinners for their sin, and Israel was not exempt from chastisement. Although divine discipline is justly punitive, it should be remedial in its consequence. Good parents punish misbehaving children, inflicting discomfort both to warn of the more severe end of sin and to encourage proper behavior. Few things are more disappointing and frustrating to parents than unresponsive children. Some children seem never to learn regardless of the intensity or frequency of disciplinary measures. This is the analogy Isaiah uses to picture God’s “frustration” over the callousness of the nation’s spiritual insensitivity. In verse 2, the Lord declared that He had “nourished and brought up children” and that they had rebelled against Him. Verses 5–9 describe a people who had already experienced some of the consequences of sin. They had been chastised but remained oblivious to what the Lord, as a father, was doing.

The prophet describes Israel’s condition in terms of an individual whose entire body bears evidence of wounds.

...the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not

been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.
(vv. 5b–6)

Although these words vividly imply the total effects of sin and thus are often employed as biblical proof of the truth of man's total depravity, their principal focus points to wounds that have been inflicted externally either by the sword or by scourging rather than to sores that fester from internal and inherent corruption. That verses 7 and 8 detail the invasion of the land by foreigners confirms the imagery. Sadly, these are wounds to which there was no response; they were ignored and left untreated to putrefy through infection.

The question of verse 5 indicates that the Lord was the primary agent who inflicted the wounds and that in spite of the thoroughness with which He had punished, the nation continued in rebellion. There are two possible translations of this question, both of which engender amazement over the persistent rebellion: (1) "Why will you be stricken again?" or (2) "Where can you be stricken anymore?" The first suggests the foolishness of a people who continue to be beaten when repentance could remedy their condition. The second pictures a body that, having been beaten so repeatedly and extensively, has no unwounded area. It underscores the insensitive and obdurate character of the nation that remained contumacious despite multiplied efforts to arouse spiritual concern. Regardless of the translation, the significance is pretty much the same. It is as though the Lord is asking in "divine frustration" where He could smite them again to do any good. I can only wonder if Isaiah's morbid image does not mirror the detailed account of God's successive disciplinary acts that his contemporary Amos indexed, each with the tragic refrain, "...yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD" (4:6–12). Isaiah's description of this spiritual callousness soundly echoes the warning of Solomon: "He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" (Prov. 29:1). All the religion in the world is not the remedy. In fact, heartless religion was a chief contributor to the problem.

The Evaluation of Empty Worship

Outwardly religious people are often the most difficult to convince of their need for God. No doubt, the people responded to Isaiah's message of condemnation with skepticism and disbelief, claiming

that their worship habits exempted them from any divine displeasure. False security seems always to accompany hypocritical worship (cf. Mal. 1:6–7; 3:8). With irrefutable argument, Isaiah levels God’s complaint against these trained sinners by proving that their religion was inwardly wrong although it was outwardly right. Verses 10–15 record God’s evaluation of empty worship.

Outwardly Right

A survey of this passage indicates that the people observed the letter of the law; they followed the Mosaic instructions according to rule, doing everything they were supposed to do. In terms of modern worship jargon, they adhered flawlessly to the regulative principle. The manner in which they multiplied sacrifices suggests that they were absolutely and indisputably orthodox (v. 11). The burnt offerings required the sacrificial victim to be burned completely on the altar; they held nothing back. The fat represented the best part of the sacrifice to be reserved for the Lord; they offered the fattest. The blood marked the most essential element of the sacrifice; from bulls to goats they shed it all. Not only were they orthodox in the manner of their worship, but they were consistent in observing all of the required feasts and ceremonies; they never missed an occasion for worship (vv. 13–14). If the “church doors” were open, they were there: they had a perfect attendance record. Similarly, they prayed fervently; spreading the hands was symbolic of fervor and zeal (v. 15). They were consistent in their “daily devotions.” Since all of this was true, it never crossed their minds that God could be displeased with them. They were satisfied; they assumed God would be as well.

Inwardly Wrong

Although God was the author of Israel’s system of worship, He categorically rejected its formalistic practice by a people whose behavior and character warranted the appellations “rulers of Sodom” and “people of Gomorrah” (v. 10). Given what He knew to be the condition of their hearts, the Lord’s analysis of Israel’s worship was justifiably harsh. How He saw their religion differed dramatically from how they perceived it. He saw their approach to Him as a treading of His courts (v. 12). Treading is an activity normally associated with beasts—a graphic image. Without regard for God’s holiness, these worshippers lumbered ox-like in the delicate surroundings of the temple, like

the proverbial bull in the china shop. He regarded their oblations as “vain” (v. 13). What should have been a sincere reflection of devoted hearts was in fact empty, unsubstantial, and worthless. The Lord also regarded their ineffectual offerings as an “abomination,” something most disgusting and detestable (v. 13). Significantly, the Scripture frequently uses this term to describe God’s attitude toward idolatry. It is sobering to realize that God regards hypocritical and heartless worship of Himself to be just as repugnant and loathsome as the worship of false gods. Even the hands spread so diligently in prayer only pretended piety because the Lord saw the hands as dripping with the guilt of violence (i.e., full of blood, v. 15). Orthodoxy (right doctrine) and orthopraxis (right practice)—though essential elements—are not the sum total of genuine religion and acceptable worship.

The Lord’s assessment of empty religion accounts for His attitude and actions towards it. Several first-person declarations express the divine repugnance and grief. The initial question of verse 11 sets the tone for the crescendo of disgust that follows: “To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me?” The terseness of the literal rendering suggests something of the disdain He had for every detail of their worship: “What to me is the abundance of your sacrifices?” Their worship meant nothing to Him; there was a total disconnect between the Lord and what they were doing. That the Lord asks those appearing before Him who had “required this” from them implies that He had no part in their pious masquerade (v. 12). In language that can only be classified as boldly anthropopathic (language expressing human feelings), the Lord declares that He has had enough of their burnt offerings (v. 11, “I am full”), that He has grown tired of their rituals (v. 14, “I am weary”), and that He just could not take it any more (v. 13, “I cannot away with”). For omnipotent Deity to confess such exhaustion highlights how offensive heartless worship must be to the Lord. Given God’s attitude about heartless religion, there can be no surprise that He declares His lack of pleasure in their sacrifices (v. 11, “I delight not”), His refusal to accept their observances as legitimate acts of worship (v. 14, “my soul hateth,” i.e., rejects), and His repudiation of their prayers by shutting (literally, darkening) His eyes and closing His ears (v. 15, “I will hide” and “I will not hear”).

The lesson is clear, and the application is encompassing: God is not satisfied with external religion. Even the right mechanics of worship are without merit. Worship must be the expression of faith.

The Corrective of Worthless Worship

As offensive as worthless worship is before the Lord, the offenders are not beyond the reach of His grace. There is hope for sinners, even for those who are highly trained in religion. Grace transforms sinners to saints, creating hearts capable of the purity required for true worship. And grace, once received, always shows itself in life, revealing the clean hands that are equally required for true worship. Psalm 24:3–4 states the inviolable law of worship: “Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart....” So to these wickedly religious people, whose hearts were corrupt and whose hands were dirty, the Lord extends hope by offering His grace and explaining what that grace demands.

The Demand of True Religion

God demands that the life of would-be worshippers correspond to the practice of their religion. Israel had made a mockery of their worship by the impiety of their lives, and things had to change. Verses 16 and 17 state both negatively and positively what God requires for a truly pious life—for those who would worship rightly. Simply stated, they had to stop sinning and start behaving well. Negatively, the Lord commanded the people to cleanse themselves, which could be accomplished by putting away the evil and ceasing to do it (v. 16). The principle is clear: fellowship with God demands purity. Positively, the Lord instructed them to “learn to do well” (v. 17). He followed that general requirement with specific examples of how that good behavior could show itself in life (e.g., kindness to widows and orphans). Interestingly, the New Testament defines true religion in almost the same terms. “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27). The point is that there is more to true piety than just talk. That is always true. What God demanded for those who approach Him in worship was a far cry from what they were. Repentance is essential to correcting worthless worship; without it, true worship is impossible.

The Offer of Grace

Isaiah 1:18, one of those high water texts in the Bible, sets the course for the necessary repentance. Although it invites lengthy discourse, I

must resist temptation and highlight just a couple of thoughts. First, the Lord issues a most gracious invitation: “Come now, and let us reason together.” We can’t take this to mean that God is offering to make concessions to sinners through negotiation. God never makes deals nor compromises His absolute requirements in order to entice worshippers. Rather, the invitation is to face the facts by grace-generated understanding and then to submit to the dictates that God establishes. The only saving way for a sinner to reason with God is to forsake his own thoughts, which are contrary to God’s, and to agree with God’s, which are infinitely superior to his (see Isa. 55:7–9). Reasoning with God is submitting to Him; anything else is unreasonable. It is the response of faith.

Second, the Lord declares His willingness and ability to forgive. In spite of the indisputable evidence of guilt (sins red like scarlet and crimson), the Lord pardons: He turns red to white. This color modification pictures the cleansing or pardon necessary for acceptance before the Lord. Again keep in mind the law of worship: only those with clean hands and pure hearts can approach His holy presence (Ps. 24:3–4). Contrarily, these people had been trying to worship the Lord with hands dripping in blood guiltiness (v. 15) and with hearts in rebellion (v. 2), so the Lord Himself makes them fit for worship by forgiving their transgressions. But that should not be surprising seeing that the Lord is good and “ready to forgive,” abounding in mercy to all that call upon Him (Ps. 86:5). Although the Lord commands them to cleanse themselves (v. 16), He declares them clean. The link between the divine command and the divine operation is common (e.g., “sanctify yourselves... I am the Lord which sanctify you” in Lev. 20:7–8). That is grace, and it is the only way the necessary changes can occur.

If anything is obvious from Isaiah’s indictment of Israel’s vain worship, it is that God takes worship seriously. Isaiah’s warning is clear enough.

The New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31–34)

MICHAEL BORG



Walter Kaiser once wrote: “Hardly has the exegesis of this passage begun when the interpreter discovers to his great delight and consternation that he is involved in some of the greatest theological questions of our day. No matter what he says, some evangelicals are bound to be scandalized because of their commitments.”¹ Jeremiah 31:31–34 is a watershed passage that divides covenant and dispensational theologies.² But it further divides Presbyterian and Baptist theologies as well.³ Consequently, this text influences one’s hermeneutics and ecclesiology.

This article will argue from a Reformed and Presbyterian perspective that God promises His covenantal people a renewed covenant that is the same in substance as previous administrations of the

1. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., “The Old Promise and the New Covenant: Jeremiah 31:31–34,” *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 15 (1972): 11.

2. See, for example, William D. Barrick, “New Covenant Theology and the Old Testament Covenants,” in *The Masters Seminary Journal* 18 (2007): 165–80; R. Bruce Compton, “Dispensationalism, the Church, and the New Covenant,” in *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 8 (2003): 3–48; Elliott E. Johnson, “Covenants in Traditional Dispensationalism,” and Darrell L. Bock, “Covenants in Progressive Dispensationalism” in *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism: A Comparison of Traditional and Progressive Views*, ed. Herbert W. Bateman IV (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 121–223; and Robert L. Saucy, “The New Covenant and the Salvation of the Gentiles,” in *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface Between Dispensational and Non-Dispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 111–42.

3. See, for example, Bruce A. Ware, “Believer’s Baptism View,” in *Baptism: Three Views*, ed. David F. Wright (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2009), 41ff., and Stephen J. Wellum, “Baptism and the Relationship between the Covenants,” in *Believer’s Baptism: Sing of the New Covenant in Christ*, eds. Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn D. Wright (Nashville, Tenn.: B&H Publishing, 2006), 97–162.

covenant of grace but new in form/mode, thereby exalting His covenantal faithfulness in bringing His people to the full realization of redemption. Because a full treatment of views cannot be here given, this article will necessarily be limited to several individuals who represent their respective theological systems. We will proceed by first briefly noting the structure of the passage before turning to an exegesis of the text itself.

Structure

Jeremiah 31:31–34 is often regarded as the climax of Jeremiah’s Book of Comfort (chaps. 30–33). Broadly conceived, Jeremiah 1–29 is focused on God’s judgment against His people and against the nations. But there is a decided change of tone beginning in chapter 30 as God speaks of the time when He will bring His people back from exile (see 30:3). The Book of Comfort is largely a section of Jeremiah where God promises restoration and salvation to His people.

The majority of commentators agree that Jeremiah 31:31–34 ought to be treated as a pericope. One telling grammatical note is the repetitive use of “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD” in both 31:31 and 31:38. Some commentators argue that 31:35–37 cannot be separated from what precedes it,⁴ though all of chapters 30–33 are integral to understanding the theological emphasis of 31:31–34.

Restricting ourselves to 31:31–34, we can structure this passage in three main sections. The first section (v. 31) is the promise of the new covenant stated. The second (v. 32) contrasts this new covenant with the old covenant; that is, the new covenant is negatively considered. The third section (vv. 33–34) puts forth the promise(s) of the new covenant; that is, the new covenant is positively considered.

While Jeremiah 31:31–34 is the only OT passage that speaks directly of the “new covenant,” there are other passages that speak of the work of God in the new covenant (cf. Ezek. 37). Furthermore, an important aspect to understanding Jeremiah 31:31–34 is to remember that this passage is quoted extensively in the NT, especially in Hebrews 8:8–13. For brevity’s sake, however, this article will not deal directly with the unfolding of Jeremiah 31:31–34 in other canonical

4. See especially Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2012), 491.

contexts. What concerns us is the specific theological message of these verses in their present context.

The Promise of the New Covenant (v. 31)

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah (31:31).

Three major issues surface in an interpretation of this passage: (1) What it means to “cut a covenant”; (2) the meaning of the adjective “new” (Heb. **שׁוּבָר**); and (3) the concept of “house” language as it pertains to a greater OT understanding.

Cutting a Covenant

The verb and direct object “to cut a covenant” is a common idiomatic phrase meaning “to make a covenant.”⁵ But it is a bit reductionistic to simply translate this phrase as “make.” The significance of the verb “to cut” (Heb. **כָּרַת**) is not fully appreciated with a simple translation. For example, Meredith Kline notes (concerning the Abrahamic covenant): “The practice of slaying an animal in the ceremony of covenant ratification is widely attested, and out of this common rite arose the familiar biblical...terminology of ‘cutting a covenant’ and the synonymous ‘cutting a curse.’”⁶ As God promises the new covenant, He employs canonical language building on previous covenantal administrations. The important aspect to note is that the new covenant does not merely contain blessings but also curses—not only against the promised mediator Christ, but against those who, like Ishmael, refuse to embrace the promises of the covenant by faith.

New or Renewed?

A second issue is the debated meaning of the Hebrew word **שׁוּבָר**, which most English translations simply translate as “new.” There are many commentators, however, who desire to translate this adjective in a way that carefully nuances the word to mean “renew.” The theological significance of one’s translation is apparent: is God renewing

5. See Gen. 15:18; Ex. 24:8; 34:10; Deut. 4:23; 29:1; 1 Chron. 16:16; 2 Chron. 7:18; 21:7; Ps. 105:9; Jer. 11:10; 34:13; Hag. 2:5. For references to the “new covenant” see Isa. 55:3; 61:8; Ezek. 34:25; 37:26; Hos. 2:18.

6. Meredith Kline, *By Oath Consigned: A Reinterpretation of the Covenant Signs of Circumcision and Baptism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 42.

the substance of His covenant or instituting a covenant that has not previously existed in form and substance?

Traditionally, the case for “new” has emphasized the disunity of the new covenant with the old covenant, whereas “renew” has stressed continuity. One’s perspective impacts both hermeneutics and ecclesiology. If Jeremiah’s intent is to show that the new covenant is wholly unlike the old covenant, then there is a large degree of discontinuity between covenantal administrations affecting one’s understanding of such issues as the Decalogue, the nature of faith, and the identity of Israel. Similarly, if the new covenant is wholly new, then it is at least one small logical step to argue that the covenant community has also been redefined in relation to the new covenant.

Those who advance the position for “new” state the following arguments: (1) Neither *חדש* or *καινη* (see Matt. 26:28) in their adjectival form mean “renew.” Rather, they mean novel, fresh, unprecedented, or not yet in existence.” (2) The contrast given as “not like the covenant” (Heb. *לֹא כַבְרִית*) is an “absolute emphatic negation.” (3) The phrase “new covenant” points to the newness of the new covenant; there is not a focus on continuity with the Mosaic covenant (or any other covenantal administration). (4) The new covenant includes no stipulations of how to have fellowship with the LORD restored (cf. Lev. 1–7), which highlights the significance of absolute forgiveness. (5) The use of “law” (31:33) does not refer to the Mosaic law but to “fresh commandments from Yahweh.” Further, Jeremiah uses “law” in several ways: a) “sayings of the prophet” (cf. Isa. 5:24); b) “the voice, the word, the status, and the testimony of the Lord”; c) the law will be obeyed by everyone; and, d) the abrogation of the old covenant is an abrogation of the old covenant law.⁷

On the other hand, those who advance the meaning “renew” state the following arguments: (1) The most common title of the new covenant in the OT is “everlasting covenant” and ratification of the “sure mercies of David” (cf. Isa. 55:3; Jer. 32:38–42; Ezek. 37:26–27). Thus, there is strong continuity between the new covenant and previous covenantal administrations. (2) The adjective *חדש* often means to “renew” or “restore.” (3) The Hebrew word means “new in time and renewed in nature. Thus for Jeremiah 31, the context, content and

7. These arguments are taken from Femi Adeyemi, “What is the New Covenant ‘Law’ in Jeremiah 31:33?” in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 163 (2006): 319–21.

New Testament vocabulary [καὶνῆ] distinction decides in favor of a ‘renewed covenant.’” (4) There is a great amount of continuity seen between this passage and the greater context of Jeremiah and the OT.⁸

How is the precise meaning of “new” in this context to be determined from the seemingly contradictory arguments laid out above? It is helpful to observe the following. First, while שָׁדָרָה in its adjectival form can mean “brand new” (see Lev. 23:16; Deut. 20:5; Eccl. 1:10), the semantical range of שָׁדָרָה is beyond simply defining it as “novel,” “fresh,” or “not yet in existence” (cf. Jer. 26:10). For example, the adjective שָׁדָרָה is used in reference to a “new king” (Ex. 1:8). Likewise, Isaiah appears to contrast the “new” things with the “former” things in a way that does not necessitate a “brand new” thing (see Isa. 42:9). Isaiah also uses the adjective to refer to the “new heavens” and “new earth” carrying a strong intonation of “renewal” (Isa. 65:17). Ezekiel uses the adjective when referring to the “new spirit” and “new heart” that God gives to His covenantal people (see Ezek. 11:19; 36:26). Finally, the argument against “renewal” is unconvincing when שָׁדָרָה can mean “unprecedented” but cannot be applied to Jeremiah 31:31. If this definition were applied here, one is not pressed to understand this adjective as completely new but there would appear to be continuity though a greater manifestation.

Second, those who argue for an absolute emphatic negation and the emphatic use of “new” in this context overstate their case. While the comparative negation can be used emphatically (see Jer. 10:16), it does not appear to be exclusively so (see Ex. 1:19; Isa. 10:11). Prior theological understandings appear to be lurking beneath the surface and grammar alone is not sufficient to settle the disagreement.

Third, those who argue that Jeremiah’s prophecy has absolute forgiveness and a new law ascribed to it as a defense of disunity (as laid out in arguments 4–5) will be dealt with throughout the remainder of this article.

These considerations, however, are not an argument in favor of “renew” as much as an attempt to argue for the possibility of this meaning in the present context. Within the greater part of this exposition, we will understand why “renew” is preferable to “new”—largely

8. These arguments are taken from Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., “The Old Promise and the New Covenant: Jeremiah 31:31–34,” in *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 15 (1972): 16–19.

based on the continuity this prophecy maintains in the substance of the old and new covenants.

House of Israel and Judah

The third major issue of v. 31 is understanding the prepositional phrase “with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.” This phrase is used regularly throughout Jeremiah (see 2:4, 26; 3:18, 20; 5:11; 10:1; 11:10; 18:6; 23:8; etc.). The central contention with this prepositional phrase relates to the identity of the house of Israel and the house of Judah—an identity understood differently among dispensationalism and covenant theology. Dispensationalists have traditionally argued that this is a literal reference to the national houses of Israel and Judah. This literalism requires seeing Jeremiah 31 as a future promise to a political entity and influences one’s view of the millennial kingdom. This has caused some tension in that Jesus institutes the new covenant with His disciples and NT believers/Gentiles. Some dispensationalists argue that there are multiple new covenants,⁹ while others argue that NT believers are somehow included in the new covenant.¹⁰

The promise, however, is a prophecy of an eschatological reunification of Israel and Judah (cf. v. 33). The restoration which the prophets prophesied and the NT confirms (cf. Heb. 8:7–13) moves beyond a literalistic understanding of national Israel and Judah coming back into the physical land of Canaan (cf. Isa. 60–66; Jer. 33:14–26). Furthermore, Jeremiah is clear that the restored “house of Israel and house of Judah” will include Gentiles (see Jer. 4:2; 16:14–18; etc.). The context shows, therefore, that restoration extends beyond a literal interpretation.

Covenant theologians largely agree that these references have always referred to the church—which under the OT was embodied in the religious-political nation of Israel and Judah. The house of Israel and house of Judah in the OT were understood as God’s corporate people, the visible community of Israelites redeemed from Egypt (cf. Ex. 16:31; 40:38), and ought to be conceived of as nothing less than the church. Jeremiah 31:31–34 not only looks back to the OT covenant community but forward to the NT covenant community.

9. See Charles C. Ryrie, *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith* (Neptune, N.J.: Loizeaux, 1953), 107ff.

10. See John F. MacArthur, *Matthew 24–28* in *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1989), chap. 12.

In this way, strong lines of continuity exist between an OT and NT understanding of the church.

Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum in their recent work have argued contrary to this understanding, stating that the definition of “house” has been redefined or restricted in the NT to refer to believers only.¹¹ “It is interesting to note that Jesus gives this meal [of the new covenant] to *his disciples*. That is to say, the new covenant is not made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah interpreted as all of Judaism indiscriminately in the first century, but rather it is interpreted specifically as those *who are followers of Jesus*, regardless of ethnicity, Jew first, and later on, also non-Jew.”¹² The implications of their argument are apparent and lend to the Baptist exclusion of children of believers as properly belonging to the covenant or church.

But their argument appears superficial and circular. Properly speaking, the “covenant partners” at the Last Supper were the twelve disciples—including Judas (cf. Luke 22:14). But even if one were to allow that Judas was somehow disassociated from the disciples at this point in Jesus’ life, the covenant (at this particular institution) was clearly not yet given to women or Gentiles, yet no one would exclude these groups from belonging to the new covenant. Rather, the disciples are to be regarded as representative of the church, not as a reference to all parties involved.¹³

This argument does little to justify a Baptist ecclesiology. Rather, the opposite appears to be the case. As the people of Judah heard this promise of the new covenant, it is unlikely that they would have restricted the household imagery to only true believers of the Lord and not to the visible church or people of God. One would expect that had “household” terminology been redefined or restricted, there would be clear NT witness to this fact—something Gentry and Wellum fail to put forward.

11. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 496ff. They later similarly argue that the “seed of Abraham” is considered differently in the NT than the OT with the coming of Christ (696).

12. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 497.

13. A note that Gentry and Wellum observe as well.

Contrast of the Old Covenant with the New Covenant (v. 32)

Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD (31:32).

The promised new covenant given in v. 31 is now shown in what it is not. Though the verse is relatively straightforward, it is theologically potent and variously understood. Understanding the significance of this contrast affects the way in which the reader will understand vv. 33–34.

Not Like What?

It has been commonly agreed among commentators that Jeremiah 11:1–17 serves as the backdrop of v. 32. Summarizing this understanding, Gerald Keown writes: “This passage . . . interprets the indictments against the people in the rest of the book as evidence of covenant breaking . . . and the disaster they suffer as the judgment that results from it (11:1). . . . Jeremiah was forbidden to pray for his community (11:14). This command ruled out the possibility of covenant renewal [from a human perspective].”¹⁴ Jeremiah 11:1–17 focuses on Judah’s rebellion in the wilderness after their deliverance from Egypt. The initial covenant administration was perpetually broken by God’s covenant people in their acts of disobedience. For the time being, God restricts Jeremiah from preaching renewal and restoration. Jeremiah’s message is simply impending destruction.

Understanding the disobedience of the people as the backdrop of v. 32 is pertinent to understanding what is being contrasted. Joshua N. Moon argues that the point of contrast in Jeremiah 31:31–32 is not the “new” and “old” covenant *per se*. Rather, “we learn that the infidelity of the people of Yhwh—the broken covenant—has been broken from the very start, from the time in which Yhwh acted to call and bring them to himself.”¹⁵ The central contrast between the new and old covenant is that of covenantal disobedience with obedience (cf. Jer. 11:4, 7). Understanding the contrast in this way has a decided influence on Gentry and Wellum’s ecclesiology. Because disobedience and

14. Gerald L. Keown, Pamela J. Scalise, and Thomas G. Smothers, *Jeremiah 26–52*, vol. 27, Word Bible Commentary (Nashville, Tenn.: Nelson, 1995), 131. [Cited hereafter as *WBC*.]

15. Quoted in Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 504.

obedience is the central point of contrast, they argue for a NT covenant community comprised of the faithful only—only believers.

While the contrast of covenant faithlessness and faithfulness ought to be appreciated, Gentry and Wellum's conclusion is not necessary. W. J. Dumbrell similarly comments that the (Mosaic) covenant was broken from a human perspective, but from the divine, God was still wed to His people. He summarizes: "The language of the marriage relationship, therefore, as applied to the Sinai arrangement underscores its permanency and provides thus the counter to the discontinuity of 'my covenant which they broke' (v. 32). In short the element which will characterize the New Covenant and thus render it 'new' will be its irrefragability."¹⁶ But it does not necessarily follow that the new covenant community is restricted to believers because of this contrast. Dumbrell writes: "Divine continuity would continue, divine consistency, as it has been expressed [in earlier covenants and] will be expressed in the new age and within a New Covenant."¹⁷ If we understand this insight, the new covenant places more of an emphasis on God's faithfulness in the covenant than on the individual faith of believers. Brevard Childs succinctly explains: "Even when Israel misunderstood the covenant as privilege, rather than responsibility, God's commitment was not withdrawn. Rather the new covenant reiterated the initial commitment and promised a new form for its actualization."¹⁸ Concluding, therefore, the contrast made here in v. 32 focuses more centrally on the *effectiveness of the covenant to deal with sin* as understood in light of disobedience and obedience. The new covenant is *not* so much a decisive break with the Mosaic covenant but represents a further development of the covenant of grace.¹⁹ The new covenant will deal with the covenantal peoples' sins in an unprecedented way—namely, through God's faithfulness.

16. William Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of Old Testament Covenants* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 1984), 178.

17. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 178.

18. Brevard Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 355. Cf. also Bruce Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 437–38.

19. See Kline, *By Oath Consigned*, 75.

Exodus and Redemption

Having established the central contrast of v. 32, it is helpful to examine the exodus imagery used in this verse.²⁰ The exodus serves both as a contrast and a mold for understanding the new covenant in light of two important issues. First, the whole Book of Comfort utilizes exodus imagery. In a helpful study, Gary Yates notes four specific passages that relate to the exodus: 1) 30:1–4 relates to the land of promise; 2) 31:2–6 relates to the past exodus event, preservation in the wilderness, and the conquest of Canaan; 3) 31:31–34 relates to the covenant God made with Moses on Sinai; and 4) 32:16–25 is a prayer for the restoration of the people of Israel in exodus.²¹ More specifically, the allusion to God taking the hand of His people and leading them out of Egypt reoccurs throughout narratives relating to the exodus (see Ex. 3:19; 13:3, 14, 16; 32:11; Deut. 3:24; 4:34; 5:15; 6:21; etc.). To the exilic community, this familiar imagery recounted God's graciousness in leading His people out of bondage and into redemption.

Second, the use of exodus-like imagery throughout the Book of Comfort, and more specifically here, shows that the promise of restoration draws an analogous relationship between the Israelites leaving Egypt and the restoration of the exilic people. This is the sustained argument for the Book of Comfort. The restoration from exile was typified in Israel's deliverance from Egypt: "Jeremiah retells the story of the creation, the exodus from Egypt, and march through the desert, the making of the covenant at Sinai, and the conquest of the promised land."²² And at every step in his prophecy, Jeremiah is showing that the restoration from exile will be a greater act of redemption (i.e., "not like") than the exodus; the new covenant will succeed where the old covenant had failed, particularly in relation to covenantal obedience and faithfulness. Understanding the restoration from exile as a

20. See also William L. Holladay, "The Background of Jeremiah's Self-Understanding: Moses, Samuel, and Psalm 22," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 83 (1964): 153–64. Holladay argues that Jeremiah understands his task to be leading a people out of bondage in an analogous way to that of Moses leading the people out of Egypt. Holladay's article is helpful in directing one's attention to the importance of the exodus imagery.

21. Gary Yates, "New Exodus and No Exodus in Jeremiah 26–45: Promise and Warning to the Exiles in Babylon," in *Tyndale Bulletin* 57 (2006): 4–6.

22. M. Vervenne, *Studies in the Book of Exodus: Redaction, Reception, and Interpretation* (Belgium: Leuven University Press, 1996), 560–65.

greater exodus gives us the hermeneutical principle of both continuity and discontinuity. The continuity lies in how restoration from exile is cast within an exodus mold and the discontinuity exemplified here is one of form and not substance.

The Faithful Wife

The final clause in v. 32 is a concessive clause that contrasts Israel's disobedience with God's lovingkindness. He has wed His people—the verb is from the Hebrew **בָּעַל** which can mean to “marry” or “lord.” The pun is intentional. The Hebrew can mean to wed but comes from the same root word for the god Ba'al. The people of Judah were condemned for their Ba'al worship (cf. 2:8, 23). God is in effect condemning them for their Ba'al worship and revealing that He is their true Lord who has wed them.

The marriage imagery here highlights Jeremiah's extensive references to God and Judah's marriage and Judah's adulterous affairs with Ba'al. Yates helpfully notes: “In his opening sermon the prophet charged that Israel/Judah had become Yahweh's unfaithful ‘wife’ and must return to Him, her ‘husband.’ The remainder of the book substantiates this accusation, describes the punishment of the unfaithful wife, calls for the wife to change her ways, and promises restoration of her relationship with Yahweh.”²³

The controlling allusion here is to Jeremiah 2:1–4:4, which itself looks to the image of an unfaithful wife. The love of Judah had been given to idols (2:25, 33). Judah was further likened to a prostitute (2:20; 3:1–3, 6, 8–9). They were guilty of adultery (3:8–9). Judah's sin is put in sexual terms (3:20; cf. 13:25–27). But as the “wife” of the Lord, Judah was supposed to be the “property” of God (i.e., first fruits [2:3]).²⁴ The Book of Comfort speaks of the restoration of Judah as God's faithful wife (cf. 30:3, 18; 31:23; 32:44; 33:7, 11, 26) because God is a faithful husband. The explicit statement in v. 32 is that Judah's transgression is symbolized as the breaking of the strongest (temporal) bond. But the implicit promise is that the new covenant will restore Judah to her husband as a bride in purity (cf. 31:4; Eph. 5:25ff).

23. Gary E. Yates, “Jeremiah's Message of Judgment and Hope for God's Unfaithful ‘Wife’” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 167 (2010): 145.

24. See Yates, “Unfaithful ‘Wife,’” 147.

But what warrants Jeremiah to understand the exodus as a marriage between God and His people? This is certainly common imagery throughout the prophets (see Isa. 54:4; 62:4; Hos. 2:16; Mal. 2:11; etc.). But does it have a source in the historical books? While this article cannot develop this thought in depth, there are allusions in the law to the exodus being a marriage between God and His people. The use of the Hebrew word *lag* can be understood as a kinsman redeemer which carries “marriage” or “property” undertones (cf. Ex. 6:6). By implication, this word is used when a previous relationship has already been established between two parties. But it is further helpful to remember that throughout Israel’s history, sin is seen as spiritual adultery (see Judg. 2:17; 1 Chron. 5:25; Ezek. 16).²⁵ Clearly the prophets are not imposing marriage imagery on the Exodus without reasonable warrant to do so, but rather developing this concept in greater clarity.

Summarizing v. 32, we can say that God contrasts the new covenant with the old covenant by focusing on the ineffectuality of the old covenant to ensure God’s people will be a faithful wife. This ineffectuality does not come as a result of the covenant of God, but from the fact that the people caused the covenant to be broken; they were the unfaithful wife. But in contrasting the covenants in this manner, Jeremiah coordinates the substance of the covenants. God is not seeking to form a new relationship with His people as much as He is looking to renew the covenant in a way that will effectually deal with His people’s sins.

Promises of the New Covenant (vv. 33–34)

But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more (31:33–34).

Having negatively considered the new covenant by contrasting it with the former covenant, Jeremiah’s prophecy goes on to detail the

25. Thanks to Dr. Michael Barrett for this insight.

promise(s) of the new covenant. These two verses lend themselves to a brief discussion of three issues.

New Covenant and Eschatology

This temporal phrase “after those days” has caused some confusion among interpreters as various options have been put forth. Dumbrell helps us understand that the key to discerning these days is to understand it as eschatological.²⁶ In 31:27–30, God promises to replant His people in the land as a sign of their restoration from exile.²⁷ But there is a greater reference than just to the restoration of Judah and its eschatological undertones; this prophecy points forward to the eschatological age relating to Jesus’ Person and work (cf. Matt. 26:28). This eschatological age is marked by unity between the house of Israel and the house of Judah, giving warrant to see Jeremiah’s transition from two houses to one house.

Understanding that the phrase is eschatological helps us understand how to interpret the new covenant. Jeremiah’s prophecy extends beyond the mere inauguration of the new covenant to its consummation.²⁸ Taking into consideration the hermeneutical principle of the prophetic perspective, it is important to understand Jeremiah 31:31–34 through an already/not-yet lens. That is to say, the inauguration and consummation of the new covenant are separated by time. Failing to grasp this aspect of the new covenant, Gentry and Wellum appear to conflate the inauguration and consummation of the new covenant, believing that the inauguration creates a community of only believers.²⁹ This conclusion, however, runs the risk of an over-realized eschatology. Waltke elaborates: “By his death, Christ inaugurated the new covenant, and in that sense brought it to realization, but he did not bring it as yet to its *full* realization.”³⁰ In looking forward to the promise(s) of the new covenant, the difference between inauguration and consummation must be forefront in our minds. The realization of these promises

26. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 176. See also Kaiser, “The Old Promise and the New Covenant,” 13.

27. *WBC*, 132–33.

28. See Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 183–84.

29. See Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 508. Cf. also Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 33.

30. Waltke, *Old Testament Theology*, 442. See also Kline, *By Oath Consigned*, 42.

awaits a future fulfillment, even as Kaiser helpfully writes: “The full realization of the tripartite promise formula is only totally realized in the *eschaton*.”³¹ Though we currently participate in the new covenant, the fulfillment of these promises is a future reality. The church is still in “exile”³²; we still await the full salvation as here revealed.³³

What Law?

Wellum and Gentry, representing a mediating position between dispensationalism and covenant theology, are relatively ambiguous regarding the “law” (Heb. *תורה*) of v. 33. Speaking in ambiguous terms they speak of this law as simply instruction, apparently in contrast to the law that God revealed to Moses on Mt. Sinai.³⁴ This definition appears to yield a more general or theoretical understanding of precisely what God’s holy standard is. Elsewhere, they readily dismiss the perpetual nature of the Ten Commandments: “I am not bound by the Ten Commandments, because they are part of an agreement between God and Israel that does not apply to me. My relationship to God is based upon and defined by the new covenant.”³⁵ Aside from its relative obscurity, can this argument be maintained from the text?

Richard Barcellos offers a helpful response. He argues that the law of v. 33 is nothing short of the Decalogue. He reasons along these lines: 1) The law is God’s law (cf. 6:19; 9:13; 16:11; 26:4 and 44:10). 2) The law is written by God, first on stones then on hearts (cf. Ex. 31:8). 3) Therefore, the law is not a new law, but one that was revealed by God, belonged to God, and written. 4) “The promise of the New Covenant includes both a *law* to follow and a *disposition* of heart to obey.”³⁶ Similarly, Keown argues: “There is no indication, however, that the content of the law, God’s will revealed in commandment,

31. Kaiser, “The Old Promise and the New Covenant,” 20.

32. See I. M. Duguid, “Exile,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, eds. T. Desmond Alexander, Brian S. Rosner, D. A. Carson, and Graeme Goldsworthy (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2000), 475–78.

33. See also Kline, *By Oath Consigned*, 76.

34. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 506.

35. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 513.

36. Richard C. Barcellos, *In Defense of the Decalogue: A Critique of New Covenant Theology* (Enumclaw, Wash.: Winepress, 2001), 16–21. Despite Barcellos’s seminal work against new covenant theology Gentry and Wellum have dismissed his arguments and not dealt with the case Barcellos makes. See also Waltke, *Old Testament Theology*, 438. For a dispensationalist critique of New Covenant Theology, see

statute, or ordinance, will be altered in the new covenant.”³⁷ There is, therefore, no precedence to see that the law of the new covenant will be substantially different from the Decalogue; rather, within the greater context of Jeremiah, one should expect that this is the most viable definition.³⁸

But if the law here refers to the Decalogue, is there a substantial change in the reception of the law? Jeremiah promises that the law will be internalized (Heb. *קָנַח* and *לָחַץ*); does this contradict the external law found in previous covenantal dispensations (i.e., stone tablets)? Dumbrell argues that the contrast is not between an external and internal writing of the law. Throughout the OT, it is understood that the law must be internalized: “The fact remains, however, that in Deuteronomy, on whatever level the address is based, the law is required to be lodged in the heart, presumably in both the national and the individual heart (cf. Deut. 6:4–6, 11:18; see also Deut. 30).”³⁹ This is further confirmed by the whole context of the OT (see Ps. 51:10, 17; 73:1, 13; Prov. 22:11; Isa. 57:15; Jer. 4:4; Ezek. 44:7, 9) and defended by Jewish exegesis. Dumbrell concludes: “Thus, the stipulation of v. 33 that the law will be put in the heart is presumably a stipulation that the same law which was inserted into the national and personal consciousness of Israel earlier at Sinai will be reapplied in the same way in the new age.”⁴⁰

That the new covenant law stands in continuity with the Decalogue is further confirmed by the covenantal formula, “I will be their God and they shall be my people.”⁴¹ This covenantal formula arises

William D. Barrick, “New Covenant Theology and the Old Testament Covenants,” in *TMSJ* 18 (2007): 165–80.

37. *WBC*, 134.

38. Femi Adeyemi admits that this is the prevailing view maintained by men from Calvin to von Rad in “What is the New Covenant ‘Law’ in Jeremiah 31:33?” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 163 (2006): 312–21.

39. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 179. See also *WBC*, 133–34.

40. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 181. It is important, however, to bear in mind that the old covenant *did* have an external nationalistic emphasis that is not as prominent under the new covenant. This, perhaps, helps us to understand Paul’s polarizing treatment of the covenants in 2 Cor. 3ff. Contra to Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 75.

41. Jeremiah makes use of this formula often, see Jer. 7:23; 24:7; 30:22; 31:1; 32:28.

out of a long covenantal history between God and Israel.⁴² But it is not as though Israel was not considered God's people prior to the inauguration or consummation of the new covenant. This promise is likely a cognate to Genesis 17:8, where God promises to be the God of Abraham's descendents (see also Ex. 6:1–8; 29:42–46; 26:40–45; etc.). This formula was common in Israelite history and clearly links previous covenant administrations and the new covenant. By using this formula, Jeremiah effectually points to the continuity of God's saving purposes stated throughout the OT to the returning exiles and to the NT church. And this formula, far from many interpretations, is not in the present age restricted to believers only.⁴³ In this way, one can rightly assert that under the new covenant, the Decalogue is being renewed in an unprecedented way: God is remaining faithful despite His people's faithlessness.

Covenant Knowledge

Following the writing of the law upon the hearts, God promises that men will no longer teach their neighbors, saying, "Know the LORD," because the knowledge of God will be had by all. Some treat this promise as proof that new covenant partners are all believers. Paul House gives a typical understanding: "Yahweh's assertion that all the covenant people will know the Lord provides a profound shift in the definition of the elect.... Now, in effect, the whole covenant group will be believers, or what has been called the remnant up to now.... The unbelieving majority will no longer exist."⁴⁴ Similarly, yet more nuanced, Wellum and Gentry argue that this covenant knowledge is not a lack of mediated knowledge,⁴⁵ but that under the old covenant, neighbors were at times required to exhort their non-believing

42. Cf. Wilber B. Wallis, "Irony in Jeremiah's Prophecy of a New Covenant," in *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* 12 (1969): 107. Wallis defends that the whole new covenant as prophesied in Jeremiah is one of irony. While we are reticent to embrace everything Wallis says, he does point out the irony that what appears "new" in the new covenant is not actually "new."

43. See also 2 Cor. 6:16; 1 Peter 2:9, 10.

44. Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 1998), 318.

45. Cf. D. A. Carson, "Evangelicals, Ecumenism, and the Church," in *Evangelical Affirmations*, ed. Kenneth S. Kantzer and Carl F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 359–60.

neighbors to “know the LORD.”⁴⁶ Under the new covenant, they argue, this type of exhortation is not necessary because the covenant community is only made up of believers.⁴⁷ This verse, they argue, “shows that the Presbyterian understanding is flawed. There are no covenant members who are not believers.”⁴⁸

But again, it appears that such a radical change among the covenant members is not necessitated by the text. This passage is likely referring to the inaugural democratization between prophet and people (cf. 42:1–3).⁴⁹ With God’s final word of revelation spoken in Christ (Heb. 1:1–4) and the giving of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2), the prophetic office which mediated the word of God to individuals was eliminated. Rather than removing the need of encouraging fellow covenant members to “know the LORD” (cf. Heb. 3:13), the aim of this promise mitigates the necessity of the prophetic office. Keeping close to this understanding, it is not necessary to see a radical shift in the definition of the elect.

Covenant and Forgiveness

The causal clause reveals a further promise contained in the new covenant. This is the promise of forgiveness of sins. Gentry and Wellum again argue that this promise promotes the view that only believers belong to the new covenant community.⁵⁰ They see the forgiveness at work here as a salvific and individually applied promise in the hearts of God’s people. Along a different line, Keown understands this promise to be an encouragement to those returning from exile that they would not bear the sins of their fathers who were exiled. From this

46. This is a peculiar argument and, as far as I have read, there are no allusions or specific places in the OT where common laypeople exhorted their fellow brothers in such a way (cf. Jer. 9:4–9). If this is what is meant by this statement, it appears to lack biblical support or examples. Cf. also to Rata, *The Covenant Motif in Jeremiah’s Book of Comfort*, 44.

47. See Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 509–10.

48. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 510. Interestingly, Gentry and Wellum do not deal with the prepositional phrase “from the smallest to the greatest.” These Hebrew adjectives, as used in Jeremiah, can be a simple attributive (see 49:15), a mark of social status (see 6:13), or as referring to children (see 16:6). Keown argues that children are most likely in view (*WBC*, 135).

49. See G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 734.

50. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 510.

perspective, the promise merely offers a new start to the exilic people (cf. Num. 14:20–23).⁵¹ But is this the emphasis of the passage?

Timothy M. Willis rightly argues that personal forgiveness of sins cannot be in view here, *per se*, because “there are numerous references to divine forgiveness in the OT, yet Jeremiah’s prophecy suggests that (some aspect of) the forgiveness of sins will be part of what is ‘new’ in the new covenant”⁵² (see Ex. 34:6, 7; Ps. 103:8–12; Isa. 43:25).

Beale argues along similar lines concerning the knowledge of God. Setting Jeremiah 31:31–34 within the context of Hebrews, he argues: “The forgiveness of sin promised in the new-covenant prophecy... has now been *accomplished*.”⁵³ The priestly work of Christ, from a temporal perspective, has been completed, and there remains nothing more to be done for sin from a sacrificial perspective. Within the new covenant, no atonement for sins is required because Christ has died once and for all.

Adding insight to this thought, Dumbrell notes, and I quote at length:

The final and important factor which controls the era of the New Covenant, Jeremiah tells us, is that it is the era of the forgiveness of sins. God, he tell us, in the new era, “will forgive their iniquity, and... will remember their sin no more.” The forgiveness of sins in the Old Testament was, as we have seen, bound up, other than in exceptional instances, with the system of institutionalization approach through sacrifice. God forgave on the condition of repentance, and this was the very basis of forgiveness. There is no mention, however, in v. 34 of any such preconditions in the new age. In fact a situation seems to be envisaged in which sin has been once for all dealt with. No more action in the new age will be called for against sin, for, remarks Jeremiah, “I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” That parallel statement is not simply the language of prophetic hyperbole nor merely a reference to the psychological attitude of God in the new age, namely that he will “forgive by forgetting” sin. It refers rather to the new age as one in which

51. *WBC*, 135.

52. Timothy M. Willis, “‘I Will Remember Their Sins No More’: Jeremiah 31, the New Covenant, and the Forgiveness of Sins,” in *Restoration Quarterly* 53 (2011): 2.

53. Beale, *New Testament Theology*, 730 [emphasis mine].

no action (in this biblical sense of remembering [via sacrifice]) needs to be taken against sin.⁵⁴

It is in this sense that we can come back to Willis and see that something has definitely changed in regards to God's forgiveness of sins, and yet not fall into the stickiness of Wellum and Gentry that does not deal with the already/not-yet tension of this passage. From a covenantal perspective, the substance of the covenant remains the same, but the form has changed—namely, the abrogation of the continual remembrance of sin in the offering up of sacrifices.

Conclusion

The issues of Jeremiah 31:31–34 are many, and exegetes have differed greatly in their interpretation of the new covenant. One's understanding of this watershed passage influences both one's hermeneutic and one's ecclesiology. But it is exegetically unsatisfying, given the context and theological concerns of this passage, to stress disunity both in regards to the promises and the partners. Dispensationalism's emphatic stress of covenantal disunity cannot be sustained in light of Jeremiah's portraying the new covenant utilizing old covenant terminology—especially redemption from Egypt. Further, a Baptist emphasis on the newness of the new covenant and its community is insufficient because the text does not warrant us to see this division and because of the way these verses focus on God's covenantal faithfulness. A proper reading of Jeremiah 31:31–34 will yield the understanding that God promises a future time in which He will renew His covenant with His church in such a way that exalts His own covenant faithfulness in bringing His people to a full realization of redemption.

54. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 182.

Systematic and
Historical Theology



Calvin on Predestination

ARTHUR MISKIN



Calvin’s doctrine of predestination has been the occasion for concern for many people. Some see it as a source of worry because of the uncertainty of final salvation. Others find it unacceptable because of its apparent contradiction of human freedom. Ironically, Calvin himself saw this doctrine as possessing great practical benefit. He insisted that it bears “sweet fruits” for the believer; only by accepting this biblical doctrine of predestination can the believer find genuine assurance and comfort in his salvation.

Errors Opposed by Calvin

John Calvin faced his fair share of heretics in his day and was scathing in his attack upon their errors. It would appear that two of his main opponents in the area of predestination were Albertus Pighius and George of Sicily, whom he brands as “a pair of unclean beasts” (Lev. 11:3). According to Calvin, both sought to undermine the doctrine of predestination but differed in the “figments” that they advanced.¹ Pighius, according to Calvin, taught that God, by His immutable counsel, created all men to salvation without distinction; but, as He foresaw the fall of Adam and in order that His election might remain firm and unaltered, He applied a remedy which might, therefore, be common to all: the election of the whole human race in Christ so that no one can perish but he who, by his own obstinacy, blots out his name from the Book of Life. Because God foresaw that some would remain determinedly in their malice and contempt of divine grace, He by His foreknowledge reprobated such. The wicked then deprive

1. John Calvin, *Calvin’s Calvinism: Treatises on the Eternal Predestination of God and the secret Providence of God* (Grand Rapids: RFP), 27.

themselves of the benefit of universal election, irrespectively and independently of God altogether. Further, he went on to teach that all who hold and teach that certain persons are positively and absolutely chosen to salvation, while others are as absolutely appointed to destruction, think unworthily of God, and impute to Him a severity utterly foreign to His justice and His goodness. Pighius goes on to mention Augustine as one who promotes such a view of God.

Calvin spares no effort in defending the good name and teaching of this great stalwart of the Christian church. Pighius held, in line with Nicolaus of Cusa, that God's foreknowledge in eternity did not include knowledge of future events. There certainly is nothing new under the sun (Eccl. 1:9). The implication is that the fall of Adam took Him by surprise. Calvin slates Pighius for substantiating his heresy by formulating a twofold knowledge in God.² This implies that all men were created unto life before the foreknowledge of the fall; the thought of man's salvation preceded the foreknowledge of his death. This must then issue forth in the notion that Christ was provided as an emergency measure or an afterthought in the mind of God. It naturally follows that the whole human race is chosen in Christ, which is what Pighius believed.³ Calvin dismantles the entire argument of the heretic by expounding three critical passages of Scripture: Ephesians 1:4; John 6:37–38, 44; and Romans 9:10–13.

The false teaching of Georgius is also thoroughly dealt with by Calvin.⁴ This man taught that no man is predestined to salvation, but that God pre-appointed a time when He would save the whole world. Calvin refutes three arguments that were put forward by this monk who denied the truth that men are given over to blindness and obstinate hardness of heart and are therefore unable and unwilling to believe the gospel. This proves too much for Georgius. How can it be that man is given over to blindness of heart by God, and from this evil heart of unbelief proceed all manner of wickedness? Calvin refers to Pharaoh who is said to have been hardened by God. Moses testifies that Pharaoh had been raised up "for this very purpose," i.e., that the glory of God be manifested in his destruction. Paul confirms that Pharaoh was one of the reprobate (Ex. 9:16; Rom. 9:17). Georgius

2. Calvin, *Calvin's Calvinism*, 28.

3. Calvin, *Calvin's Calvinism*, 45.

4. Calvin, *Calvin's Calvinism*, 157–86.

would have us believe that it is the sin of the wicked that condemns them to hell. Calvin in no way denies this fact: "All those who, being destitute of the Spirit of adoption, precipitated themselves into eternal destruction by their own sin and fault." But these vessels of wrath were "afore prepared unto destruction," so there is something that precedes and that is the eternal counsel of God which has ordained it to be so.

The Biblical Source of Predestination⁵

Contrary to what many believe, the doctrine of predestination is not one that Calvin himself devised. For Calvin, Scripture is the inspired and inerrant Word of God. As the revealed will of the living God, Scripture is the single source of Calvin's theology and so it is evident that his entire teaching on this unpopular doctrine was drawn exclusively from Scripture. In examining the doctrine, Calvin warned against two dangers, namely, excessive curiosity where there is speculation beyond what Scripture teaches, and excessive timidity that dares not speak where the Scriptures do speak. Concerning the first he says: "[T]he moment we exceed the bounds of the word, our course is outside the pathway and there we must repeatedly wander, slip and stumble." Concerning the latter, he warned against being "so cautious or fearful that [we] desire to bury predestination in order not to disturb weak souls."

Definition

In two comprehensive definitions, Calvin summarized his doctrine of double predestination:

We call predestination God's eternal decree, by which he determined with himself what he willed to become of each man. For all are not created in equal condition; rather, eternal life is fore-ordained for some, eternal damnation for others. Therefore, as any man has been created to one or the other of these ends, we speak of him as predestined to life or death.⁶

5. Fred H. Klooster, *Calvin's Doctrine of Predestination*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1977), 20ff. The writer is indebted to Dr. Klooster for very valuable insights into Calvin's development of the doctrine of predestination.

6. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 3.21.5.

As Scripture then clearly shows, we say that God once established by his eternal and unchangeable plan those whom he long before determined once for all to receive into salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, he would devote to destruction. We assert that, with respect to the elect, this plan was founded upon His freely given mercy without regarding human worth; but by his just and irreprehensible but in incomprehensible judgment he has barred the door of life to those whom he has given over to damnation. Now among the elect we regard the call as a testimony of election. Then we behold justification another sign of its manifestation, until they come into the glory in which the fulfilment of that election lies. But as the Lord seals his elect by call and justification, so, by shutting off the reprobate from knowledge of his name or from the sanctification of the Spirit, he, as it were, reveals by these marks what sort of judgment awaits them.

These summaries indicate that Calvin considered both election and reprobation sovereign works of God rooted in His eternal and immutable decree. Thus Calvin emphasized both a sovereign election and sovereign reprobation. In speaking of both, he used adjectives that cannot be applied to both equally. He followed Paul in saying: “[I]n the case of the elect he would have us contemplate the mercy of God, but in the case of the reprobate acknowledge his righteous judgment.”⁷ Election displays the free mercy and the goodness of God, or His grace. Reprobation, on the other hand, displays the righteous judgment of God, or His justice. The incomprehensibility of God is called to our attention again and again, but the three attributes most mentioned in Calvin’s discussions are sovereignty, grace, and justice.

Sovereign and Gracious Election

The Divine Decree of Election

In setting forth the doctrine of election in his *Institutes*, Calvin begins with Ephesians. In that great Trinitarian passage (Eph. 1:3–6), Paul refers to God’s “good pleasure of his will” as the source of grace received.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in

7. John Calvin, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993), 203.

Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

When one pays careful attention to the separate clauses of this passage, there is no reason to doubt the doctrine of election. “Paul declares all virtue appearing in man is the result of election.... Besides they were elected ‘to be holy’, which refutes the error that election is derived from foreknowledge.”⁸

In his commentary on Ephesians, Calvin summarized the doctrine of election by referring to four causes of our salvation. “The efficient cause is the good pleasure of the will of God; the material cause is Christ; the final cause is the praise of his grace... the formal cause is the preaching of the gospel, by which the goodness of God flows out to us. Calvin emphasizes three factors in the area of election:

1. Election is God’s work.
2. Election is God’s decretive work.
3. Election is God’s decretive work relating to individuals.

Election is God’s Work

According to Calvin, election is God’s sovereign work from beginning to end and concerns the eternal counsel made before the foundation of the world. Although all three persons of the Trinity are involved in this divine decree, Calvin understood it as primarily the work of the first two Persons. This he based on John 6:37, 39: “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.... And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing.”⁹ But Calvin also considered Christ Himself as the author of the decree.

When Christ declares, “I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen” (John 13:18), He makes Himself the author of election.¹⁰ Calvin also saw the elect as elect in Christ and Christ as “the

8. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.22.2.

9. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.22.7.

10. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.22.7.

mirror of our election,” but at this point it is important to note that Christ Himself is the author of our election.

Election is God’s Decretive Work

Both election and reprobation refers to the sovereign eternal counsel of God. “We call predestination *God’s eternal decree*, by which he determined with himself what he willed would become of each man.”¹¹ “Scripture...clearly shows that...God once established by his *eternal and unchangeable plan* those whom he long before determined once for all to receive unto salvation and those whom he on the other hand would devote to destruction.”¹² The eternal decree or eternal plan precedes the person elected. God’s counsel precedes all of His activities in history as an eternal plan; however, that is carried out in history. Calvin sees an intimate relationship between God’s decree and God’s providence. “God [is] the ruler and governor of all things, who in accordance with his wisdom has from the farthest limit of eternity decreed what he is going to do, and now by his might carries out what he decreed to do.”¹³ All creatures are governed by God’s secret plan in such a way that nothing happens except what is knowingly and willingly decreed by Him.¹⁴ “God’s providence, therefore, [is] the determinative principle for all human plans and works not only to display its force in the elect, who are ruled by his Holy Spirit, but also compel the reprobate to obedience.”¹⁵

Election is Particular

The decree is specific and particular; it concerns specific individuals. The decree does not concern some general concern on the part of God to save those who believe. Rather, it concerns individuals, not yet existent, whom God destines for eternal salvation. It determines and provides the means for the accomplishment of this end for each elect individual.

This view did not lead Calvin to individualism; he did not refer to individual election alone. He spoke also of national election of Israel—election to office in distinction from election to salvation. These other species or degrees of election do not necessarily involve

11. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.21.5.

12. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.21.7.

13. Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.16.8.

14. Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.16.3.

15. Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.18.2.

salvation. Esau was part of the elect nation but broke covenant and showed that he was not elect unto salvation. Judas was of the elect nation and was elected to office, but was not elected to salvation. God not only offers salvation, but so assigns it that the certainty of its effect is not in doubt or suspense.¹⁶ Not the whole nation of Israel but only the elect within the nation are engrafted into their Head, Jesus Christ, so they are never cut off. These elect are bound together in communion: “the Heavenly Father has gathered his elect together and has joined them to himself in indissoluble union.”¹⁷

Particular election brought with it the objection that God was then a respecter of persons. Calvin answered this by asserting that the Creator has sovereign right over His creation. There is nothing in a person as such that accounts for his election or reprobation. The elect to whom God shows mercy are as guilty as the reprobate. The reprobate are eventually condemned for their sins, but the sovereign act of God in preterition was not occasioned by their sin. With Augustine, Calvin said: “The Lord can give grace to whom he will...because he is merciful and not give to all because he is just judge. For by giving to some what they do not deserve...he can show his free grace.... By not giving to all, he can manifest what all deserve.”¹⁸ Those elected are not more worthy than those rejected; it is a matter of God’s sovereignty alone. “God chooses some and passes over others according to his own decision....” If anyone seeks a further cause than God’s free sovereignty, “let them answer why they are men rather than oxen or asses....”¹⁹ “O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?” (Rom. 9:20). The decree of election makes a distinction between men where there is none by nature, e.g., Jacob and Esau, Isaac and Ishmael. In free and sovereign election God gives freely and generously where no merit is present in the recipient.

The Cause and Ground of Election

The principal cause, highest reason, and foundation of our election is God Himself—His sovereign will and good pleasure. The cause is

16. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.21.7.

17. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.21.7.

18. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.23.11.

19. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.24.17.

not good works. Election is unto good works and does not arise out of good works (Eph. 1:4). Election was decreed before the foundation of the world, so the elect did not yet exist to perform good works. Thus neither is the cause foreknowledge of works. “We were all lost in Adam; and therefore, had not God, through his own election, rescued us from perishing by his own election, there was nothing to be foreseen.”²⁰ Election cannot be pushed beyond the bound of God’s good pleasure; otherwise man begins to wickedly investigate the causes of God’s will. His will alone is the cause of all things. “God will have us use such soberness that his bare will may suffice us for all reasons. . . . It is wisdom in us to do whatever God appointed and never ask why.”²¹

The ground is Christ. Calvin emphasized that sovereign election unto salvation is “election in Christ.” There is a basis or ground for this election. When Paul teaches that we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, he takes away all worth on our part, “for it is just as if he said: since among the offspring of Adam the Heavenly Father found nothing worthy of his election, he turned his eyes upon his Anointed to choose from that body as members those whom he was to take into the fellowship of life.”²² Election in Christ in no way minimized or altered the decretive character of divine election for Calvin. On the contrary, election in Christ sets forth the ground for this eternal divine decree, or its ‘material cause.’²³ Election in Christ is second proof of the freedom of election. If we are chosen in Christ, then it is outside of ourselves. The Father views us in Christ and all merit that He sees in us comes from Christ alone. If we are elect in Christ, it follows that we are ourselves unworthy.

The Goal and Means of Election

There is a twofold goal regarding election. The ultimate goal of election, according to Calvin, was the glory of God. This was the unique emphasis of both his teaching and his personal life. *Soli Deo gloria* was his well-known motto. In the *Institutes*, Calvin gave far more attention to the immediate goal of our election, which is the sanctification

20. *Ephesians* (on 1:4) *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 125.

21. John Calvin, *Sermons on the Epistles of Paul to Timothy and Titus* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1983), 703.

22. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.22.1.

23. Calvin, *Ephesians*, 127.

of the elect: “that we should be holy and without blame before him” (Eph. 1:4). That sanctification leads the believer to glorify his sovereign and gracious Lord. Divine election provides all of the means necessary to attain the goal of God’s sovereign purpose. Romans 8:29–30 provides the basic structure for these means by which God effectuates His eternal election: calling, justification, glorification. Election envelops the whole of the redemptive process from the eternal decree to its final accomplishment in glory. Election therefore ties in with the whole of soteriology and ultimately eschatology. This explains why Calvin places his discussion of predestination in Book III of his *Institutes*, where he deals with soteriology. It is in eschatology that soteriology ultimately terminates.

The means whereby God effects His decreed goal is through the preaching of the gospel. By divine command, the gospel must be preached to all, but not all will hear. Does the universal call of the gospel then conflict with particular election? Calvin answered carefully and scripturally. We may not say that the gospel is “effectually profitable to all.”²⁴ Relying on Augustine, Calvin explained how the gospel should be preached:

If anyone addresses the people in this way: “If you do not believe, the reason is that you have been divinely destined for destruction,” he not only fosters sloth but also gives place to evil intention. If anyone extends to the future also the statement that they who hear will not hear because they have been condemned, this will be cursing instead of teaching. . . . *For as we know not who belongs to the number of the predestined or who does not, we ought to be so minded as to wish that all men be saved.* So shall it come about that we try to make everyone a sharer in our peace. . . . It belongs to God to make that rebuke useful to those whom he . . . has foreknown and predestined.²⁵

At the same time Calvin held that the preaching of the gospel, even for the reprobate, involves display of God’s “great benefit,”²⁶ or God’s common grace. A heavier judgment awaits the reprobate who have heard the gospel and rejected it than those who lived before the coming of Christ and never heard the gospel. Calvin referred to gospel preaching

24. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.22.10.

25. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.23.14. Emphasis mine.

26. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.24.12.

as streaming “forth from the wellspring of election.”²⁷ He explained: “The elect are gathered into Christ’s flock by a call not immediately at birth and not all at the same time but as it pleases God to dispense grace to them...but before they are gathered unto that supreme Shepherd they wander scattered in the wilderness common to all.”

Calvin further states that two errors need to be avoided concerning election and faith. The first error makes “man God’s co-worker to ratify election by his consent...for this makes man’s will superior to God’s.”²⁸ Man is not merely given the ability to believe; Scripture states that man is given faith itself (Eph. 2:8). The second error makes election dependent upon faith. Calvin states: “It is false to say that election takes effect only after we have embraced the gospel, and it takes its validity from this.”²⁹ Election is not doubtful and ineffectual until confirmed by faith. He did admit that election is confirmed “with respect to us,” sealed as it were with a seal, but we must not confuse cause with effect. The pipe through which the water runs must not be confused with the fountain from which it springs. Faith is fitly joined with election, provided it takes second place.³⁰

Sovereign and Just Reprobation

Calvin admitted that reprobation raised questions that he could not answer, yet he felt compelled to defend the doctrine because Scripture requires it. Concerning Romans 9, he said “that hardening is in God’s hand and will just as much as mercy is...and Paul does not...labour anxiously, as do others to make false excuses in God’s defence.”³¹ Calvin was thinking of those who accepted election but denied reprobation. Some of his friends, including fellow Reformers, urged him to soft-pedal the doctrine of reprobation.

The Divine Decree of Reprobation

Calvin understood the eternal counsel of God as the expression of His sovereign will and purpose for the entire history of the world. Both His foreknowledge and His providence are rooted in His eternal

27. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.24.1.

28. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.24.3.

29. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.24.3.

30. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.22.10.

31. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.24.1.

counsel. Reprobation, as well as election, concerns the eternal decree or sovereign counsel of God.

Reprobation Involves God's Decretive Work

We call predestination God's eternal decree, by which he compacted with himself what he willed to become of each man. For not all are created in equal condition; rather, eternal life is *foreordained* for some, eternal damnation for others. Therefore, as any man has been created to one or the other of these ends, we speak of him as *predestined* to life or to death.³²

As Scripture, then, clearly shows, we say that God once established by his *eternal and unchangeable plan* those whom he long before determined once for all to receive into salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, He would devote to *destruction*.³³

Jacob is chosen and distinguished from the *rejected Esau* by God's predestination, while not differing from him in merits.³⁴

Calvin made no specific reference to the distinct persons of the Trinity in connection with reprobation as he did with election. He did, however, contend that Christ Himself taught this doctrine. "Now how will those who do not admit that God condemns them dispose of Christ's statement: 'Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up?'"³⁵ He also appealed to Romans, knowing that one clear passage of Scripture would not silence the opponents: "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory..." (Rom. 9:22–23).

Reprobation is Particular

For Calvin, reprobation, like election, concerns specific individuals. It does not refer to a general class of people, as the later Arminians contended. Esau is named in clear distinction from Jacob. But though the decree clearly refers to individuals, Calvin insisted that we by no

32. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.21.5.

33. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.21.7.

34. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.22.6.

35. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.23.1.

means know who the reprobate are. We are to preach the gospel to all and desire the salvation of all to whom we preach; we need never fear that by so doing we contradict the will of God by which He sovereignly decreed to reprobate some.³⁶

The Cause of Reprobation

The Ultimate Cause Is Not Sin

This is the most common and apparently most simple explanation for the cause of reprobation. Election is aimed at producing good works that glorify God (Eph. 1:4); hence human works are excluded from consideration as the cause of election. With regard to reprobation, however, the sinful actions of men are related to the final condemnation that proceeds from a righteous God. Though Calvin emphasized the fact that no one is finally condemned who does not deserve that condemnation, he emphatically contended that sinful works are not the ultimate cause or basis for God's eternal decree of reprobation. Romans 9 is crucial in his argument: "For as Jacob, deserving nothing by good works, is taken into grace, so Esau, as yet undefiled by any crime, is hated." Calvin add: "Now it is proved that he did not see it, since he specifically emphasizes the point that when as they had yet done nothing good or evil, one was chosen and the other rejected."³⁷ This goes to prove that the ultimate cause of divine predestination does not lie in works.

The Cause Is Not Foreknowledge of Sin

Calvin also rejected this argument on biblical grounds. God foresees future events only by reason of the fact that He decreed that they should take place. Here Calvin refers to Proverbs 16:4: "Behold! Since the disposition of all things is in God's hand, since the decision of salvation or of death rests in his power, he so ordains by his plan and will that among men and women some are born destined for certain death, who glorify his name by their own destruction...both life and death are acts of God's will more than of His foreknowledge."³⁸ God "not only foreknew it, but ordained it."³⁹

36. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.24.13.

37. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.22.11.

38. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.23.6.

39. Calvin, *Calvin's Calvinism*, 199.

The Ultimate Cause Is God's Sovereign Will

If the decree of reprobation does not have its foundation in the sinful works of those reprobated or in the divine foreknowledge of such works, then, according to Calvin, it must have its ultimate foundations in the decree of God. Does this not then make God unjust? In Romans 9, Esau is not condemned because of his sinful actions. Paul concludes from this that God has mercy on whom He pleases: "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy" (Rom. 9:13). Therefore God has mercy on whom He wants to have mercy, and hardens whom He wants to harden. The apostle Paul attributes both to God's decision alone. When it is said that God hardens or shows mercy to whom He wills, men are warned by this to seek no ultimate cause outside His will.⁴⁰ Calvin also puts it this way: "[T]hose whom God passes over (*praeterit*) he condemns (*reprobat*); he does this for no other reason than that he wills to exclude them from the inheritance which He predestines (*praedestinat*) for his own children."⁴¹

What is the ultimate cause of God's decree of reprobation? According to Calvin, the answer is the sovereign good pleasure of God. No cause other than God's sovereign will can be adduced. Calvin agreed with Plato who said that men who are troubled with lusts are in need of law; but the will of God is not only free of all faults but is the highest rule of perfection, the law of all laws. Calvin regarded God's will as the highest rule of righteousness; whatever He wills, by the very fact that He wills it, must be considered righteous. When one asks why God has so done, we must reply because He has willed it.⁴² When we ask why He has so willed it, we are seeking something higher than God's will, which cannot be found. This is Calvin's response to those who claim that God is unjust to hold us responsible for what He Himself has decreed. Yet God has supplied in His Word weapons against these objectors. Scripture makes it plain that God owes nothing to human beings, even less to those who are "vitiating by sin" and are all "odious to God."⁴³

The sovereignty of God's will in reprobation could bring the objection that God is the author of sin. God so wills the reprobation

40. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.22.11.

41. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.23.1. Cf. Calvin, *Romans* (on 9:11).

42. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.23.2.

43. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.23.3.

of man without making Himself the author of sin yet without removing the sinner's responsibility. Calvin fully admitted that God had willed Adam's fall. He furthermore saw it as God's decretive will and not merely His permission. God does not merely permit man to sin; He rules and overrules all the actions of the world with perfect and divine rectitude—even the sin of mankind is under His sovereign control. In other words, "man falls according as God's providence ordains, but he falls by his own fault."⁴⁴ How did Calvin respond to the charge that God's decree of reprobation makes Him the author of sin? He was convinced that God's will is the ultimate cause of all things and he was willing to leave the mystery there.

Calvin differentiated between the ultimate and proximate causes—God's sovereign will is the ultimate cause of Adam's fall and of reprobation, while human sin is the proximate cause. We are to examine what is clearly revealed, namely, man's personal guilt, rather than seek to understand and scrutinize God's will as the ultimate cause but which we cannot understand.

Some further points need to be made at this juncture. First, reprobation and election are equally ultimate in several ways. According to Calvin, the sovereign will of God is the ultimate cause of reprobation as it is of election. Human sin entered prominently into Calvin's discussion of reprobation, but this he saw as the proximate cause, the ultimate cause being the will of God. Human responsibility for sin constitutes the judicial element of reprobation, namely, eternal damnation. Calvin urged his readers to look at the proximate cause or "evident cause of condemnation" because they could readily recognize and understand this.⁴⁵ God's justice is apparent in His condemnation of the guilty unbeliever, but Calvin never allowed the proximate cause of reprobation (condemnation) to stand by itself. Compelled by the teaching of Scripture, he acknowledged that the ultimate or remote cause of reprobation is the sovereign will of God. However incomprehensible this is, he submitted to the authority of Scripture.

Second, reprobation and election are not completely parallel. Although the two are equally ultimate in the sense that the sovereign will of God is the ultimate cause of each, this does not mean, for Calvin, that they are in all respects parallel. While both election and

44. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.23.8.

45. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.23.8.

reprobation are described as “sovereign” (indicating the co-ultimacy of the two), election is further described as “gracious” (gratuitous) and reprobation as “just” (see Belgic Confession, Art. 16).

One of the most striking indications of the lack of parallelism is evident in Calvin’s insistence on distinguishing between the ultimate and proximate causes of reprobation. Human sinful action is the proximate cause of the condemnation aspect of reprobation, but Calvin never referred to it as even a proximate cause of election. The ground of election is Jesus Christ, and it is because of precisely this that nothing in anyone can ever be the ground of their election. With regard to reprobation, however, sinful human actions do come into the picture. Calvin did make a distinction between preterition and condemnation, but he did not regard sinful human action as the proximate cause of God’s sovereign passing by of some while electing others. This decision he credited solely to the freedom of God and His sovereign free will. It is not because of sinful actions that God decrees to pass some by with His grace. Works neither performed nor foreseen play any role as the proximate cause of the preterition aspect of reprobation. If this were the case, there would be no election.

Thus sin is the proximate cause of the condemnation aspect of reprobation alone. Said another way, condemnation, while sovereignly executed, is always the result of sin; “none undeservedly perish.”⁴⁶ The objects of God’s eternal election were unworthy of the grace He chose to give them, but God looked upon them in Christ.⁴⁷ In Calvin’s doctrine of reprobation there is no parallel to this key feature of election.

The Goal and Means of Reprobation

As with election, the goal of reprobation, in Calvin’s thought, is the glory of God.⁴⁸ Romans 9 indicates that even reprobation has the glory of God as its goal. “The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil” (Prov. 16:4). Three complex factors work together in contributing to God’s glory: the eternal decree of God, the wickedness of man, and the final condemnation of the unbeliever by a just God. The complex interrelationship between these three factors led Calvin to acknowledge the mystery of it all.

46. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.24.12.

47. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.24.12.

48. Calvin, *Calvin’s Calvinism*, 97.

Godly minds cannot “reconcile the two matters, that man when first made was set in such a position that by voluntarily falling he should be the cause of his own destruction and yet that it was so ordained by the admirable counsel of God, that this voluntary ruin to the human race should be the cause of humility.”⁴⁹

Because God’s decree always includes the means for its effectuation, there is a parallel between decree and means with respect to both election and reprobation. Yet the relation of decree and means in reprobation is the “reverse” of what it is in election. In other words, God withholds from the reprobate what He gives to the elect. He enlightens the hearts of the elect by His Spirit while He abandons the reprobate and withholds His grace from them. Calvin recognized that there is diversity in the means that God uses to execute His plan of reprobation. Some people may be deprived of the privilege of hearing the gospel; to others, He transmits His doctrine wrapped in enigmas and they are cast into greater stupidity. God’s use of these various means does not eliminate or reduce human responsibility. Man remains accountable and culpable for his sin.

Conclusion

The doctrine of double predestination has never been and never will be popular. It was not personal preference that led Calvin to teach these doctrines, but truth gleaned from Scripture. The unpopularity of this humbling doctrine is due in part, perhaps, to the fact that people do not readily submit to the full teaching of Scripture. This is the key to Calvin’s doctrine of predestination. He sought faithfully to echo what he heard the Scriptures say. He was also fully aware that indiscreet proclamation of these doctrines could lead to problems; that is why he said, “but I am not unaware that prudence should be shown in tempering everything to the building up of faith.” Even this, however, is not enough to lessen man’s rejection of this unpopular doctrine. Calvin adds: “But as I have studied in good faith to do just this, even...the niceties of some are not yet satisfied...” It is indeed a great challenge to any minister of the Word to preach this doctrine graciously, without detracting from its full scriptural import.

49. Calvin, *Calvin’s Calvinism*, 98.

John Bunyan: His Life, Writing, and Influence

GEOFF THOMAS



John Bunyan had no family influences encouraging him to become a Christian. His grandfather married four times, his father three times, while he married twice. His grandfather was what we might understand to be a kind of “traveling salesman” who left his grandson 6d in his will. His father, Thomas Bunyan, was a tinker or brazier. He possessed a “smallholding” with a few animals and chickens, but his income came from traveling around farms and villages in Bedfordshire repairing saucepans and kettles. He was a hard man, his speech laced with frequent swearing. The home was modestly comfortable characterized by unremitting hard toil.

John Bunyan was the first of the Bunyans to become literate. He gained a school scholarship by a bequest of the Mayor of London. No Bunyan in all the generations before him could read or write; his father signed his will with an X. Bunyan learned to read, and later wrote *Pilgrim's Progress* as well as three fat volumes of his books which are still in print.

In June 1644, when he was sixteen, Bunyan's mother passed away and four weeks later his sister died. Eight weeks after his mother's death, his father remarried and, in eight months, his wife gave birth to a boy whom his Royalist father named Charles. Four months earlier, John had left home and joined the Parliamentary Army fighting against King Charles. There was little affection between son and father. How then did John Bunyan become a Christian? Ten factors all played their part, great and small.

His Conversion

1. Bunyan heard gospel preaching while he was in the Army.

For three years, Bunyan served under Oliver Cromwell's growing leadership. Bunyan was originally based in Newport Pagnell, and we know that in October, seven preachers were active there. Twice on Sundays and every Thursday there were Puritan ministers exhorting the troops. There were prayers every day and the Bible was read. The teenage Bunyan was given a new concept of worship in which the climactic aspect was the preaching of the Word. Captain Hobson was one of those preachers. He had signed the 1644 First London Confession and at least one of his sermons was printed. He said such things as this to the gathered soldiers: "They alone are fit to declare Christ who understand Him for enjoyment. This is like the difference between reading about a country and visiting that place. That man only is fit to declare the truth whose spirit is crucified by the power of the truth."

2. Bunyan married and obtained his first books.

We know practically nothing about Bunyan's first wife, not even her name. It was probably Mary because that was the name of their first child. At Cromwell's victory and the return of peace, Bunyan was demobbed at twenty years of age, a self-assertive, fully adult Parliamentarian. The only trade he knew was repairing pots and pans like his father before him. His stake anvil is on display in the Bunyan museum today; it weighs sixty pounds and Bunyan carried it in a sling on his back from farm to cottage to village green. When he married his wife he said, "We had not a dish or spoon between us," but his wife had a godly father and John loved to hear about him. There could have been no greater contrast to his own father.

3. Bunyan began to read Christian books.

Bunyan's wife was also literate and her father gave them two books as a dowry. One was Arthur Dent's *Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven*, and she and John read it to one another. Dent spelled out the marks of grace in a believer whereby that man might know that he was going to heaven: a love for the children of God; a delight in God's Word; often and fervent prayer; a zeal for God's glory; a denial of self; patiently bearing the cross; faithfulness in our calling; honest, just,

conscientious dealing with our neighbors. Later Bunyan obtained a copy of Luther on Galatians, which he also found helpful.

4. Bunyan received a rebuke.

A Christian woman heard Bunyan speaking roughly in the language he had heard from his father since a boy. The woman rebuked him for his cursing, telling him that he was spoiling the young people of the town by his foul speech. Her words came as a shock to him; his conscience was enlightened and he ceased his compulsive swearing.

5. Bunyan began to attend church regularly.

John fell into the Christian pattern of being found in a congregation of people who had gathered for worship on the first day of the week. The vicar, Christopher Hall, preached the law of God strongly, especially the fourth commandment to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. He warned against Sabbath-breaking.

6. Bunyan became the recipient of the convicting work of the Spirit of God.

One Sunday afternoon, his morning attendance at church over, Bunyan was playing a game of cat with his friends, but his play was interrupted by a voice speaking to him: "Will you leave your sins and go to heaven, or have your sins and go to hell?" He was thoroughly alarmed for a few hours, but shook off the impressions of the words from heaven, coming to the conclusion that he would keep hold of his sins. But his next weeks were miserable as he clung guiltily to his follies, in a more miserable state than if he had mortified them.

7. Bunyan was stirred by the godly conversation of Christians.

Bunyan would work in Bedford and eat his bread with some Christian women who tailored their conversation for his ears. They talked of the new birth, the love of Christ, and their own sins. Bunyan listened intently and later wrote, "They spoke as if joy was making them speak. They were to me as if they had found a new world," and he often sought them out and sat with them.

8. Bunyan had a vivid dream.

In this dream, these women of Bedford were sitting on the sunny side of a mountain while he sat on the other side in the cold on frosty ground. Between him and the women was a high wall, but Bunyan,

in his dream, discovered a very narrow opening. He struggled and struggled in his dream, pushing, thrusting, and kicking his way to them through the confines of that passage. Psychiatrists would refer to this as a “birth dream” and we would smilingly refer to it as a “new birth dream.”

9. Bunyan experienced a prolonged conviction of his sin.

Many years later, in 1666, when he was thirty-eight years old, Bunyan described the early years of his pilgrimage in his book, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*. It is the first autobiography written in England, and in it Bunyan looks back to that period over a decade earlier in which he traveled his long journey of maybe five years duration into assurance of salvation. He knew terrible temptations to leave the narrow path, to despair, to blaspheme the name of Jesus as the darts of evil thudded into him. There were times when he felt so low that he “envied a toad.” He once heard the refrain, “Sell him... sell him... sell him” repeated constantly. Then deliverance came, promises of the Word were applied to his mind, only to vanish, casting him into doubt again. His journey into full assurance of faith was long and powerful. It is doubtful whether any other Christian of the Puritan period experienced so prolonged a trial in coming to rest in the person and work of the Lord.

10. Bunyan was helped by the pastoring and preaching of John Gifford.

Gifford was the minister of a local independent church. Through his sermons, the twenty-five-year-old Bunyan saw the meaning of the blood of Jesus Christ. The gospel became clearer and Bunyan moved to be nearer the church which became his own fellowship. What grief he must have known when John Gifford died three years later.

His Writing

How did John Bunyan become a writer? In 1655, the twenty-seven-year-old tinker was received into that Bedford congregation. He was very intelligent, quick witted, and eloquent. The famous drawing of him reflects the painting of “The Laughing Cavalier” with Bunyan’s moustache and flowing hair and twinkling eyes, more than a portrait of some dour Roundhead. What a dashing leader he was! Soon he was asked to give a message to the congregation and it was very acceptable. Later that year, he preached some sermons against Quaker

quietism. Some of the congregation urged him to put the messages into print, so the following year his first book was published, *Some Gospel Truths Opened*. The next year there was a follow-up series of sermons which became his second book, *A Vindication of Some Gospel Truths*. Both these books are found in volume 2 of *Bunyan's Works* (Banner of Truth).

Thus, before age thirty, Bunyan had two books in print, both based on his preaching. His first book was 45,000 words and his second 40,000 words in length. Bunyan's concern with the Quakers' doctrines was that they lacked the profoundly somber analysis of the human heart that is found throughout the Bible. Where was their presentation of man's total unworthiness before God? The next year appeared his third book, *A Few Sighs from Hell* (50,000 words in length), a series of sermons on Jesus' parable of the rich man and Lazarus. John Gifford, his pastor, wrote a foreword commending this book directing readers to "be not offended at his plain and direct speech." This volume became a most popular work throughout Bunyan's life, going into nine editions. From that time onwards, Bunyan regularly published books. His printer was the most radical in England, Nathaniel Ponder, the same printer who published John Owen's works.

Bunyan was the first major English writer not to be based in London, and the first not to have a university education. The army was his school and the prison his university. His style was conversational, that of the yeoman workman full of aphorisms, his aim being to speak as common people do and think as wise men do. He said, "Words easy to understand hit the mark when high and learned ones only pierce the air."

No other great writer in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was so passionately and fiercely on the side of the common people as was Bunyan. Like the later Spurgeon, he had a feeling for the colloquial phrase, for example, "A river will take away the stink of a dead dog!" And again, "the lumber and the cumber of the world." He could take up the common parlance of his day, its love of stories and music and poems, and incorporate it all into serving the gospel of Christ. Not only did Bunyan speak plainly, but his wife did as well. She had learned from him. Hear her speaking to magistrates recalling her miscarriage at the arrest and imprisonment of her husband: "I was dismayed at the news, and fell into labour and so continued for eight days, and then was delivered, but my child died."

His Imprisonment

By the time he reached thirty years of age, Bunyan's reputation was spreading across England as a preacher and writer. Then came the counterpoise of personal sadness and the hatred of the world. When he was thirty, his wife died, leaving him to take care of four children under the age of nine. His first daughter, Mary, was blind. That year, 1658, was the year Cromwell died, to be briefly followed by a single year of Cromwell's son's government. During that time, Bunyan was remarried to an eighteen-year-old girl called Elizabeth. In May 1660, the monarchy was restored and Charles II became king. Within months, the persecution of non-Anglican Christians began. Episcopacy was restored and the Bedford congregation was turned out of its church. Bunyan was a man who had never experienced religious persecution. Since joining the army at age fourteen, seventeen years earlier, he had experienced the freedom of expressing his convictions. Thus a new period in his life began of suffering and remarkable creativity.

By October 1660, the remaining regicides who had signed the death warrant of the father of Charles II were executed. In the next eighteen months, 1,760 ministers who would not conform to a submission to Episcopal government over them were ejected from their pulpits and vicarages. In November, Bunyan was arrested. He was preaching in a private home and a warrant for his arrest had been issued. He was warned of the danger but felt he must go ahead and preach. Officers arrived and escorted him to the home of a justice of the peace. The man was not in, so Bunyan was sent back to Elizabeth for the night, but the next morning he was brought before Justice Wingate who was determined to have Bunyan imprisoned and made an example to the other Independents. Would Bunyan promise to cease preaching? "No!" Then he must go to jail. The prison was in the next street, consisting of two cells and a dungeon. Bunyan knew it well; he had visited it with his congregation to take creature comforts and the gospel message to the prisoners. He waited there seven weeks for his appearance before the Quarter Sessions. Some of the prisoners were clearly mentally deranged. One who had been accused of witchcraft died there. Conditions were appalling. Bunyan's response was this: "I begged God that if I might do more good by being at liberty than being in prison that then I might be set at liberty, but if not—then His will be done."

A bill of indictment was brought against Bunyan, that he had “devilishly and perniciously abstained from coming to church to hear divine service, and is a common upholder of several unlawful meetings.” When Bunyan was asked what he had to say about this, he replied that he frequently attended “the church of God.” The following piece of dialogue then took place with Justice Kelyng:

Kelyng: Do you come to church (you know what I mean) to the parish church, to hear divine service?

Bunyan: No, I do not.

Kelyng: Why?

Bunyan: Because I do not find it commanded in the word of God.

Kelyng: We are commanded to pray.

Bunyan: But not by the Common Prayer-book.

Kelyng: How then?

Bunyan: With the Spirit.

Bunyan was then sentenced to a lengthy imprisonment. In fact, he spent the next twelve years of his life in jail, that is, between a third and half his adult life was spent locked away because he would make no compromise with the established church or the State. Those who put him in prison felt they had been living in terrible days when tinkers were actually allowed to preach and were given the freedom of the press to publish. They rejoiced that such days were over. Bunyan was a dangerous rabble rouser in their eyes. How severe was his sentence? Only the regicides, and three other men who were leaders of the Parliamentary army, were treated worse than Bunyan. No other Christian suffered so long an imprisonment for his faith, and never again in England after Bunyan. He went to prison for the act of preaching, as Mussolini said about Gramsci in 1928: “For twenty years we must stop that brain from working.” So it was with Bunyan; he had to be silenced. But he was no more silenced than Solzhenitsyn was by his time in the Russian Gulag. Bunyan refused to stop preaching, and that was his challenge. He told them that preaching was his vocation and they found that subversive, declaring to him that tinkering was his vocation.

Bunyan admitted that he was afraid of the thought of climbing the execution ladder to be hung, but that if his last words could result

in one person being converted, his life would not be thrown away. He spoke these grand and famous words: "It was for the word and the way of God that I was in this condition. I was engaged not to flinch a hair's breadth from it. It was my duty to stand to His word whether He would ever look upon me or not, or save me at the last. Wherefore, thought I, I will leap off the ladder even blindfolded into eternity, sink or swim, come heaven, come hell. 'Lord Jesus, if Thou wilt catch me, do! If not, I will venture for Thy name.'"

So Bunyan was in prison from 1661 to 1672. During that time he wrote twelve books, some of which had their origin in his prison sermons. His most famous book of the twelve was *Grace Abounding*. Released from prison, he wrote a further seven books. He was then arrested again and spent a further ten months behind bars, during which time he wrote part one of *Pilgrim's Progress* (Bunyan had written twenty-five books before he wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*). It was published in 1678. He wrote another sixteen books which were published before he died, and a further fifteen which were not published until after his death.

In all, John Bunyan wrote fifty-eight books. How few natural advantages he had, using a quill pen, self-made ink, and reams of paper, locked up, unable to be refreshed by preaching in different venues. He sat and wrote, day after day. In the early years, he was allowed some times out of prison, even on some occasions to visit London, but then the regimen became tougher and such freedoms were terminated. Bedford jail was unsanitary, overcrowded, and replete with diseases. Bunyan had with him Bibles (half his scriptural quotations were from the Authorized Version and half were from the Geneva Bible), the two books he inherited from his first wife, and Luther's *Galatians*. The single greatest personal influence over him was his friend and admirer, John Owen. If Bunyan had read as much as other men, he might have written as little as other men.

So Bunyan paid a great price for his commitment to the freedom to preach. His tactics in prison were non-resistance, adherence to the whole counsel of God, avoidance of any hint of scandal, and a readiness to cooperate with any state authorities who would grant freedom and toleration to dissenters.

His Abiding Influence

Bunyan's books have had an abiding influence. Once again, the three volumes of his *Works* are back in print. *Pilgrim's Progress* is now available

in two hundred languages. There are the curiosities connected with it, for example, there are seventeen different versions in a poetic form and there are sixteen children's versions of *Pilgrim's Progress*. There are fifty biographies of John Bunyan. The world's best-selling book after the Bible is *Pilgrim's Progress*. It is loved today in the Third World.

Socialist playwright George Bernard Shaw was a fierce admirer and defender of Bunyan; he had once read *Pilgrim's Progress* as a child to his father. Shaw compared him favorably to Shakespeare, declaring that Bunyan's characters were more heroic men and women than Shakespeare's, believing in joy, enjoying life, and thinking life was worth living, while Shakespeare's characters had no faith, no hope, no courage, no conviction, and no heroic quality. Bunyan's men were on a path, at the end of which a man might find the Celestial City and then say these words at which, said Shaw, "the heart vibrates like a bell when it hears these words": "Though with great difficulty I am got hither yet now I do not repent me of all the trouble I have been at to arrive where I am. My sword—I shall give to him who shall succeed me in my pilgrimage, and my courage and skill to him that can get it." Or again when Valiant for Truth says, "I fought till my sword did cleave to my hand and when they were joined together, as if a sword grew out of my arm, and when the blood ran through my fingers, then I fought with most courage." Shaw said, "Nowhere in all Shakespeare is there a touch like that of the blood running down through the man's fingers and his courage rising to passion in it." Thus Shaw saw *Pilgrim's Progress* as a literary masterpiece. Dr. Johnson said he hated long books; he hardly ever finished one, but there were three books he wished were longer: *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Don Quixote*, and *Robinson Crusoe*.

Bunyan's books have such a large influence for several reasons.

His Theology

Bunyan was helped by John Owen who in turn respected him greatly and went as often as he could to hear Bunyan preach. The theology of *Pilgrim's Progress* is the theology of the Westminster Confession of Faith. The doctrine is in the latter, but in the former are the personalities enfleshing those Standards. Bunyan's book on the fear of God was recently warmly reviewed in a *Journal of Pastoral Practice* of the Jay Adams school. His book, *Come and Welcome to Jesus*, is a splendid example of evangelistic preaching. His books on prayer are

heartwarming and encouraging. Bunyan even has a book on the awesome doctrine of reprobation.

His Pastoral Heart

Pilgrim's Progress is in two parts. The first part is the history of an individual pilgrim, while Part Two is the story of a congregation on pilgrimage. The first is the story of the individual facing his fate alone in uncertain days; the second chronicles a more settled society. Bunyan has been set free and so there is the family on its journey through this world to its eternal home. In Part One, evil characters predominate while in Part Two, true servants of God are in the majority. In Part One there are few women; in Part Two, women are the principal characters and Bunyan has a new understanding of the vulnerability of the Christian on his pilgrimage. There are characters like Mr. Despondency and his daughter, Much Afraid. There is Mr. Fearing and Mr. Ready to Halt. The children get tired and sick; they lose things and make embarrassing remarks. Five years after Bunyan wrote *Pilgrim's Progress Part Two*, he died.

His Humanity

Both Bunyan and Owen played the flute. Bunyan is said to have made a flute out of a chair leg in prison. He also had a metal violin and a cabinet with a number of musical instruments painted on its side. He delighted in the sound of church bells throughout his life. He wrote books and poems for boys and girls. He was a devoted family man. When the Russian ambassador arrived in London for the first time in 1645, London had been under Puritan rule for four years. What impressed the ambassador was the chiming of the church bells from a hundred buildings, the sound of the loud singing of psalms from all those churches, and the stained glass windows in the churches—not shattered by some iconoclastic movement. Bunyan was no killjoy. Particularly in Part Two of *Pilgrim's Progress* there are celebrations at deliverances and family gatherings with trumpets, bells, and wine—as there were when the daughter of the Protector Oliver Cromwell was married.

John Milton was writing *Paradise Lost* about the same time as Bunyan wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*. Milton had little but contempt for the sinful irrationality of the masses; Bunyan viewed them with pity

and desired to help them. Thus today Milton is admired and studied, while Bunyan is loved and read all over the world.

His Last Days

Defiantly Radical

In his early life, Bunyan's loyalty was to the Army, not to the government, the throne, or the gentry. The government, the throne, and the gentry had put Bunyan in prison for long years. He was not happy with the limited freedoms given to non-Anglicans at the Restoration in 1688. Nonconformists were still without any voting rights. He had lived through the Civil War and the Putney debates. He was cynical of the political process and he was patronized by the Established Church of England; Anglican Henry Desire once said to his congregation when introducing him, "Don't be surprised that a tinker can mend souls as well as kettles and pans." A tinker! He was a mighty preacher of the new covenant, unlike a single bishop in the Establishment. Or again, when William Dell, the Master of Gonville and Gaius College in Cambridge as well as being a vicar in the town, invited him to preach in his pulpit on Christmas Day, he told the congregation, "I'd rather have a plain countryman speak in the church than the best orthodox minister in the country"—words that meant well but were also effortlessly and unthinkingly superior.

In his writings, Bunyan refers to Origen, Machiavelli, Luther, Tyndale, Cranmer, Ainsworth, Samuel Clark, John Owen, Baxter, Jessey, the Koran, and probably Hobbes the philosopher. In *Pilgrim's Progress*, it is Ignorance who suffers the most deplorable fate. So Bunyan ended his days as a reformer, disaffiliated from the civil and religious establishment along with his closest ministerial friend, John Own, whose pulpit he often occupied. Like Owen, Bunyan was not involved in plots to overthrow the government; the weapons of his warfare were spiritual and mighty through God to pull down the vastest strongholds.

A Greatly Esteemed Preacher

In the 1670s and 1680s, he traveled throughout the south of England, visiting free churches and often going to London. People thronged to hear him everywhere he went. He was the most well-known Christian in England, and maybe in the world. If the grapevine spread the news that Bunyan was preaching in some London congregation, all

the theological students in Charles Martin's Dissenting Academy were freed from lectures to go and hear him. Even Charles II heard about him and asked Owen who he was.

A Disappointed Man

In some ways, Bunyan was a disappointed man. He had hoped to see the triumph of the godly. He had given his life to awaken them and prepare for the rule of the saints, but many of the saints showed they were unfit to rule. After 1689, the persecution of Free Church preachers and gatherings came to an end, but the disunity of those Christians meant that the gentry filled the vacuum and returned to power across England.

A Pastor to the End

Bunyan died after being soaked to the skin, caught in a heavy thunderstorm, on his way to help reconcile estranged Christians. He died in the home of a grocer who was a Baptist deacon. He was buried near Owen and Goodwin in Bunhill Fields. He left 42 pounds and 19 shillings in his will. He never led a party, any organization, or administration. But he was a good preacher and a writer of genius.

Bunyan encourages us to think that if we preach, we can write, and that we must preach plainly and directly with pastoral concern and biblical integrity. He is telling us that life is a pilgrimage and we are not to ever seek for an alternative to that journey. Bunyan urges us to concentrate on basics and to be prepared to suffer for our Lord as He gave His life for us.

Innate Knowledge in the Thought of Wilhelmus à Brakel

TODD D. BAUCUM



The Baroque world of the seventeenth century brought a cacophony of new thinking into the life of the Dutch Reformed Church. Descartes’s famous axiom “*cogito, ergo sum*,”¹ seeking certitude in that which is beyond doubt, re-ignited the old battles of epistemology that had been fought throughout the medieval age. How we know truth and the line between us and the eternal God were perennial issues; natural knowledge of God is a philosophical question that goes back to Aristotle.² In light of this long history, it is crucial to see how Wilhelmus à Brakel stands not in isolation, but as part of a trajectory of orthodox thought. His work is both scholastic and biblical in method and in commitment. As a pastoral theologian, à Brakel engaged in theological disputes, but not with the eye of an academic. His purpose was aimed higher: he wrote theology for the glory of God and to move human hearts in loving obedience to Him.

In a preface, à Brakel wrote, “They are assaulted on the one side by people of a corrupt mind who propose reason to be the rule for doctrine and life; on the other side by people who, in striving for holiness and love, set aside truth and stray towards a religion which

1. “I think, therefore, I am” is found in Descartes’s *Discourse on Method* (1637), and is the classic expression for Cartesian epistemology that one cannot doubt the existence of one’s own thinking, even doubting self. This for him is the foundation for all true reasoning. He takes certainty away from a theological base, such as revelation.

2. For Aristotle, God is the unmoved mover or the highest perfect form to be conceived. This concept is a philosophical idea in metaphysics and is not the same as the revealed God of Scripture. However, his methodology was a help for classical theories and proofs for God’s existence by many theologians, especially Thomas Aquinas.

proceeds from nature, revolving around the practice of virtue.”³ It is in this divergence of emphasis that we see balance and brilliance in the discussion of innate knowledge.

Historical Background of the Further Reformation

As a representative of the mainstream of the Dutch Further Reformation, Wilhelmus à Brakel had enormous influence on his countrymen in the hugely popular publication of his *De Redelijke Godsdienst*.⁴ It is the object of this study to understand his view of innate knowledge and natural revelation in light of the broader historical context of the Netherlands in the seventeenth century and beyond. It is also important to see à Brakel in light of the Reformed tradition and its treatment of natural revelation in comparison with Calvin’s own view and other Reformed thinkers. Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676), who had a strong influence on à Brakel, wrote against Descartes, but à Brakel took a more nuanced approach to the issue of natural theology. This would have implications for later theologians such as B. B. Warfield and Herman Bavinck, appearing in their positive approach to natural theology.

Theological controversy does not happen in a vacuum, and the historical context in which à Brakel’s ministry occurred sheds light on some of the influences surrounding the debates. Robert Godfrey comments broadly on the cultural times in the Netherlands during this period:

Changes of the seventeenth century brought many other influences to bear on life in the Netherlands. The United Provinces were clearly one of the leading countries of Europe in the middle of the seventeenth century and had achieved considerable political stability and security. Economically the Netherlands flourished, dominating world trade. Culturally her art and literature blossomed, producing such greats as Rembrandt and Vondel. Many varied intellectual currents flowed through the Netherlands. Voetius stoutly set himself against novelty and

3. Wilhelmus à Brakel, *A Christian’s Reasonable Service*, ed. Joel Beeke, trans. Bartel Elshout (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 1999), cxvi.

4. The Dutch name of the work, *A Christian’s Reasonable Service*. Stoeffler notes that if it had not been for the language barrier, “he would have achieved the distinction of being one of the outstanding Pietistic theologians in Europe and America” (F. Ernest Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*. [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965], 15). Thankfully, this work, now translated into English, is enjoying a wider readership.

diversity and continued to pursue in quite medieval terms his ideal of a fully Reformed society.⁵

Looking at the religious climate, Stoeffler paints a rather unspiritual picture of the times, writing, “Preaching was largely a matter of setting forth correct theological dogmas and generally accepted middle class virtues, the latter with a touch of artificial religious flavor.... Dutch culture in general put emphasis upon material things, upon comfort and security, and among the more sophisticated, upon the pursuit of intellectual ends. This was the age of Descartes whose speculations began to challenge the theologians.”⁶ This was the context in which the pietistic impulse of the Further Reformation began to thrive among men like Voetius and à Brakel.

This study will focus on à Brakel’s contribution to a Reformed view of knowledge and natural revelation. This discussion about epistemology did not just emerge in his day, and it is paramount to put the discussion in historical and philosophical context.

Philosophical, Theological, and Cultural Context

From the medieval period and throughout the time of the Reformation, theology was the indisputable queen of the sciences. Philosophy and reason were understood to be the handmaids of faith and the knowledge of God. With the influence of the Renaissance and the growing confidence of reason as a source of authority, the ground began to shift under Teutonic pressure. It would be described as a time of major philosophical change. Epistemological questions go back to antiquity, but they took new meaning with the arrival of Descartes. Albert Avey writes: “The seventeenth century was the time of the florescence of British empiricism and Continental rationalism. From Francis Bacon, on the one hand, and Descartes, on the other, ran two streams of emphasis in thought which were merged by Kant in the next century.”⁷ The knowledge of God became less of a concern as the mere search for the ground of knowing took center stage. “Aristotelian logic was re-formulated, and the problem of knowledge

5. Robert W. Godfrey, “Calvin and Calvinism in the Netherlands,” in *John Calvin: His Influence in the Western World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 113.

6. F. Ernest Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 115–16.

7. Albert Avey, *Handbook in the History of Philosophy* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1954), 124.

was made a central concern.”⁸ Questions of how we know and what we know moved beyond mere stoic skepticism to dominate a new emerging worldview.

This was the age of Galileo, Pascal, and Isaac Newton, and the rise of modern science and great changes in the intellectual climate as universities moved away from the dominance and control of ecclesiastical authority. In many respects, Erastian principles at work in the Netherlands and other countries allowed the State to grant increasing freedom of thought to academic scholars and appointments to state schools without theological screening. One cannot assume the prominence of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands included authority over the universities in keeping orthodoxy in check. The diversity of theologies already addressed at the Synod of Dordt did not grant the conclusions of the Synod any lasting authority, for in less than a century the Synod of Dordt was almost forgotten as Holland became the standard bearer of tolerance over theological disputes in Europe. Such a climate opened doors to men like Descartes, a French Roman Catholic in conventional belief, and Baruch Spinoza, a Hebraic philosopher, who arguably took Cartesian thought to one radical end of the metaphysical spectrum. These open doors were not embraced by the theologians of the Dutch Further Reformation. But their opposition did not mean they were against reason with fideist leanings. These were men of learning and deep piety, and it is to a key representative that we now turn, Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635–1711).

À Brakel’s Life and Influence

Wilhelmus à Brakel was born on January 2, 1635, and grew up under the immeasurable influence of a pious home and a minister father, Theodorus à Brakel (1608–1669). Theodorus was a significant figure in the Dutch Further Reformation, and he certainly passed the torch of reforming piety to the next generation. The elder à Brakel wedded the mystical tradition of the *Modern Devotion* from the likes Bernard of Clairvaux and Thomas á Kempis with Calvin’s theology of Reformed orthodoxy. He was known to practice an intense prayer and meditative life similar to those in monastic orders.⁹ This background shaped

8. Avey, *Handbook in the History of Philosophy*, 124.

9. Arie de Reuver, *Sweet Communion: Trajectories of Spirituality from the Middle Ages through the Further Reformation*, trans. James A. De Jong (Grand Rapids: Baker,

and influenced Wilhelmus and left its mark on his own contribution to spiritual reformation while serving several congregations in Friesland. The younger à Brakel would rise in respect and influence through his theological writings aimed not at academics but for the benefit of regular believers. He combined “dogmatic capability” with a “pastoral, experiential disposition.”¹⁰

In Joel Beeke’s introduction to the first English translation of *De Redelijke*, he notes the balanced approach of à Brakel to the theological trends of his day. Citing the work of Osterhaven, he writes, “The experiential theology sought a healthy balance between mysticism and precisionism.”¹¹ Considering the two streams in the Dutch Further Reformation, mysticism (and the danger of subjectivism) and activism (and the danger of legalism), à Brakel was a mainstream representative of the *Nadere Reformatie*. Within this tension, he was a strong advocate of both the inner and outward aspects of Christian orthodoxy. Writing against the extremes of rationalistic doctrine and subjective Labadism, he used reason and a scholastic method to refute unsound theology.¹²

The historical analytical work of Richard Muller is especially aimed at debunking some of the simplistic categorizing of all scholastic methodology as capitulation to Aristotelian thought. Muller concludes: “The use and development of scholastic method, in other words, although one of the indices to the development of Reformation and post-Reformation theology, is an issue that can and, indeed, must be distinguished from the use of various elements of Aristotelian physics, metaphysics, or ethics. A thinker may be identified as ‘scholastic,’ whether in the Middle Ages or the early modern era, by his use

2007) 167–68. He practiced a rigorous daily schedule of three periods of meditation, which included prayer and Bible reading, with restrictions on eating and sleeping. See especially de Reuver’s comment referring to Theodorus’s “almost monastic practice of contemplation” (282). This type of practice influenced by the *Modern Devotion* of Thomas à Kempis would continue to bear fruit in Dutch culture.

10. Reuver, *Sweet Communion*, 233.

11. à Brakel, *Christian’s Reasonable Service*, xciv.

12. à Brakel, *Christian’s Reasonable Service*, cv. “Dutch Second Reformation divines were united in emphasizing the importance of doctrine. Many of them (including even the Teellincks and the Brakels) viewed themselves as being free from ‘scholasticizing’ in formulating doctrine, but nevertheless did frequently utilize scholastic terms and methodology, as is abundantly evident in this translation of *De Redelijke Godsdienst*.”

of the prevalent methods of academic disputes.”¹³ This is especially true when it comes to à Brakel’s work in *De Redelijke Godsdienst*. His question and answer writing method is very scholastic in pedagogical style and reasoning.

Key Debates in Reformed Thinking

Descartes sought to move philosophy away from what he considered the speculations of theology. René Descartes lived in the Netherlands for a twenty-year period (1628–1649), during which he wrote most of his philosophical work. The physician Henri Reguis taught Descartes’s theories at the University of Utrecht, but not all were pleased with his views. This is where the famous controversy erupted in 1648 between Voetius and Descartes, out of which would come Descartes’s *Letter to Voetius*, where he argued for religious toleration for all beliefs since all religions worship the same God.¹⁴

As W. Robert Godfrey notes, “The emergence of Descartes’s thought marked a special challenge to Reformed dogmatists as Cartesian philosophy confronted Aristotelianism often used to express Reformed systematic theology in the universities. Thus theology moved in a more technical and scholastic direction in response to the polemical and philosophical climate of the day, but also in response to the basic Reformed conviction that theology was a science.”¹⁵

On Descartes and the Theory of Knowledge

À Brakel’s mentor and teacher, Gisbertus Voetius, debated Descartes and wrote against his philosophical method.¹⁶ We can detect in à Brakel’s work a consistent development and a further refinement of Voetius’s rejection of reason as a sole basis for the search for knowledge. À Brakel has a rather positive view of man’s reasoning ability and his concept of “innate knowledge,” while not buying wholesale into

13. Richard A. Muller, “Scholasticism, Reformation, Orthodoxy and the Persistence of Christian Aristotelianism,” *Trinity Journal* 19 (1998): 94.

14. “Rene Descartes.” *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s.v. “Rene Descartes,” <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/158787/Rene-Descartes> (accessed November 5, 2013).

15. Godfrey, “Calvin in the Netherlands,” 111.

16. *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s.v. “Letter to Voetius,” <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/920169/Letter-to-Voetius> (accessed November 05, 2013). This is evidenced in the famous letter Descartes wrote in response to Voetius’s attacks.

the view of Descartes, does couch the concept in the image of God. In philosophy, an “innate idea” is something congenital in a human, not learned or acquired by experience. It maintains that certain ideas such as God and infinity must be innate because there is no satisfactory way to explain their existence.¹⁷ Jay Wood writes: “Descartes was educated in Europe at a time when the scholastic paradigm that had dominated the university curriculum for centuries was in disarray.... Various social and political events such as the religious wars following the Reformation jointly contributed to an atmosphere of intellectual uncertainty, whose disturbing effects were keenly felt by Descartes.”¹⁸

This era can be described as a “search for certainty,” but it ushered in a new methodology that sought certitude through the autonomous self and “not in the church or tradition...but in the mind of the knowing subject.”¹⁹ Descartes wanted to ground certitude in a foundational truth that would not be subject to competing ecclesiastical debates, setting aside the scholastic methodology of Thomist reasoning for a new one. Descartes took skepticism to a point of irreducible questioning, rejecting both the conclusion of stoicism and classical theology. The doubting self became the point of irreducible knowledge, from which to deduce other areas of knowing. Ironically, the gift of certitude that Descartes thought he would give to both philosophers and theologians laid the ground work for the skepticism in biblical theology that would follow. Both Voetius and à Brakel knew this, we could safely assume, and sought to defend biblical faith upon a more certain ground. Natural theology became the chief concern in regard to metaphysics and certitude would fade away in the fog of modern rationalism where reason would hold court over revelation.

In the following analysis of à Brakel’s view of innate knowledge, our purpose will be to accurately explain his argument point by point and to offer some comparisons with other theologians who followed him.

À Brakel’s View of Reason and Natural Theology

The Belgic Confession recognized that God has used the book of nature to reveal a true knowledge of Himself. Article 2 states: “We

17. *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s.v. “innate idea,” <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/288470/innate-idea> (accessed November 04, 2013).

18. Jay Wood, *Epistemology: Becoming Intellectually Virtuous* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 1998), 80.

19. Wood, *Epistemology*, 78.

know Him by two means: first, by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe; which is before our eyes *as a most elegant book*, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many characters leading us to contemplate the invisible things of God.”²⁰ Within this theological tradition of the two books—the book of nature and the book of Scripture—à Brakel develops his rationale for innate knowledge. He notes that it is a given that knowledge of God must be mediated if it is in any sense understood as revelation: “If man is to make God the foundation of religion, recognizing his obligation towards Him, then he must know God. This makes it necessary first to demonstrate from which source the right knowledge of God must be derived.”²¹ From this basic premise, which from the point of Christian dogmatics is certain, à Brakel shows that we need to know the source of this knowledge. He then introduces the concept of innate knowledge in his doctrine of revelation. To convey the significance and full meaning of this notion, he even invents a new word, *God-serkennendheid*—the innate knowledge of God. Innate knowledge is not a Cartesian innate idea, strictly speaking, deduced by mere reasoning; rather, it is a gift of God. “God has created within all men an *innate knowledge* that God is, that is, an acknowledgement that God exists.”²²

À Brakel then proceeded to distinguish innate knowledge from what it is not. First, it is not just the human ability to think. He gives this example: prior to birth, a child cannot have a thought; thus it would not be innate if it must be seen as mere cognition.²³ Secondly, it is not some type of mental image imprinted as it were on the heart. It is not an image in the mind like a mirror or the remnant of a memory, for then everyone would base their view of God on their own mental picture or image. This would not be innate but the origin and causality of knowledge.

Rather, according to à Brakel, humans have the capacity to have a “potential” knowledge of God, or in his own words, “an impression of God.”²⁴ This is very similar to the view of Calvin whose *sensus divinitatis* is part of what God gives to all people, whether elect or not.

20. *Belgic Confession of Faith*, <https://puritanseminary.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/The-Belgic-Confession-of-Faith.pdf> (accessed November 11, 2013).

21. à Brakel, *Christian’s Reasonable Service*, 1:4–5.

22. à Brakel, *Christian’s Reasonable Service*, 1:5.

23. à Brakel, *Christian’s Reasonable Service*, 1:6.

24. à Brakel, *Christian’s Reasonable Service*, 1:9.

For à Brakel, this impression is a “created nobility” that is rooted in the *imago Dei*. This is a shadow of man’s former prelapsarian state and merely the capacity to know that God exists—that He is the Creator and Ruler and everyone is obligated to live under His rule, and those who disobey will be held accountable. So, this knowledge follows the biblical description in Romans 1, with basic knowledge about God’s eternal power and the human responsibility or moral consequences of this knowledge.²⁵

Moreover, à Brakel is balanced in how he understands the working of this knowledge. In some ways it is like a light switch, with all the potential to bring illumination, but needs someone to throw the switch. À Brakel’s positive view of human nature is also tempered with a biblical view of sin. A child must be taught about God; when they hear they were made by God, this “innate knowledge of a God or better put, the acknowledgement of God is to be activated.” This is a latent ability that must be brought to action or life by the work of God. This aspect of God’s knowledge is developed in his chapter on soteriology and the work of the Holy Spirit: “Man, having been gifted with innate knowledge and created with the ability to reason as well as to acknowledge God, is capable of knowing God in due season.”²⁶ À Brakel makes clear that this knowledge is always in essence a revealed truth that comes from beyond or outside the person in origination. There are two ways this knowledge is revealed: in nature and in the special revealed truth of Scripture.

From nature, he recites the evidence given by the Apostle Paul in Romans 1:19–20: “Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.” This is the outward testimony that God gives in the created world.

Secondly, there is the inward testimony of conscience. “Man’s innate ability to reason enables him by way of research to become knowledgeable in various subjects as well as to increase in this acquired knowledge.”²⁷ This seems to give reason a more positive role

25. à Brakel, *Christian’s Reasonable Service*, 1:6.

26. à Brakel, *Christian’s Reasonable Service*, 1:6.

27. à Brakel, *Christian’s Reasonable Service*, 1:8.

in the unregenerate state to attain certain truth about God. Taken at this point, it appears that à Brakel is affirming both a positive view of the will and the mind. “Likewise the innate knowledge of God enables man, by observing the works of God in their created nobility, to increase in the knowledge of God and by means of the visible ascend to the invisible One.”²⁸ This may seem problematic with other doctrines like the effect of sin, fallen reason, and the absolute need of regeneration to rightly apprehend God. This weakness or potential weakness will be addressed later. What is being argued in this point is the correlation between natural revelation and innate knowledge, and not what follows in what can be known in an unregenerate state. “That which is visible could not possibly communicate to man that there is a God if prior to that he did not have an impression of God in his soul.”²⁹ Therefore, natural revelation for à Brakel is external to us, for it comes from outside of us. He quotes from Job and Psalm 19 to give textual evidence. “But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?”³⁰ “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.”³¹ His basis for such a positive view of natural revelation is founded on what Scripture actually affirms. In his explanation of the inward witness, à Brakel also affirms that the moral law of the conscience is a point of contact where God has spoken. “[I]t is evident that man by nature possesses both an external and internal knowledge of God.”³²

À Brakel makes the classic distinction between natural revelation, which God gives in two forms, and natural theology, which is the outworking of what one can believe based on that revelation. Here he recounts three ways to develop natural theology. This is a historical synopsis of methodology, and thereby presumably not a personal endorsement of all types. This again would be, in true

28. à Brakel, *Christian's Reasonable Service*, 1:8.

29. à Brakel, *Christian's Reasonable Service*, 1:8.

30. Job 12:7–9.

31. Psalm 19:1–3.

32. à Brakel, *Christian's Reasonable Service*, 1:8.

fashion, a way of scholastic methodology. First, the way of negation is to affirm what we do not know. À Brakel does not put names with this approach, but it is clearly the apophatic theology of thinkers like Dionysius the Areopagite and John Scotus from the ninth century who affirmed that we cannot deduce what God is but merely affirm what He is not.³³

Second, there is a natural theology that affirms all that is good, beautiful, and enjoyed in God's creation points to an uncreated Being, that is, God. This approach reflects what is known as the ontological argument as advanced by Anselm, and a proof retained by Descartes.

The third way is arguing from the simple to the cause, or the cosmological argument. In addition to affirming these classical Thomist views on natural revelation, à Brakel later adds a fourth, the moral argument. His scholastic methodology again addresses the disputed point. If there is no innate knowledge, then the pagan would be without an inner law; and if he did not have an inner law, he would not be accountable to such a law. If there is no law to which a pagan is held accountable, then by definition such a person would be without guilt and without sin.³⁴

From this point, à Brakel answers several objections to the notion of innate knowledge.³⁵ If it is innate in all men, then there would be no atheists, reasons the first objection. But there are atheists. The argument against innate knowledge is seemingly established on the ground that it would lead to universal belief or at least acknowledgment of deity. Some even offer evidence: "in some heathen it has been observed that not the least trace of religion was found."³⁶ If atheism was found among some groups or in isolated periods of pre-Christian antiquity, would this not discredit the notion of innate knowledge as mere conjecture?

33. Diogenes Allen, *Spiritual Theology* (Boston: Cowley Publications, 1997), 141. This via negative is described by Princeton Seminary's Professor of Philosophy as "we therefore have to negate or reject our affirmations because God surpasses anything that we can say about him." One can appreciate the concern to honor God's nature and transcendence in this method, but it leaves a weak understanding of the role of revelation in developing valid theological language.

34. à Brakel, *Christian's Reasonable Service*, 1:10.

35. Remembering how this style developed, the disputed point is first addressed with its stated objection and then the answer is given.

36. à Brakel, *Christian's Reasonable Service*, 1:10.

À Brakel's answer is simply *petitio principia*, meaning, this begs the question. This is a form of fallacy found in circular reasoning. The fact that there are some atheists represents the proposition they are the exception to the rule and so the normative evidence points to the prevailing reality that most people in all cultures do have a belief in some god. À Brakel is putting Aquinas to good use. Even if it is given that atheism exists, someone confessing unbelief does not disprove the notion that "concealed in their heart" is a "propensity" to acknowledge a god.

When the Bible speaks of atheism, as David does in the Psalms, it refers to the denial of the ungodly who seek not to honor God but "to silence their disturbed conscience." This kind of atheistic belief is a mere confession that they deny God, which still does not disprove, on a biblical basis, the notion of innate knowledge. David writes in Psalm 14:1: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good." When Paul speaks about those who are "without God," he is speaking of those not in a saving relationship with God, which is not connected to verity of innate knowledge: "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12).

As already noted earlier in the historical context, Europe was seeing a new spirit of skepticism sweep throughout the universities. One leader in this school of thought that rejects God and moral absolutes was the Dutch philosopher, Baruch de Spinoza.³⁷ If atheism is on the rise and reason is the only guide for knowledge (having rejected the Scriptures as God's revelation), then it would seem to indicate that there is no such thing as innate knowledge. Such people use reason to deduce God is not triune (Socinians) and that God is more of an impersonal force or beyond any dealings with nature (Deism). The implication is that such innate knowledge would be an aid to reason

37. For some historians, Spinoza is noted as the first to deny the supernatural character of the Bible; he was forced out of the synagogue for his radical beliefs. He certainly earned the title Father of Higher Criticism in spirit. He is usually classified more as a pantheist than an atheist because of his monistic view of nature and spirit. In his day, he was charged with atheism, which some rightly predicted would be the direction his disciples would lean.

in deducing the existence of God. Therefore, if such knowledge was real, it would naturally lead to belief and not unbelief.

For à Brakel, the real concern is *how* reason is applied to a right understanding of Scripture. Those who reject Scripture and its moral virtues and foundations show in themselves the result of such faulty use of reasoning. Biblical doctrine acknowledges the propensity of fallen minds to suppress the truth. “Consequently, a person can become completely oblivious to the existence of God; however, from this it does not follow that God did not create this knowledge and conscience within man.”³⁸ Finally, à Brakel affirms, the absence of faith cannot disprove the “propensity or the ability” to have a belief in God. It logically cannot follow.

Next in line of arguments is the question about the saving ability of innate knowledge. Can innate knowledge lead to salvation? Can natural knowledge of God save us? This is indeed a central concern for those who want to safeguard a traditional understanding of the sufficiency of Scripture and uniqueness of Jesus Christ. Is there a possible trap-door option in this language? In response, à Brakel states the Socinians would respond affirmatively and that Arminians and Roman Catholics would lean this way. À Brakel himself would respond with a loud “No.” Here is found his natural theology and any hint of weakness from the standpoint of Reformed orthodoxy is put to rest. He affirms that innateness can teach us of judgment, but not of mercy and grace. It will leave us “ignorant of the satisfaction of the justice of God and of the holiness with which one is able to stand in the just judgment of God.”³⁹ There is no salvation outside of Christ. Only one name is given and in only one name must we believe (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; John 3:36). The knowledge of Christ and salvific power is not attainable in the innate knowledge of God; “He is revealed only in the Gospel.”⁴⁰ Thus à Brakel affirms human propensity for belief while strongly committed to the Reformed understanding of the human inability to come to God in a relationship of grace. “It is therefore incontrovertible that the natural knowledge of God cannot bring about salvation for man.”⁴¹

38. à Brakel, *Christian's Reasonable Service*, 1:12.

39. à Brakel, *Christian's Reasonable Service*, 1:13.

40. à Brakel, *Christian's Reasonable Service*, 1:13.

41. à Brakel, *Christian's Reasonable Service*, 1:13.

Second Set of Objections

If there is innate knowledge from the light of nature, some will seek; the question then follows, will it not lead to more light? In other words, if humans suppress the truth and are condemned, what about those who respond to the light of nature? This is a common objection, as if there is a loophole in the order of God's redemptive plan. The answer à Brakel gives is again within the realm of Reformed orthodoxy. The light of nature spoken by Paul in Romans is not a light sufficient to bring a person to a choice of faith or unbelief. It does not contain and cannot be proven from Scripture that this light of nature can give anyone but the bare knowledge of the existence of a Creator. This light of nature is only able to convict "man that God is just in condemning him."⁴² Such a view was held by both Calvin and Jonathan Edwards: "Natural knowledge of God, after the Fall, is a kind of revelation reserved for the regenerate. Only a believer can know God's original intention in nature: knowledge of himself as Creator, Provider, and Redeemer."⁴³

À Brakel also responded to the textual evidence offered by some based on Romans 2:4 and Acts 17:27 that innate knowledge does provide sufficient light to see a need to seek and find God, and that therefore God would receive such a one if they come by the light of nature.

- *Romans 2:4*: "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"
- *Acts 17:27*: "That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us."

À Brakel first deals with the textual issue as central to his argument. Romans 2 is addressed to those who hear the gospel, and thus has nothing to do with innate knowledge but with revealed truth. Secondly, natural light may lead some to reform their lives to a life of virtue and so be spoken as a "conversion," but this is not true conversion where a person is transformed from death to life through Christ alone.

42. à Brakel, *Christian's Reasonable Service*, 1:14.

43. Diana Butler, "God's Visible Glory: The Beauty of Nature in the Thought of John Calvin and Jonathan Edwards," *Westminster Theological Journal* 52 (1990): 25.

In the Acts passage, Paul is showing how the idol to the unknown god had left them in ignorance, for they did not depart from their idolatry, thus proving his point. The idol to the unknown god was in essence a testimony of God's requirement for all people to seek after Him. This is precisely the point that à Brakel is making regarding innate knowledge; the objection proves the point. "Man is obligated to seek God..., however, without the wondrous light which God grants to His children in the moment of regeneration, they shall never, 'feel after Him, and find Him' unto reconciliation and salvation, even though the light of nature may bring them to the realization that God truly exists and wished to be served in spirit and in truth."⁴⁴ Seeking after God is then a gift of grace that God gives not to the unbeliever who suppresses truth, but to the one whom He calls and to whom He grants redemptive knowledge through the Holy Spirit.

The next line of objection is concerning the moral law or the inner conscience. This is the view that a truly virtuous man can be saved if he follows the light given to him. Natural knowledge implies, as they argue, a knowledge that is sufficient for salvation. If a person responds to this natural revelation, God will give more grace—which in the end will lead to salvation. For this objection textual evidence is also supplied, such as in Matthew 13:12: "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given...." They also give evidence as shown in the example of Job, the Centurion (Matt. 8) and Cornelius (Acts 10). To such supposedly strong textual evidence, à Brakel applies good reasoning and sound exegesis. He takes the argument apart both logically and biblically. No one rightly uses the light of nature. No one can live a life of virtue even if they ostensibly seek to live a moral life, for the basis of true virtue is in faith. "They do not proceed from faith, are not in true harmony with the law, and are not performed to the honor of God."⁴⁵ A virtuous life is not simply virtue as defined by Aristotle, or by modern standards, but biblical virtue is aimed at the service and honor of God.

The final big question that is left hanging in the minds of those who follow the logical precision of à Brakel is, If innate knowledge or natural revelation does not save us, what good is it? À Brakel outlines six benefits, briefly described as:

44. à Brakel, *Christian's Reasonable Service*, 1:15.

45. à Brakel, *Christian's Reasonable Service*, 1:16.

1. God exists and is an invisible, spiritual being who is infinite, holy, omnipotent, good, and just.
2. God is the cause of all things and the sovereign Lord over all things.
3. All people are obligated to do God's will.
4. Everyone is confronted with their guilt "against the background of God's justice."
5. Such knowledge promotes civility.
6. Through the revelation of the Scriptures we are able to be led in true godliness by the Holy Spirit.

The Reformed View in Historical Glance

Calvin's *Institutes* begins with the dual focus of self knowledge and knowledge of God—*Dei notitiam et nostril res esse conjunctas*.

Our wisdom, in so far as it ought to be deemed true and solid Wisdom, consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But as these are connected together by many ties, it is not easy to determine which of the two precedes and gives birth to the other. For, in the first place, no man can survey himself without forthwith turning his thoughts towards the God in whom he lives and moves; because it is perfectly obvious, that the endowments which we possess cannot possibly be from ourselves; nay, that our very being is nothing else than subsistence in God alone. In the second place, those blessings which unceasingly distil to us from heaven, are like streams conducting us to the fountain.⁴⁶

This description asserts a strong positive role of natural revelation in our knowledge of God, but one that is rooted in God as the "fountain" of origin. In a manner echoing the language of Aquinas, Calvin would affirm the cosmological argument, in a fashion that also sees its limitation.⁴⁷ "[I]t is certain that man never achieves a clear knowledge of himself unless he has first looked upon God's face, and then

46. John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 37.

47. Richard Muller, "The Divine Essence and Attributes," vol. 3 of *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to 1725* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 173.

descends from contemplating him to scrutinize himself.”⁴⁸ Found in both Augustine and Aquinas (sources for Calvin) is the concept of *theologia naturalis*. This is rooted not in speculation, but in revelation, as Calvin’s commentary on Romans 1:21 reflects: “God has presented to the minds of all the means of knowing him, having so manifested himself by his works, that they must necessarily see what of themselves they seek not to know—that there is some God.”⁴⁹ Atheism does not deny the veracity of innate knowledge for Calvin, just as à Brakel had argued. Calvin writes: “If, indeed, there were some in the past, and today not a few appear, who deny that God exists, yet willy-nilly they from time to time feel an inkling of what they desire not to believe.”⁵⁰

Calvin’s view of this innate knowledge of God was affirmed by the Synod of Dort under the fourth and fifth head of doctrine and described as “glimmerings of natural light”:

There remain, however, in man since the fall, the glimmerings of natural light, whereby he retains some knowledge of God, of natural things, and of the differences between good and evil, and discovers some regard for virtue, good order in society, and for maintaining an orderly external deportment. But so far is this light of nature from being sufficient to bring him to a saving knowledge of God and to true conversion, that he is incapable of using it aright even in things natural and civil. Nay, further, this light, such as it is, man in various ways renders wholly polluted and holds it in unrighteousness, by doing which he becomes inexcusable before God.⁵¹

It would be hard to deny that there is any disagreement between this view and the one previously stated by Calvin. Following this trajectory of thinking, we move on to consider another influential theologian in Dutch circles up to the modern period.

48. John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill (Louisville: Westminster, 2006), 37.

49. John Calvin, *Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 71.

50. Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, trans. Battles, 1.3.2.

51. The Canons of Dort, <https://puritanseminary.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/The-Canons-of-Dort.pdf> (accessed November 11, 2013).

Herman Bavinck

Herman Bavinck (1854–1921) taught theology at the Free University of Amsterdam. In an essay originally published for the *Princeton Theological Review* in 1909, he approvingly cites Calvin’s positive view on human reasoning. Like Calvin, he speaks of “remnants of the divine image” that leave man with a capacity to know something of God and also sets humans apart from other creatures. Referencing Calvin’s commentary on Romans 2, Bavinck speaks of some degree of knowledge that is found in fallen man: “[I]t is contrary to Scripture as well as to experience to attribute to man such a perpetual blindness as would render him unable to form any true conception. On the contrary, there is light still shining in the darkness, men still retain a degree of love for the truth, some spark of the truth has still been preserved.”⁵² It is this spark of truth still in man that matches à Brakel’s view of innate knowledge. Yet this knowledge of God reveals the justice of God’s power and wrath against rebellious sinners. Fallen humanity can only know God as Creator and not as Redeemer. The special revelation found in the gospel is needed to know the redeeming love found in Jesus Christ.

Bavinck writes: “For since the Fall nature no longer reveals to us God’s paternal favor. On every side it proclaims the divine curse which cannot but fill our guilty souls with despair.”⁵³ “It is true the Holy Spirit as a spirit of sanctification dwells in believers only, but as a spirit of life, of wisdom and of power He works also in those who do not believe.”⁵⁴ So, we can see in Bavinck’s own view of Calvin the same line of thought found in à Brakel—that this remnant of knowledge, latent in all people, is only a benefit to those who are also regenerated by the work of the Holy Spirit. But Bavinck still affirms a possible point of contact that can be used in man’s reasoning abilities. Herman Ridderbos asserts, “[W]hen with Bavinck one allows for a certain epistemological commonness, then one can put the question as to what one can accomplish in this territory with the proofs for the existence of God. And then one will come to the conclusion, that nothing can be mathematically demonstrated in this field, but the

52. Herman Bavinck, “Calvin and Common Grace” in *Calvin and the Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 119.

53. Bavinck, “Calvin and Common Grace,” 114.

54. Bavinck, “Calvin and Common Grace,” 119.

Christian position can be defended before the ‘natural reason’ as well as that of others.”⁵⁵ The ground of commonness has some value, but it is a limited value and is dependent upon the work of the Holy Spirit to bring light where darkness prevails.

In this respect, the advocate of Reformed epistemology, Nicholas Wolterstorff, states that Bavinck’s doctrine of innate knowledge “is not that ‘we are able, all by ourselves, to deduce conscious, clear and valid knowledge of God from the contents of our own minds.’ The idea is rather ‘that we possess both the *capacity* (aptitude, faculty) and the *inclination* (*habitus*, disposition) to arrive at some firm, certain, and unfailing knowledge of God.... This disposition to form beliefs about God is not a disposition to draw inferences about God. It is rather a disposition whose output is immediately formed beliefs about God.”⁵⁶ Therefore this innate knowledge needs to be triggered by God’s revelation, both in external and internal means.

Next we turn to a contemporary of Bavinck, crossing the Atlantic to the teaching at Princeton of the eminent B. B. Warfield.

B. B. Warfield

The great Princeton apologist Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield (1851–1921) was at his core a biblical theologian who taught polemical theology at a time of modernism’s great challenge to orthodoxy. In considering Warfield’s religious epistemology, it is safe to assume that he held to a positive role for human reason. As a leading representative of Princetonian apologetics, Warfield held that the duty of believers “is no less than to reason the world into the acceptance of the truth.”⁵⁷ Like Calvin, he believed that there is a remaining remnant of the

55. Quoted in Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith* (Philadelphia: P&R, 1975), 176. Van Til is well known for his departure from this line of Reformed or “classical” apologetics and maintains that these men moved away from Calvin towards the more Roman Catholic position put forth by Aquinas. This is still a highly debatable point but is outside the purview of this paper.

56. Nicholas Wolterstorff, “Herman Bavinck—Proto Reformed Epistemologist,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 45 (2010): 133–46, 139. ATLASerials, Religion Collection, EBSCOhost (accessed October 29, 2013).

57. B. B. Warfield, “Christianity the Truth” in *Selected Shorter Writings*, 2 vols., ed. John Meeter (Nutley, N.J.: P&R, 1970), 2:213. This is not in his view the use of bare reason on unregenerate and fallen minds without the aid and illumination of the Holy Spirit; Warfield held to the essential role of the Spirit’s work in applying right reason to the mind of unbelievers.

knowledge of God, but added, “our native endowment is not merely a *sensus deitatis*, but also a *semen religionis*.”⁵⁸ This seed or innate desire to worship, bent inward and suppressed, is nonetheless for Warfield evidence that man was created to worship the Creator.

Man is incurably religious. But, for Warfield, this positive aspect of human nature is spoiled by sin. Therefore, the work of the Spirit in regeneration is the starting point for a right view of God: “His doctrine of the testimony of the Spirit is the keystone of his doctrine of the knowledge of God. Men endowed by nature with an ineradicable *sensus deitatis* which is quickened into action and informed by a rich revelation of God spread upon His works and embodied in His deeds, are yet held back from attaining a sound knowledge of God by the corruption of their hearts which dulls their instinctive sense of God and blinds them to His revelation in works and deeds.”⁵⁹ Summarizing Calvin’s view, he asserts this is essential to a right understanding of his “whole system of truth,” and, by necessary inference, this reflects his own appropriation of Calvin in his apologetics. As Paul Helseth maintains, Warfield drew upon Augustine’s “innate ideas” and Calvin’s epistemology and held that they “were essentially the same, simply because both acknowledge that God is not only the God of all grace and truth, but ‘the Light of all knowledge’ as well.”⁶⁰

It is seen therefore that a point of contact with man’s reasoning capability is affirmed by à Brakel, Bavinck, and Warfield, in a direct line of influence from Calvin and in continuity with him.

Assessing Brakel’s Positive View of Reason

Innate knowledge and the role of reason had a long history before Calvin, and à Brakel affirmed aspects of scholastic theology without succumbing to the intense objectifications of scholastic nominalism. He did this by affirming the priority of revelation and the work of the Spirit, just as Calvin taught. His great concern was neither scholastic nor philosophical. As a pastor/theologian, à Brakel sought to bring comfort to the struggling believer and assurance to the honest doubter. Unlike Descartes and his disciples, à Brakel was not seeking an

58. B. B. Warfield, “The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God” in *Calvin and the Reformation*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 139.

59. Warfield, “Calvin’s Doctrine of the Knowledge of God,” 201–2.

60. Paul K. Helseth, “A ‘Rather Bald’ Rationalist,” in *B.B. Warfield: Essays on His Life and Thought* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 2007), 58.

irreducible principle of certitude, but a foundation for living blessedly before God. Finding true certitude is found not in a mathematically precise axiom or in the speculation of metaphysics, but in the grace initiated relationship with the God made known in the face of Jesus Christ revealed in the Scriptures. It was upon this unshakable ground that another French philosopher, Blaise Pascal, would write the following prayer, found after his death enclosed in the hem of his jacket with the date, Nov. 23, 1654: “Fire—God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not of philosophers and scholars. Certainty, certainty, heartfelt joy, peace. God of Jesus Christ. God of Jesus Christ. My God and your God...”⁶¹ This inner assurance is described by à Brakel as the ultimate purpose of innate knowledge sparked by God’s inward work of the revealed Word and the Holy Spirit.

The believing Christian is therefore to pass from outward certainty of who God is to an inward assured confidence that comes from a Spirit-graced experiential knowing. The Heidelberg Catechism expresses it thus: “Question 21: What is true faith? Answer: True faith is not only a certain knowledge, whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in His word, but also an assured confidence, which the Holy Ghost works by the gospel in my heart; that not only to others, but to me also, remission of sin, everlasting righteousness and salvation, are freely given by God, merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ’s merits.”⁶²

It is perhaps an important distinction to make between certitude and assurance or confidence. The quest for absolute philosophical certitude is seemingly an unattainable reach in considering the nature of infinite truth found in God. Such attempts often lead to idolatry. That this was true to both Scripture and Calvin is attested by T. F. Torrance in a statement almost doxological in tone:

Man is made to know God, so that he is not truly man unless he knows God. His whole manhood depends not only upon the grace of God in creation, but upon such a communication of his Word of grace that the image of God becomes engraved, as Calvin said, on his person. But we do not know God truly

61. Blaise Pascal, *Pensees*, 309, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/pascal/pensees.pdf> (accessed November 20, 2013).

62. Heidelberg Catechism, <https://puritanseminary.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/The-Heidelberg-Catechism.pdf> (accessed November 11, 2013).

unless we know that our knowing is due to God alone; we must be able to trace the light back to its source in God, realizing that in so doing we are brought into immediate relation to the very fountain of life. Otherwise the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness comprehends it not; but no man can be said to *live*, in the proper sense of the word, in that condition. True knowledge involves in the very act of knowing an acknowledgment that the Known is the Master of our life and that we depend entirely upon his grace in our being and knowing, and as such, it carries with it a profound knowledge of self. It is not the knowledge of self is in any sense a precondition of the knowledge of God, but that the knowledge of God has not really come home to us unless it has brought to us, in the realization of our utter dependence on the grace of God, a true knowledge of our own creaturehood. Therefore, we may say, man has been made in such a way that he is not truly man except in the realization of his creaturely dependence on the grace of God, and that he cannot retain his life except in a motion of thankful acknowledgement of the sheer grace of God as Creator and Father in whose Word man's life is deposited, and in the continuous communication of which alone may life be possessed.⁶³

In similar fashion, when defending the notion of innate knowledge, à Brakel sought not the certitude of philosophical speculation but a means to point to the absolute need of humility in coming before God. Innate knowledge was not a starting point from which natural reason can then ascend to the knowledge of God.

All truth is God's truth, but His truth cannot be isolated into bare facts by men in white lab coats with axiomatic scalpels. Truth is about right knowing, and the certitude of faith is also a reasonable act of true worshippers. Assurance of faith through a reasonable and affective trust in God's grace is the true aim of all right knowledge. As Blaise Pascal saw, truth is found only in Jesus Christ, as opposed to Descartes's method of seeking epistemological certitude apart from God. "The Christian religion, then, teaches men these two truths; that there is a God whom men can know, and that there

63. Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965, 1975) 101–2. Torrance states that this is characteristic of historic Reformed theology and of Calvin: "The whole of the Reformed doctrine of man is set forth in this context of grace and thanksgiving."

is a corruption in their nature which renders them unworthy of Him. It is equally important to men to know both these points; and it is equally dangerous for man to know God without knowing his own wretchedness, and to know his own wretchedness without knowing the Redeemer who can free him from it. The knowledge of only one of these points gives rise either to the pride of philosophers, who have known God, and not their own wretchedness, or to the despair of atheists, who know their own wretchedness, but not the Redeemer.”⁶⁴

Finally, that the ground of certainty is not in our reasoning abilities is clearly affirmed by à Brakel when he states, “if one wishes to judge the matters revealed in God’s Word on the basis of one’s ability to comprehend clearly and discerningly and to accept only as truth that which can be comprehended, such a person must be called an atheist.”⁶⁵ It is highly plausible in this reference to atheism that à Brakel had Descartes in mind. The famous philosopher posits a view of God and even affirms a proof for His existence, but all such speculations are deduced from the innate idea of his own ability to doubt. Such a person in à Brakel’s view would be consigned to “remain a doubter all his life.”⁶⁶ A firmer foundation for thinking about God and knowing God through the certain knowledge is needed. Of this view, in line with classic Reformed anthropology, à Brakel is a worthy and faithful proponent.

64. Pascal, *Pensees*, 109.

65. à Brakel, *Christian’s Reasonable Service*, 1:316. “His darkened intellect will never acknowledge the perfection of God, the Holy Trinity, God’s influence in the preservation and governing of all things...” This points to the infallible ground of certitude to be found in Scripture’s revealed truth.

66. à Brakel, *Christian’s Reasonable Service*, 1:316.

Jonathan Edwards on the Justice of God

PETER AIKEN



Increasingly in Christian churches today, the biblical teaching of the eternal damnation of sinners is questioned. The question is often raised how a loving God could eternally punish sinners. At the same time, the question of how God maintains His justice in pardoning sinners of their sins is rarely questioned. But both questions are integral to an understanding of the subject and both need to be addressed if the justice of God is going to be understood.

Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) wrote substantially on the subject of the justice of God, and he addressed both of these concerns in his writings. This paper will demonstrate that Edwards believed that God is just in all His actions towards mankind and that God is to be praised for all that He does. For Edwards, the glory of God is manifested in His justice, both in punishing the wicked for their sins and in saving His people from their sins. In a sermon entitled “All God’s Methods are Most Reasonable,” Edwards sought to show the justice of God in decreeing sin, in electing and reprobating, in making covenants, in giving commandments, in punishing, and in providential dealings in order to vindicate God of the charge of being unrighteous.¹ This paper will limit its consideration of the justice of God principally to the issue of God’s justice in condemning the wicked and in providing salvation for the elect.

1. Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards: Sermons and Discourses 1723–1729*, ed. Kenneth P. Minkema, vol. 14 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1997), 161.

Jonathan Edwards

Edwards had a brilliant mind and has been labeled as America's premier philosopher-theologian.² But as Iain Murray points out, "The key to an understanding of Jonathan Edwards is that he was a man who put faithfulness to the Word of God before every other consideration."³ He understood that it was the Christian's business to honor God and that God will honor His truth and those who are faithful to it.⁴ While the notion of God's justice pervades much of Edwards's writings, he focused on the topic in a number of sermons, which include "The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners," "God is a Just and Righteous God," and "The Justice of God in Making Satisfaction for Sin." His treatment on the justice of God is important for consideration because of the vision of God that had obviously gripped Edwards in his reflection on biblical revelation and is presented through his writings. Whereas the human tendency is to focus on oneself, Edwards insisted on prioritizing the glory of God as the supreme goal of all study. He writes, "The glory of God is the greatest good, tis that which is the chief end of the creation, tis a thing of far greater importance than anything else."⁵ This vital point in Edwards's focus opened the doors for understanding God's justice and for glorifying God for His justice as well.

The Justice of God Defined

Edwards defines the righteousness or the justice of God as "a natural, necessary and unchangeable disposition of the divine nature to render to everyone their own."⁶ Justice and righteousness belong to the very being of God; The Lord Himself says so in His self-revelation about

2. W. Gary Crampton, *Meet Jonathan Edwards: An Introduction to America's Greatest Theologian/Philosopher*, ed. Don Kistler (Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2004), vi.

3. Iain Hamish Murray, *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 471.

4. Murray, *Jonathan Edwards*, 471.

5. Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards: Sermon Series II, 1729–1731* (Jonathan Edwards Center, 2008), vol. 45: Sec. Mark 9:44, <http://edwards.yale.edu/archive?path=aHR0cDovL2Vkd2FyZHMueWFsZS5lZHUvY2dpLWJpbi9uZXdwaglsby9nZXRvYmplY3QucGw/Yy40MzozLndqZW8=> (accessed September 13, 2013).

6. Jonathan Edwards, *A Just and Righteous God*, ed. Don Kistler (Orlando, Fla.: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2006), 2.

His perfect character (Ex. 34:7; Num. 14:18).⁷ Edwards impresses the absolute nature of God's justice by suggesting the need to distinguish between the free will of God and what He must be. He writes,

When we speak of justice and holiness and a disposition or inclination of the nature of God, it is not to be distinguished from the will of God. Justice is God's constant will of giving to everyone what is according to a regular equity. But yet in some things we are forced, in our way of conceiving, to distinguish between the free will of God and the unalterable inclination of His nature. God wills to be infinitely merciful and gracious, and yet He is not necessarily merciful to everyone; but He is necessarily just to all.⁸

God's justice then is consistent and necessarily implied in His perfections.⁹

The justice of God also directs one's attention to the Lord's role as Governor and Supreme Judge of the world. It belongs to Him to distribute rewards and punishments according to what each deserves.¹⁰ This distribution is in exact proportion to their fitness.¹¹ Edwards explains, "If it is to God's glory that He is in His nature infinitely holy and opposite to sin, then it is to His glory to be infinitely displeased with sin. And if it is to God's glory to be infinitely displeased with sin, then it must be to His glory to exercise and manifest that displeasure and to act accordingly."¹²

Edwards also describes the justice of God in relation with the other attributes of God. This proves to be a helpful point and answers the question of how we know that God is just. Edwards explains that it is apparent that God is just because He is infinite in understanding and so there is no possibility of injustice arising from ignorance or mistake. Furthermore, God is infinitely powerful and does as He

7. Wilson H. Kinnach, Kenneth P. Minkema, and Douglas A. Sweeney, eds., *The Sermons of Jonathan Edwards: A Reader* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999), 8, <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10178434> (accessed September 6, 2013).

8. Edwards, *A Just and Righteous God*, 3.

9. Craig Biehl, *The Infinite Merit of Christ: The Glory of Christ's Obedience in the Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Jackson, Miss.: Reformed Academic Press, 2009), 99.

10. Edwards, *A Just and Righteous God*, 11.

11. Edwards, *A Just and Righteous God*, 4.

12. Jonathan Edwards, *Our Great and Glorious God*, ed. Don Kistler (Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2003), 171.

pleases, so there is no need to be tempted to act unjustly. To suggest that God is unjust in fact contradicts all the attributes of God and so the very being of God. He concludes this thought by saying, "If this is the case the dispute is not whether God is just or not, but whether there is any God at all or not."¹³

Having established that God is necessarily just in all that He does, Edwards mentions several ways in which the Lord's righteousness or justice appears. First, it is shown in the giving of the law. The giving of the law, though, underscores the reality that the Lord is the giver and judge of the law and that He deals with utmost strictness.¹⁴ This strictness can be understood when one considers that the law not only forbids all kinds of evil, but He does so in all degrees, in all cases, and at all times.¹⁵ Additionally, the law threatens eternal destruction not only for following a sinful course, but for any particular sin (Gen. 2:17; Matt. 5:22). Furthermore, sins of omissions are likewise threatened with eternal destruction (Matt. 25:41–43), as are sins of ignorance (2 Sam. 6:6–7).¹⁶ Second, the justice of God can be seen in light of the fact that He also performs His promises.¹⁷ He is a faithful God who binds Himself to His Word and never breaks His promises. Third, the justice of God appears in justly punishing sin both in this world, but more particularly in the world to come.¹⁸

The Justice of God Demonstrated in Damning Sinners

The Basis for God's Just Verdict Against the Wicked

There is perhaps no area where the justice of God is more questioned or resisted than as it pertains to God's judgment against the wicked. In addressing this subject, Edwards focuses on the righteousness of God's law and the violation of righteousness in man's sinfulness. He writes, "The law is the great rule of righteousness and decorum that the Supreme and Universal Rector has established and published for the regulation of things in the commonwealth of the universality of intelligent beings and moral agents."¹⁹

13. Edwards, *A Just and Righteous God*, 7.

14. Edwards, *A Just and Righteous God*, 182.

15. Edwards, *A Just and Righteous God*, 182.

16. Edwards, *A Just and Righteous God*, 183–87.

17. Edwards, *A Just and Righteous God*, 10.

18. Edwards, *A Just and Righteous God*, 11.

19. Edwards, *Our Great and Glorious God*, 177–78.

The law serves as the basis for understanding the justice of God in three ways. First, the nature of the law requires it.²⁰ As an expression of the will and character of God, it is necessary that God act in harmony with the revelation of His law. “A law that is not fixed with respect to those subject to its requirements is without authority and is no longer a law.”²¹ Second, for God not to judge sin would be contrary to the design of the law. “The law is made so that it might prevent sin and cause it not to be, and not that sin should disannul the law and cause it not to be.”²² In other words, “[t]he design of the law is to regulate the sinner, not to be regulated by the sinner.”²³ Third, Edwards argues that it is not fitting that God’s great rule should be abrogated and give place to opposition of rebellious subjects on account of the perfection of the lawgiver. “He who breaks the law finds fault with it and casts the reflection on it that it is not a good law.”²⁴ To break God’s law is to challenge the justice of the Lord who established the law.

He also points out that along with the law itself are the absolute threats of God. In the first book of the Bible, God warns, “Thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:17). Edwards explains that it would be against the truthfulness of God to threaten what He knows He will not accomplish.²⁵ At this point, Edwards realizes that he must distinguish between absolute threats and non-absolute ones. The absolute threats of Scripture are a sort of prediction or promise from God; they must come to pass by virtue of the claim of the One who made the promise.²⁶ The non-absolute threats of Scripture are those in which there is a possibility of escape either expressed or understood in the threatening.²⁷ This distinction serves to maintain both the seriousness of the threats of God’s law while also recognizing that not everything God threatened in Scripture comes to pass.

With this understanding of the seriousness of God’s law, Edwards demonstrates the basis for God’s justice in a sermon entitled, “The

20. Edwards, *Our Great and Glorious God*, 177.

21. Biehl, *The Infinite Merit of Christ*, 119.

22. Edwards, *Our Great and Glorious God*, 179.

23. Biehl, *The Infinite Merit of Christ*, 120.

24. Edwards, *Our Great and Glorious God*, 179.

25. Edwards, *Our Great and Glorious God*, 183.

26. Edwards, *Our Great and Glorious God*, 183.

27. Edwards, *Our Great and Glorious God*, 185.

Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners.” Edwards demonstrates that it is entirely just for God to punish the wicked on the basis of man’s sinfulness. William Nichols highlights how this sermon exposes two modern misconceptions. The first is that people think they deserve salvation and the second is that it would be unjust to be tormented in hell eternally for one’s sins.²⁸ Instead of quickly passing over the fact that all men are sinners, Edwards slowly unmask the horror of sin, both for its immensity but also because of the very nature of sin itself. He notes that God is just to cast off wicked men when one considers how much sin they are guilty of.²⁹ Later he says, “Now if one sinful word or thought has so much evil in it, as to deserve eternal destruction, how do they deserve to be eternally cast off and destroyed, that are guilty of so much sin!”³⁰

After showing the basis for man’s condemnation in light of their sin, Edwards shows the harmony or fittingness of God’s judgment against the wicked in light of their sin. First, Edwards writes it would be just because this is exactly agreeable to their treatment of Him. He writes, “You never have exercised the least degree of love to God; and therefore it would be agreeable to your treatment of him, if he should never express any love to you.”³¹ Second, it would be agreeable to their treatment of Jesus Christ in rejecting Him.³² Edwards writes, “[W]ill you charge Christ with injustice because he doesn’t become your Savior, when at the same time you won’t have him, when he offers himself to you, and beseeches you to accept of him as your Savior?”³³ But then Edwards flips his thinking to expose the heart of his hearer. He asks how a person can be willing to have Christ for a Savior unless he has first come to recognize that he deserves hell.³⁴

28. Jonathan Edwards, *Seeking God: Jonathan Edwards’ Evangelism Contrasted With Modern Methodologies*, ed. William C. Nichols (Ames, Ia.: International Outreach, Inc., 2001), 169–70.

29. Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards: Sermons and Discourses 1734–1738*, ed. Marvin X. Lesser, vol. 19 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001), 344.

30. Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 19:345.

31. Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 19:352; Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Edward Hickman, vol. 2 (Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 81.

32. Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 19:360.

33. Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 19:360.

34. Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 19:362.

Men's own consciences testify against them that they have sinned against their Lord. Third, it would be agreeable to the way that they consider others. People often despise the notion of showing mercy to vicious people since they are unworthy, but are they not unworthy themselves? Fourth, if God should cast them off, it would be fitting with respect of their own behavior towards themselves in being so careless over their own salvation.³⁵ Edwards says, "You would have your own way, and did not like that God should oppose you in it, and your way was to ruin your own soul: how just therefore is it, if now at length, God ceases to oppose you, and falls in with you, and lets your soul be ruined, and as you would destroy yourself, so should put to his hand to destroy you, too!"³⁶

But someone might object to God's dealings with humanity as being unjust. After all, if God is sovereign, is He not responsible for man's sinfulness? Edwards demonstrates that God's sovereignty in no way impinges on His just rule over His creation. First, God was under no obligation to keep men from sinning but was free in His providence to allow them to sin. Second, God had the liberty to determine according to His divine wisdom and good pleasure "whether every particular man should stand for himself or whether the first father of mankind should be appointed as the moral and federal head and representative of the rest."³⁷ Mankind is not hurt in God's determination of selecting the first father of men to represent them on their behalf. In addition, there would have been just as much danger of falling if God had made a covenant with every person in particular.³⁸ Third, when men fell and became sinful, God had the sovereign right to determine whether He would redeem them or not.³⁹ When Edwards is done, any notion of God being unjust in condemning sinners is completely removed. Sereno Dwight makes a similar observation in saying,

The sermon on the *Justice of God in the Damnation of sinners* in the language of the text, literally stops the mouth of every reader, and compels him, as he stands before his Judge, to admit, if he does not feel, the justice of his sentence. I know not where to

35. Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 19:370.

36. Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 19:372.

37. Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 19:347.

38. Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 14:176–78.

39. Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 19:347.

find in any language, a discourse so well adapted to strip the impenitent sinner of every excuse, to convince him of his guilt, and to bring him low before the justice and holiness of God.⁴⁰

The Administration of God's Justice Against the Wicked

God's justice is seen not only on the basis of man's sinfulness, but also in the administration of His justice against the wicked. Edwards notes that every crime deserves punishment in proportion to the seriousness of the crime.⁴¹ He then explains that a crime is more or less heinous according as we are under greater or less obligations to the contrary.⁴² Edwards argues that human beings are obligated to love, honor, and obey any being in proportion to the loveliness, honorableness, and authority of that being. Since God is infinitely loving and has infinite authority and power of His creation, any sin against God is a violation of infinite obligation. Sin then is an infinite evil upon two accounts. It is committed against One who is infinitely excellent and deserving to the contrary, and, secondly, it is committed against God who has absolute sovereignty over all creatures.⁴³ God's eternal condemnation of the wicked is just because although the sins were limited to a lifetime, they were infinitely evil in their nature.

But there is another thought that surfaces in Edwards's argument. Not only is God just in eternally condemning the wicked because of the infinite evil of sin, but because of the finitude of the human person, God's eternal condemnation of the wicked must be eternal since finite creatures cannot bear His infinite wrath. Edwards explains,

Those who are sent to hell never will have paid the whole of the debt, which they owe to God, nor indeed a part, which bears any proportion to the whole. They never will have paid a part, which bears so great a proportion to the whole, as one mite to ten thousand talents. Justice therefore never can be actually satisfied in your damnation; but it is actually satisfied in Christ. Therefore he is accepted of the Father, and therefore all who believe are

40. Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Henry Rogers, Sereno Edwards Dwight, and Edward Hickman (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1998), 1:xcii.

41. Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 19:342.

42. Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 19:342.

43. Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 14:189.

accepted and justified in him. Therefore believe in him, come to Him, commit your souls to Him to be saved by Him.⁴⁴

There is no place for annihilationism in Edwards's thinking. As John Gerstner says, "Edwards annihilates the belief in total annihilation."⁴⁵ Edwards discards this view through his explanation of the justice and lordship of God. Ultimately, one must answer the question, "How could Christ have had to die for us when no punishment threatened?"⁴⁶ God's judgment against the wicked will be eternal because of the infinite evil of sin and because of the infinite wrath of God that must be directed against sin.

The Purpose of God's Justice Against the Wicked

Edwards gives three reasons why the Lord determines it appropriate to eternally punish the wicked. First, God's judgment against the wicked magnifies His glory as a just God. "God does this to vindicate His own glory. God might glorify His sovereign and infinite grace in their conversion and pardon, but God is pleased to glorify His justice by His severity on some as well as by His mercy on others."⁴⁷

Second, and closely related with this thought, God's judgment against the wicked vindicates the Lord of the injury directed at His honor and majesty. According to Edwards, the Day of Judgment serves the purpose of most gloriously showing the justice of God.⁴⁸ Not only will it be a day when every irregularity of the world will be rectified, but the world will in a most appropriate way be judged by the Lord Jesus. "It will be for their conviction that they are judged and condemned by that very person that they have rejected, by whom they might have been saved: who shed his blood to give them an opportunity to be saved; who was wont to offer his righteousness to them when they were in their state of trial."⁴⁹

44. Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 2:89.

45. John H. Gerstner, *Jonathan Edwards: A Mini-Theology* (Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria, 1996), 108.

46. Gerstner, *Jonathan Edwards*, 109.

47. Edwards, *A Just and Righteous God*, 108.

48. Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 14:516.

49. Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 14:521–22.

Third, God's just verdict against the wicked is intended to humble believers.⁵⁰

God has magnified his free grace towards you, and not to others; because he has chosen you, and it hath pleased him to set his love upon you. O! what cause is here for praise? What obligations are upon you to bless the Lord, who hath dealt bountifully with you, and to magnify his holy name?... You should never open your mouth in boasting, or self-justification: you should lie the lower before God for his mercy to you. But you have reason, the more abundantly for your past sins, to open your mouth in God's praises, that they may be continually in your mouth, both here and to all eternity, for his rich, unspeakable, and sovereign mercy to you, whereby he, and he alone, hath made you to differ from others.⁵¹

In light of everything that has been said about God necessarily being just and always doing what is just, the natural question should be how a just God can pardon sinful creatures.

The Justice of God Displayed in the Salvation of Sinners

The justice of God not only humbles saints because they see what they deserve, but it also humbles saints because they see what has been done for them. The justice of God is not ignored in the salvation of sinners. Instead, as Edwards explains, God fully satisfies His justice in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. Edwards demonstrates the justice of God by focusing on God's covenant and Christ's perfect obedience.

Covenantal Context

When God created the world, He entered into a covenant with Adam, who served as a federal head for all human beings. In this covenant, God not only explained the rule of righteousness and the conditions for eternal life, but in making a covenant God bound Himself to it.⁵²

If we speak of the covenant God has made with man stating the condition of eternal life, God never made but one with man,

50. Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards: Sermon Series II, 1729–1731*, 152.

51. Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 19:376.

52. Edwards, *A Just and Righteous God*, 4.

to wit, the covenant of works; which never yet was abrogated, but is a covenant stands in full force to all eternity without the failing of one tittle. The covenant of grace is not another covenant made with man upon the abrogation of this, but a covenant made with Christ to fulfill it. And for this end came Christ into the world, to fulfill the law, or covenant of works, for all that receive him.⁵³

Edwards writes in another place, “There have never been two covenants, in strictness of speech, but only two ways constituted of performing this covenant: the first constituting Adam the representative and federal head, and the second constituting Christ the federal head; the one a dead way, the other a living way and an everlasting one.”⁵⁴

Christ’s Perfect Obedience

This covenantal approach to the Scriptures opens up a way of understanding the work of Christ in light of God’s justice. In fact, Edwards’s treatment of the covenant doesn’t begin with Adam but in eternity past when God determined to redeem sinners without doing injury to His justice by the terms of the covenant of redemption.⁵⁵ In this eternal covenant, God determined to redeem sinners by sending the Son into the world to satisfy the justice of God. Edwards writes, “Thus, as the requirement of perfect obedience went unanswered by Adam’s disobedience on behalf of all mankind, the requirement of God’s unchanging rule of righteousness remains to be answered by mankind to obtain eternal life. This was answered on behalf of the elect through Christ’s perfect obedience.”⁵⁶

The justice of God requires perfect obedience for eternal life and death for disobedience.⁵⁷ Edwards develops his argument from Psalm 69:5 to show that Christ made full atonement for sin and offered to God what was fully equivalent to what was owed to divine justice for our sins.⁵⁸ First, Christ satisfied the justice of God in living a life of

53. Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards: The “Miscellanies,” a–500*, ed. Thomas A. Schafer, vol. 13 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1994), 217.

54. Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 13:219.

55. Biehl, *The Infinite Merit of Christ*, 70.

56. Biehl, *The Infinite Merit of Christ*, 133.

57. Biehl, *The Infinite Merit of Christ*, 87.

58. Edwards, *Our Great and Glorious God*, 185–86.

perfect righteousness. Edwards points out that the sacrifices under the law typified Christ's sacrifice not only as a satisfaction but also meritorious obedience.⁵⁹ It is for this reason that one finds obedience compared with sacrifice in Psalm 40:6. Second, Christ satisfied the justice of God in enduring the just wrath of God against the sins of His people. Edwards summarizes the work of Christ in terms of justice by saying,

Christ never so eminently appeared for divine justice, and yet never suffered so much from divine justice, as when he offered up himself a sacrifice for our sins. In Christ's great sufferings, did his infinite regard to the honor of God's justice distinguishingly appear; for it was from regard to that, that he thus humbled himself: and yet in these sufferings, Christ was the mark of the vindictive expressions of that very justice of God. Revenging justice then spent all its force upon him, on the account of our guilt that was laid upon him; he was not spared at all.⁶⁰

In another place, Edwards writes, "Rather than justice not have its course, God would bring such sore and dreadful misery, such pain, distress, and wrath upon the Son of His eternal and infinite delight. This shows the severity and inflexibleness of God's justice beyond anything else, and as nothing else can do."⁶¹ Christ's perfect obedience then serves as the only basis for hope of salvation.

The Justice of God as Cause for Doxology

The Believer's Assurance

Ultimately, the justice of God serves to promote the glory of God. Edwards realized this fact. First, he highlights how the satisfaction of God's justice in salvation serves as the foundation for the believer's assurance. "The redemption by Christ is particularly wonderful upon this account, inasmuch as the justice of God is not only appeased to those who have an interest in him, but stands up for them; is not only not an enemy but a friend, every whit as much as mercy."⁶² The justice of God stands up for them and relates as a friend to them

59. Edwards, *Our Great and Glorious God*, 188–89.

60. Kimmach, Minkema, and Sweeney, *The Sermons of Jonathan Edwards: A Reader*, 177; Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 19:577.

61. Edwards, *A Just and Righteous God*, 12–13.

62. Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 13:221.

because the believer's righteousness is the righteousness of God, the righteousness not of a human but a divine Person.⁶³ This reality of God's justice being satisfied in Christ and those who are united to Him by faith ought be the cause for praising God throughout eternity. Believers can be assured of their salvation because Christ is their Surety and Representative who has already been openly acquitted and justified and their Mediator has been entrusted with all things and is appointed as the Judge of the world.⁶⁴ But secondly, Edwards argues that God is to be glorified by His saints for His justice because of who He is. Since God is pleased to glorify His justice by His severity on some as well as His mercy on others, believers are to praise God for all that He does for He is altogether good.⁶⁵

The Believer's Perspective

In an essay entitled, *The Glory of God's Justice and the Glory of God's Grace*, John Colwell writes, "Edwards is representative of a Puritan tradition which, comprehending the Cross of Christ within a substitutionary model, tended in some respects to consider God's justice as primary."⁶⁶ As mentioned above, it is true that Edwards believed that God must necessarily be just at all times and that He is under no moral obligation to be merciful. However, this does not mean, as is implied by Colwell, that Edwards was imbalanced in his understanding of the mercy of God and the presentation of Scripture. Colwell goes on to not only suggest the possibility that God may choose to show mercy upon all, but also discards the notion of God's justice being the focus of worship.

If God's justice and God's grace do not coexist in eternal equilibrium then we cannot presume with Jonathan Edwards to ponder the righteous rejoicing with the angels concerning the fate of the reprobate.... In light of the love of God in Christ I cannot comprehend how the fate of the lost could ever be anything other

63. Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards: The "Miscellanies" 1153–1360*, ed. Douglas A. Sweeney, vol. 23 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2004), 94.

64. Edwards, *A Just and Righteous God*, 89–91.

65. Edwards, *A Just and Righteous God*, 108.

66. John E. Colwell, "The Glory of God's Justice and the Glory of God's Grace: Contemporary Reflections on the Doctrine of Hell in the Teaching of Jonathan Edwards," *Evangelical Quarterly* 67, no. 4, 304.

than a matter of grief, a grief which, along with the wounds of Christ, stands in eternity as a testimony to the unrelenting love of God even for those who finally and fatally reject Him.⁶⁷

But God is His attributes and deserves to be worshipped for who He is. Just as God is to be worshiped for His love and mercy, so He is to be worshiped for His justice and righteousness. Edwards makes this point clear by appealing to Revelation 19:1–3. Not only will the justice of God’s moral government be discovered on the Day of Judgment, but as Edwards says, “there will be argument given for the saints and angels to praise.”⁶⁸

That is why the saints in heaven so praise God for the punishment of the wicked: because they are sensible of the majesty and glory of God, and they see how just it is, that those that have affronted him and cast contempt upon him should suffer everlasting burnings for it. In Revelation 19:1–3, it says, “And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.”⁶⁹

Edwards again and again returned to Christ’s excellence as something that can be expressed in terms of harmony and symmetry.

Christ incarnated and revealed the divine beauty because he embodied “an admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies.” He was both Lion and Lamb. He harmonized glory and humility, majesty and meekness, obedience and dominion, sovereignty and resignation, and justice and grace.... He radiated holiness yet bore the charge of guilt. *He lived for the divine justice and suffered from the divine justice.* He suffered the “greatest degree of humiliation” and yet in those sufferings displayed his glory [*italics added*].⁷⁰

67. Colwell, “The Glory of God’s Justice and the Glory of God’s Grace: Contemporary Reflections on the Doctrine of Hell in the Teaching of Jonathan Edwards,” 307.

68. Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 14:515–16.

69. Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 14:189.

70. E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought From the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005), 115.

Edwards did not see God's mercy and justice as set against each other; God is necessarily just in all things and merciful to some.

Conclusion

The justice of God was thus an integral aspect of Jonathan Edwards's understanding of the glory of God. Because God is just, He is to be worshiped for who He is and what He does, which includes the salvation of believers and damnation of sinners on the last day. Edwards reminds the church that no one can be accepted before God without perfect righteousness. All stand in need of a Savior.⁷¹ Secondly, he teaches the church to praise God for all His attributes. God is to be praised not only for His grace and mercy, but also for His wisdom and justice and truth. As with Edwards, Christians should marvel at the harmony that exists in God's ways and between His attributes. Thirdly, this view of God's justice may clarify the biblical teaching of God's justice in contradistinction from other views and open doors in engaging Muslims in their understanding of salvation in the light of God being necessarily just and doing what is just. Finally, Edwards viewed all things in light of the glory of God. He wrestled with difficult questions like everlasting punishment, but always through the lens of the manifestation of God's glory. This is a necessary reminder for believers who are always prone to focus on the creation rather than the Creator.

71. Edwards, *A Just and Righteous God*, 13.

Jonathan Edwards's Reshaping of Lockean Terminology into a Calvinistic Aesthetic Epistemology in his *Religious Affections*

HYUNKWAN KIM



Perry Miller's seminal works have categorized Jonathan Edwards's overall thoughts into a wholly Lockean influence.¹ From the framework Miller established, a number of scholarly studies have been fostered.² However, many scholars have pointed out that Miller's

1. Perry Miller, "Jonathan Edwards on the Sense of the Heart," *Harvard Theological Review* 41(1948): 123–45; *Jonathan Edwards* (New York: William Sloane, 1949), passim; and *Errand into the Wilderness* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), passim. In these works, Miller strongly asserted that Locke was the most dominating source from which Edwards acquired almost all his theoretical starting points.

2. Reactions to Miller's thesis are numerous; some of note are John E. Smith, editor's introduction to "Religious Affections," in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 73 vols. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1957), 2:1–83, "Jonathan Edwards: Piety and Practice in the American Character," *The Journal of Religion*, vol. 54, no. 2 (1974): 166–80, "Jonathan Edwards as Philosophical Theologian," *The Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 30, no. 2 (1976): 306–24; and *Jonathan Edwards: Puritan, Preacher, Philosopher* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992); Wallace E. Anderson, "Immaterialism in Jonathan Edwards' Early Philosophical Notes," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 25, no. 2 (1964): 181–200; Paul Helm, "John Locke and Jonathan Edwards: A Reconsideration," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 7, no. 1 (1969): 51–61; "A Forensic Dilemma: John Locke and Jonathan Edwards on Personal Identity," in *Jonathan Edwards: Philosophical Theologian*, ed. Paul Helm and Oliver D. Crisp (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003), 45–60; and "The Human Self and the Divine Trinity," in *Jonathan Edwards as Contemporary, Essays in Honor of Sang Hyun Lee*, ed. Don Schweitzer (New York, Peter Lang, 2010): 93–106; George Rupp, "The 'Idealism' of Jonathan Edwards," *Harvard Theological Review* 62, no. 2 (1969): 209–26; Edward H. Davidson, "From Locke to Edwards," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 24 (1963): 355–72; Conrad Cherry, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal* (1966; reprint, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), passim; Morton White, *Science and Sentiment in America: Philosophical Thought from Jonathan Edwards to John Dewey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 35; Jean-Pierre Martin, "Edwards's Epistemology and the New Science," *Early American Literature*, vol. 7, no. 3, (1973): 247–55; Terence Erdt, "The Calvinist Psychology

assertions went too far in identifying Edwards's theological empiricism with Locke's empiricism. For instance, Conrad Cherry indicated that "Miller frequently minimizes themes of Calvinist thought which were at the forefront of Edwards's reflective concerns."³ George M. Marsden also pointed out that "Locke opened up exciting new ways of looking at things" regarding a number of concepts, "yet Edwards was no Lockean in any strict sense."⁴

This line of interpretation, which aims to counterbalance Miller's thesis, attempts to place Edwards in a broader scholastic background. Norman Fiering has rightly traced Edwards's metaphysical background to some of Locke's intellectual rivals such as John Norris,

of the Heart and the 'Sense' of Jonathan Edwards," *Early American Literature* 13 (1978): 165–80; and *Jonathan Edwards, Art, and the Sense of the Heart* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980); David Laurence, "Jonathan Edwards, John Locke, and the Canon of Experience," *Early American Literature* 15 (1980): 107–23; David Lyttle, "The Supernatural Light," in *Studies in Religion in Early American Literature* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1983), 1–20; James Hoopes, "Jonathan Edwards's Religious Psychology," *Journal of American History* 69 (1983): 849–65; and *Consciousness in New England* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), passim; Norman Fiering, "The Rationalist Foundations of Jonathan Edwards's Metaphysics," in *Jonathan Edwards and the American Experience*, ed. Harry S. Stout and Nathan O. Hatch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 73–93; and *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought and Its British Context* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 33–45; Sang Hyun Lee, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), passim; Robert E. Brown, "Edwards, Locke, and the Bible," *The Journal of Religion*, 79, no. 3 (1999): 361–84; Michael J. McClymond, "Spiritual Perception in Jonathan Edwards," *The Journal of Religion*, 77, no. 2 (1997): 195–216, *Encounters with God: An Approach to the Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), passim; Alan P. F. Sell, *John Locke and the Eighteenth-Century Divines* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 2006), 16–62; Michael J. McClymond and Gerald R. McDermott, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 60–76, 311–20.

3. Conrad Cherry, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal*, 3, citing James H. Nicholas, Review of Perry Miller's *Jonathan Edwards*, in *Church History*, 20 (1951): 79. On the same page, Cherry adds his explanation to show Edwards's propensity for Calvinist thought: "Yet Edwards was willing to be called a Calvinist, for distinction's sake... the sovereignty and freedom of God; the drama of history as the story both of man's tragic fallenness and of God's renewed purpose to deliver; man's frailty and unworthiness in comparison with the justice and mercy of a majestic God; the personal and social value of a disciplined, holy life of practice."

4. George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003), 63.

Bishop Berkley, and Nicolas Malebranche.⁵ John E. Smith explains that “Edwards’s philosophical stance can best be defined as a subtle interweaving of the Augustinian tradition and its later outcropping in the Cambridge Platonists, with one fundamental idea derived from Locke which he made the basis of his theological empiricism.”⁶

Ongoing scholarly discussions for identifying the influences on Edwards seem to conclude that Edwards drew from various theological and philosophical streams, and developed his own theological structure by using thinkers from various traditions eclectically. When it comes to Edwards’s original concept of religious affections, however, it does seem clear that Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* is probably the best source of inspiration for Edwards’s critical concepts.

According to Smith, Locke’s emphasis on “sense” and his concept of “new simple idea” are essential for understanding Edwards’s concept of religious affections. Edwards transformed Locke’s new simple idea to develop his own concept of “new spiritual sense”—the characteristic of true saints who are graciously affected, according to Edwards’s explanation.⁷ Just as Locke insists that “the creation of new simple idea is beyond all human power,” Edwards also tries to explain those who have new spiritual sense cannot have given it to themselves.⁸ In addition to this, Edwards’s unitary account of the human self reveals considerable similarity with that of Locke’s.⁹ Both Locke and Edwards identify the understanding and will as two inseparably combined faculties of the soul.¹⁰

In fact, Edwards is considered to have read at least two different editions of Locke’s *Essay*. When Edwards was at Yale College, there was the first edition of Locke’s *Essay*, which was published in 1690,

5. Fiering, “The Rationalist Foundations of Jonathan Edwards’s Metaphysics,” 77. To specify, Fiering identifies them as the “theocentric metaphysicians,” a sub-branch of the so-called Continental school. According to Fiering, Edwards fits perfectly into that group of scholars, whereas Locke hardly belongs at all.

6. Smith, “Jonathan Edwards as Philosophical Theologian,” 311.

7. Smith, “Jonathan Edwards: Piety and Practice in the American Character,” 169–70.

8. Smith, “Jonathan Edwards: Piety and Practice in the American Character,” 170.

9. For further explanation on this subject, see Helm, “The Human Self and the Divine Trinity,” 93–106.

10. See, John Locke, *The Works of John Locke*, 10 vols. (London: Thomas Tegg, 1823), 2.21.6; and Edwards, *Works*, 2:96.

in the library's Dummer collection.¹¹ Furthermore, in the list of his "Account Book," a ledger in which Edwards noted books that were lent to others, there is a record that Edwards owned two volumes of *The Works of John Locke*, which was published in 1727, as well as the first edition of Locke's *Essay*.¹² Thus, at this point at least, one might identify a certain connection between Locke and Edwards.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that Edwards was not an unimaginative follower of Locke. Rather, he refashioned Lockean terminology to develop his own theological epistemology. To be more exact, Edwards adopted Lockean terminology to explain a spiritual perception of divine beauty. Consequently, the essential meaning of Edwards's language definitely deviates from Locke's.

Therefore, in this context, I would like to contend that, even though Edwards adopted Lockean terminology to explain his concept of spiritual sense, his use of Lockean language effectually served to develop his peculiar aesthetic epistemology in an empirical way. To support this, I will first unpack Edwards's use of Lockean terminology and method within his concept of religious affections, especially in relation to sense and new simple idea. Second, I will demonstrate how Edwards modified and utilized Lockean terminology for his own use and purpose, centering on new spiritual sense. Lastly, I will display how Edwards relates new spiritual sense with perceiving God's beauty. From these, I will show that Edwards's epistemology is not consistent with Locke's, but is a peculiar one of his own, as well as being faithful to the Calvinistic tradition.

Continuities between Locke and Edwards

No single sentence can better summarize John Locke's empirical epistemology than this famous Latin phrase, *Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu*, which means, "Nothing is in the intellect which was not first in sense." It is Locke's explanation of the sense that provides a fundamental framework for understanding his *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, which he wrote "to inquire into the original, certainty, and extent of human knowledge."¹³ He strongly asserts that

11. Louise May Bryant and Mary Patterson, "The List of Books Sent by Jeremiah Dummer," in *Papers in Honor of Andrew Keogh, Librarian of Yale University, by the Staff of the Library, 30 June 1938* (New Haven, Conn.: privately printed, 1938), 435.

12. Edwards, *Works*, 26:326.

13. Locke, *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, 1.1.2.

there are no innate principles in the human mind. Instead, he appeals to everyone's own sense-experience as the sole source.¹⁴

Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas; how comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it, with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from experience: in that all our knowledge is founded, and from that it ultimately derives itself. Our observation employed either about external sensible objects, or about the internal operations of our minds, perceived and reflected on by ourselves, is that which supplies our understandings with all the materials of thinking.¹⁵

Thus, the sense-experience occupies a pivotal position in Locke's epistemology. To Locke, "the fountains of knowledge," from which "all the ideas we have, or can naturally have," are twofold: one is "depending wholly upon our senses, and derived by them to the understanding," which he calls *sensation*;¹⁶ the other is "the perception of the operations of our own mind within us, as it is employed about the idea it has got," which he calls internal sense or *reflection*.¹⁷ In sum, Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding* begins with an exhaustive objection to innate ideas and then proceeds to demonstrate how knowledge is derived wholly from passively conveyed ideas through the external organs of the five senses and the internal sense or reflection.¹⁸

According to Sang Hyun Lee, "Edwards accepted the fundamental concerns of Locke's empiricism."¹⁹ Like Locke, Edwards also views knowledge as something "to be attained through a direct contact with the world."²⁰ Accordingly, Edwards's concern for the sensation as a fundamental beginning in acquiring knowledge is clearly revealed in one of his early notes:

14. Locke, *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, 1.4.25.

15. Locke, *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, 2.1.2.

16. Locke, *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, 2.1.3.

17. Locke, *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, 2.1.4.

18. Lee, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 118.

19. Lee, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 124.

20. Lee, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 124.

Sensation: How far all acts of the mind are from sensation; all ideas begin from thence, and there never can be any idea, thought or act of the mind unless the mind first received some ideas from sensation, or some other way equivalent, wherein the mind is wholly passive in receiving them.²¹

This displays that Edwards also acknowledges sensation as the fundamental source in acquiring knowledge.

Edwards's emphasis on sensation does play a significant role in buttressing his original concept of religious affections. To clarify their correlation, it would first be necessary to illustrate the meaning of "affection." Edwards provides one proposition just before he proceeds to unpack the nature of the affections in *A Treatise concerning Religious Affections*: "True religion, in great part, consists in holy affections."²² Edwards believes that "true religion is first a matter of having the right affections."²³

What, then, are the affections? Edwards defines the affections as "no other, than the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination and will of the soul."²⁴ This definition requires further explanation because Edwards's interpretation of the soul's faculties is unique:

God has indued the soul with two faculties: one is that by which it is capable of perception and speculation...which is called the *understanding*. The other faculty is that by which the soul does not merely perceive and view things, but is some way inclined with respect to the things it views or considers...either as liking or disliking, pleased or displeased, approving or rejecting. This faculty is called by various names: it is sometimes called the *inclination*: and, as it has respect to the actions that are determined and governed by it, is called the *will*: and the *mind*, with regard to the exercises of this faculty, is often called the *heart*.²⁵

21. Edwards, *Works*, 6:391.

22. Edwards, *Works*, 2:391.

23. Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 313.

24. Edwards, *Works*, 2:95.

25. Edwards, *Works*, 2:96.

Here, Edwards explains two faculties of the soul: the “understanding” that perceives and speculates, and the “inclination or will” that moves the soul towards or away from things.

By definition, it seems that the affection has a close relationship with the function of the will. However, it should be noted that Edwards’s explanation of the affection always comes from “the unity of the soul and self.”²⁶ That is, Edwards does not consider the understanding and the will as divided but as inseparably combined in the same soul; the will in no way works alone apart from the understanding. Edwards says, “Holy affections are not heat without light; but evermore arise from some information of the understanding, some spiritual instruction that the mind receives, some light or actual knowledge.”²⁷

In other words, Edwards’s affection is definitely a dynamic concept by which a cognitive subject is vigorously oriented toward a certain external object accompanied by understanding of it. Therefore, as Edwards has observed, every affected soul “does not merely perceive and view things, but is some way inclined with respect to the things it views or considers.”²⁸ This concept of the unity of the soul occupies a significant role in Edwards’s affection, since Edwards imputes true religion to those who are so graciously “affected” that they have a vigorous inclination towards God, not to those who have merely a “notional understanding” on dogmatic confessions or correct doctrines.²⁹

Prominent was Edwards’s example that shows the difference between notional understanding and true affection. Edwards was fond of exemplifying “tasting-sense” to describe the peculiarity of affection. For instance, having knowledge through experiencing the sweet taste of honey is far from merely knowing that honey is sweet. Likewise, having notional knowledge on the religious truths is insufficient to be a saint until he or she experiences true religious affections.

As we shall see later, Edwards’s fundamental use of sense is rather different from that of Locke. However, sense-experience itself obviously constitutes a main stepping-stone for interpreting both of their

26. McClymond and McDermott, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 312–13.

27. Edwards, *Works*, 2:266.

28. Edwards, *Works*, 2:96.

29. Smith, “Jonathan Edwards: Piety and Practice in the American Character,” 169–70.

thoughts. Harold Simonson even identifies the sense as “perhaps the single word which summarizes Edwards’ whole system of thought.”³⁰

Another key factor that could link Locke with Edwards is the concept of simple ideas, especially the character of simple ideas when being imprinted on the human mind. Smith says that “[n]o other single feature of Locke’s philosophy was more important” to Edwards than his doctrine of “a new simple idea.”³¹ According to Locke, idea is the object of thinking that comes from sensation or reflection. After defining idea, Locke divides ideas into simple ideas and complex ideas. Simple ideas are something “each in itself uncompounded.”³² They contain in them only “one uniform conception in the mind,” and are “not distinguishable into different ideas.”³³ Locke believed that the human mind is thoroughly passive in acquiring simple ideas, while it voluntarily creates complex ideas from combining simple ones. Locke explains how simple ideas work on the mind:

These simple ideas, when offered to the mind, the understanding can no more refuse to have, nor alter, when they are imprinted, nor blot them out, and make new ones itself.... As the bodies that surround us do diversely affect our organs, the mind is forced to receive the impressions, cannot avoid the perception of those ideas that are annexed to them.³⁴

Here, Locke distinctly contrasts the passivity of the mind with the activity of ideas.

However, Locke’s explanation of simple ideas leaves room for one critical question. If the mind can only perceive simple ideas passively, how could we be assured that they really reflect things themselves? Interestingly, Locke seemed aware of this difficulty, so he attempted a “recourse to a *deus ex machina*.”³⁵ Locke explains, “[S]imple ideas,

30. Harold Simonson, “Introduction” to *Selected Writings of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Waveland Press, 1970), 12.

31. Smith, “Jonathan Edwards: Piety and Practice in the American Character,” 170.

32. Locke, *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, 2.2.1.

33. Locke, *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, 2.2.1.

34. Locke, *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, 2.1.25.

35. Sell, *John Locke and the Eighteenth-Century Divines*, 29. A Latin phrase, which means “god from the machine.” The term was first used in ancient Greek and Roman drama, where it meant the timely appearance of a god to unravel and resolve the plot. The *deus ex machina* was named for the convention of the god’s appearing in the sky,

which since the mind, as has been showed, can by no means make to itself, must necessarily be the product of things operating on the mind in a natural way, and producing therein those perceptions which by the wisdom and will of our Maker they are ordained and adapted to."³⁶

From this, one might see which part of Locke's explanation on simple ideas was so attractive to Edwards. Just as Locke insists that "the creation of 'a new simple idea' is beyond all human power,"³⁷ Edwards also thinks that new spiritual sense is something infused into the minds of the saints "through the saving influences of the Spirit of God."³⁸ Thus, Edwards says:

From hence it follows, that in those gracious exercises and affections which are wrought in the minds of the saints, through the saving influences of the Spirit of God, there is a new inward *perception* or *sensation* of their minds, entirely different in its nature and kind, from anything that ever their minds were the subjects of before they were sanctified. For doubtless if God by his mighty power produces something that is new, not only in degree and circumstances, but in its whole nature, and that which could be produced by no exalting, varying or compounding of what was there before, or by adding anything of the like kind; I say, if God produces something thus new in a mind, that is a perceiving, thinking, conscious thing; then doubtless something entirely new is felt, or perceived, or thought; or, which is the same thing, there is some new sensation or perception of the mind, which is entirely of a new sort, and which could be produced by no exalting, varying or compounding of that kind of perceptions or sensations which the mind had before; or there is what some metaphysicians call a new *simple idea*.³⁹

an effect achieved by means of a crane. Since ancient times, the phrase has also been applied to an unexpected saviour or to an improbable event that brings order out of chaos. *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s. v. "deus ex machina," <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/159659/deus-ex-machina> (December 8, 2013).

36. Locke, *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, 4.4.4.

37. Smith, "Jonathan Edwards: Piety and Practice in the American Character," 170.

38. Edwards, *Works*, 2:205.

39. Edwards, *Works*, 2:205.

Here, Edwards explicitly uses the term “a new simple idea” in explaining his concept of spiritual perception or new spiritual sense. According to David Laurence, the “metaphysician” in question who is being mentioned is certainly John Locke.⁴⁰

Considering the evidences hitherto discussed, it seems to follow that, first, Lockean terminologies are employed by Edwards, and second, Locke’s empirical epistemology provides Edwards with basic insight with which he could develop his original concept of religious affections especially in relation to new spiritual sense. However, when Edwards wrote on spiritual sense, as Paul Helm has well explained, “Edwards used Lockean empiricism” not as a *theory* for religious experience but “as a *model* for religious experience.”⁴¹ Therefore, it is also obvious that Edwards’s use of sense is clearly distinguished from that of Locke. Even though Edwards adopted from Locke “a total experimental orientation of thought,”⁴² he surpassed Lockean influence in applying new simple idea to his concept of religious affection, and further to his aesthetic epistemology.

Discontinuities between Locke and Edwards

Any investigation into Edwards’s epistemology needs to note that his appeal to sense is primarily related to a spiritual experience. While Locke’s emphasis of sense mostly focuses on natural human experiences in acquiring knowledge, Edwards’s use of sense aims to describe supernatural ones. According to Helm, “Edwards uses the language of ‘sense’ in an attempt to highlight what in his view was the peculiar character of religious experience, not to reduce it to the level of sense experience.”⁴³ In this regard, Miller seemingly fails to distinguish Edwards’s thought from Locke’s, because he believed that Edwards’s spiritual sense is no more than an extended type of natural sense. Miller writes, “In Edwards’s ‘sense of the heart,’ there is nothing transcendental; it is rather a sensuous apprehension of the total situation.”⁴⁴ If this were indeed so, one can see why Miller so closely associated Edwards’s sense with Locke’s.

40. Laurence, “Jonathan Edwards, John Locke, and the Canon of Experience,” 108.

41. Helm, “John Locke and Jonathan Edwards: A Reconsideration,” 54.

42. Smith, *Jonathan Edwards: Puritan, Preacher, Philosopher*, 26.

43. Helm, “John Locke and Jonathan Edwards: A Reconsideration,” 54.

44. Miller, “Jonathan Edwards on the Sense of the Heart,” 127.

However, in his *Treatise concerning Religious Affections*, Edwards clearly states that spiritual knowledge is “perfectly diverse from all that natural men have, till they have a new nature.”⁴⁵ Edwards explains, “It is evident, that those gracious influences of the spirits, and the effects of God’s Spirit which they experience, are entirely above nature, and altogether of a different kind from anything that men find in themselves by the exercise of natural principles.”⁴⁶

Edwards firmly believed that the true works of the Holy Spirit are given only to the mind of the elect:

The inheritance that Christ has purchased for *the elect*, is the Spirit of God; not in any extraordinary gifts, but in his vital indwelling in the heart, exerting and communicating himself there, in his own proper, holy or divine nature: and this is the sum total of the inheritance that Christ purchased for *the elect*.⁴⁷

Here, Edwards describes the Holy Spirit, revealing His own nature as one who indwells the heart of the elect. One could therefore say that only the elect could possess spiritual knowledge by the Holy Spirit.

Edwards’s assertion that the Holy Spirit provides the elect with spiritual knowledge seems to be simply faithful to the traditional Calvinistic view. However, the uniqueness of Edwards lies in his assertion that the existence of new spiritual sense is a precondition to receive the spiritual knowledge. According to Hoopes, Edwards was distinct from those earlier theologians “in the rigor of his insistence that utterly new knowledge requires a new sense.”⁴⁸ Edwards adopted Locke’s empirical model in order to explain the operation that the elect acquires the spiritual knowledge through the medium of new spiritual sense.

Edwards’s use of new spiritual sense is confined only to describe the mind of the elect when they acquire spiritual knowledge, while Locke applies his concept of new simple idea into the universal human mind when they acquire any kinds of knowledge. Consequently, in understanding Edwards’s epistemology, regeneration is the essential starting point through which the saints are equipped with new spiritual sense. Edwards explains that new spiritual sense is what the saints

45. Edwards, *Works*, 2:272.

46. Edwards, *Works*, 2:266.

47. Edwards, *Works*, 2:236.

48. Hoopes, *Consciousness in New England*, 83.

have received in regeneration.⁴⁹ As a result, the conversion becomes the essential process through which the saints identify themselves as the elect. Edwards thus says that God's love to the elect is discovered by conversion.⁵⁰

At this point, Edwards's new spiritual sense shows a similarity with Locke's new simple idea only in that the human mind is thoroughly passive in acquiring those concepts. However, Edwards originally utilized Lockean terminology to explain the procedure of regeneration. Helm argues that "what Locke had to say about simple ideas gave Edwards a model for what he thought happened at religious conversion."⁵¹ According to McClymond, "the spiritual sense is Edwards's restatement, in the language of eighteenth-century philosophy, of the Puritan conviction that the unregenerate are spiritually blind and that conversion is the opening of one's eyes to God."⁵²

Next, Edwards decisively shows a different perspective on the human mind in comparison to that of Locke. At this point, Edwards's deviation from Locke becomes more obvious. While Locke describes the mind as entirely passive in acquiring new simple idea, Edwards replaces the same mind as having a potential ability to be activated under a certain condition. That is, the mind of the saint is temporarily passive until it is endowed with new spiritual sense. With this new spiritual sense, however, it rightly experiences the excellency and the amiableness of God. It is actively directed toward God and accompanied by perceiving divine values, which is the core of the religious affections.

Here as well the activity of the Holy Spirit works as the absolute threshold that awakens the human mind. To show this, Edwards explains that the Holy Spirit enlightens the minds of the saint, infuses saving grace, and abides with them as indwelling principle:

The Spirit of God is given to the true saints to dwell in them, as his proper lasting abode; and to influence their hearts, as a principle of new nature, or as a divine supernatural spring of life and action. The Scriptures represent the Holy Spirit, not only as

49. Edwards, *Works*, 2:271.

50. Edwards, *Works*, 2:249.

51. Helm, "A Forensic Dilemma: John Lock and Jonathan Edwards on Personal Identity," 45.

52. McClymond, *Encounters with God: An Approach to the Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 9.

moving, and occasionally influencing the saints, but as dwelling in them as his temple, his proper abode, and everlasting dwelling place (1 Corinthians 3:16, 2 Corinthians 6:16, John 14:16–17). And he is represented as being there so united to the faculties of the soul, that he becomes there a principle or spring of new nature and life.⁵³

Here Edwards exemplifies that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit makes it possible for the human mind to actively contemplate the spiritual knowledge. Furthermore, with this new principle, the saints are able to grasp the true nature of all other creatures “as the images or shadows of divine things, that is, in their true relational structure.”⁵⁴

Depicting the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the saints, Edwards appears to portray their connection so intimately united as to imply that the human faculties are identical with divine principle.⁵⁵ However, Edwards never destroys the chasm placed between God and human beings. The Holy Spirit is not collapsed into a human being, nor is the human mind absorbed mystically in the Holy Spirit.⁵⁶ Edwards denies both of amalgamation. Rather, stressing the sovereignty of God, Edwards accused the concept of mystical union with the Holy Spirit as heretical: “Not that the saints are made partakers of the essence of God, and so are ‘Godded’ with God, and ‘Christed’ with Christ, according to the abominable and blasphemous language and notions of some heretics.”⁵⁷

For this reason, in Edwards’s epistemology, the human mind must depend on the revelation of the Holy Spirit to acquire spiritual knowledge. For Edwards, continuous “supernatural revelation and the spiritual light” is “essential for clarifying the nature of reality.”⁵⁸ However, Locke considered revelation just as “enlarged natural reason”: “Revelation is natural reason enlarged by a new set

53. Edwards, *Works*, 2:201.

54. Lee, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 144.

55. See Cherry, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal*, 28–29.

56. Cherry, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal*, 29.

57. Edwards, *Works*, 2:203.

58. Douglas A. Sweeney, “‘Longing for More and More of It?’: The Strange Career of Jonathan Edwards’s Exegetical Exertions,” *Jonathan Edwards at 300*, ed. Harry S. Stout, Kenneth P. Minkema, and Caleb J. D. Maskell (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2005), 28.

of discoveries communicated by God immediately.”⁵⁹ From these, one might conclude that Edwards’s diagram of epistemology shows “triadic” structure rather than “dyadic” connection.⁶⁰ Because, in this form of epistemological structure, not only are both “perceiving subject” and “perceived object” involved, but the Holy Spirit occupies the most important pivot.⁶¹

For these reasons, scholars such as Paul Ramsey and Conrad Cherry interpret Edwards’s use of Locke’s new simple idea in the context of the Augustinian doctrine of *illumination* and the traditional concept of *infusion*, rather than of Lockean origin.⁶² Indeed, considering Edwards’s explanation on religious affections, *illumination* and *infusion* are two major works of the Holy Spirit that activate the human mind.

As mentioned earlier, Edwards’s affection signifies an inclined state of the human mind in which understanding and willing are harmoniously integrated. To have true religious affections means 1) to have an illuminated understanding, and 2) to have an infused will by the work of the Holy Spirit. In his *Religious Affections*, Edwards exemplifies this procedure as follows:

The light of the Sun of Righteousness don’t [sic] only shine upon them, but is so communicated to them that they shine also, and become little images of that Sun which shines upon them; the sap of the true vine is not only conveyed into them, as the sap of a tree may be conveyed into a vessel, but is conveyed as sap is from a tree into one of its living branches, where it becomes a principle of life. The Spirit of God being thus communicated and united to the saints, they are from thence properly denominated from it, and are called *spiritual*.⁶³

This quote demonstrates that divine light illuminates the minds of the saints and infuses new principle by communicating and uniting to their minds so that they also can reflect spiritual light. Thus, Ramsey insists in his introduction, “How wrong it is to reduce Jonathan

59. Locke, *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, 4.19.4.

60. McClymond, “Spiritual Perception in Jonathan Edwards,” 201. See also Cherry, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal*, 25–43.

61. McClymond, “Spiritual Perception in Jonathan Edwards,” 201.

62. See Cherry, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal*, 25–43; Paul Ramsey, editor’s introduction to Freedom of the Will, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 73 vols. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1957), 1:40–44.

63. Edwards, *Works*, 2:201–2.

Edwards's system to that of John Locke, while ignoring the traditional doctrine of infusion and not giving equal weight to his Augustinian doctrine of illumination."⁶⁴

Terrence Erdt relates Edwards's new spiritual sense to the Calvinistic psychology of sense of the heart.⁶⁵ According to Erdt, Edwards developed his concept of new spiritual sense out of the earlier Calvinist tradition, refashioning it with Locke's emphasis on sense-experience and his own explanation of true conversions during the Great Awakening.⁶⁶ More directly, Erdt connects John Calvin's concept of *sensus suavitatis* with Edwards's concept of tasting-sense: "Calvin's explanation that the sense of the heart was the particular feeling that the saint had toward the message of salvation was not a piece of pietistic vaguery. He labeled the feeling itself *suavitatis*, sweetness, which Edwards incorporated into his own lexicon to describe the religious experience."⁶⁷ According to Erdt, this sense of *suavitatis* is not only manifest in Calvin's theology, but also has long been a part of the Calvinistic Puritan tradition.

From the arguments discussed so far, it seems clear that even though Edwards uses Lockean terminology, he deviates from Locke in that 1) his concern for sense is mainly to explain the spiritual experience, and 2) he adopted the character of new simple idea in an attempt to describe the concept of new spiritual sense. Consequently, Edwards's epistemology is not consistent with Locke's. Rather, Edwards's teaching of new spiritual sense can be traced back to the Augustinian and Calvinistic doctrines. However, based on the concept of new spiritual sense, Edwards attempted to explain the aesthetic experience of the saints, focusing on God's beauty where no earlier Calvinistic authors before him put such an emphasis. Douglas Elwood observes that "his stress on the primacy of the aesthetic over the moral and legal in our experience of God places the old Calvinism on a very different footing."⁶⁸

64. Ramsey, editor's introduction to *Freedom of the Will*, 43.

65. See Erdt, "The Calvinist Psychology of the Heart and the 'Sense' of Jonathan Edwards," 165–80, and *Jonathan Edwards, Art, and the Sense of the Heart*, 2–23.

66. See Erdt, *Jonathan Edwards, Art, and the Sense of the Heart*, 2–23.

67. Erdt, "The Calvinist Psychology of the Heart and the 'Sense' of Jonathan Edwards," 171.

68. Douglas Elwood, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 3.

Edward's Aesthetic Epistemology

In his *Religious Affections*, Edwards's stress on sense is directly connected with relishing divine beauty.⁶⁹ That is, the saints taste no other than the beauty of the divine values through the God-given new spiritual sense. Edwards repeatedly reminds the intimate relationship between the new spiritual sense and the spiritual beauty in the *Religious Affections*:

The beauty of holiness is that thing in spiritual and divine things, which is perceived by this spiritual sense.⁷⁰

I have already shown what that new spiritual sense is, which the saints have given them in regeneration, and what is the object of it. I have shown that the immediate object of it is the supreme beauty and excellency of the nature of divine things, as they are in themselves.⁷¹

Spiritual understanding consists primarily in a sense of heart of that spiritual beauty...and this sensibleness of the amiableness or delightfulness of beauty, carries in the very nature of it, the sense of the heart.⁷²

A sense of true divine beauty being given to the soul, the soul discerns the beauty of every part of the gospel scheme.⁷³

Through the new spiritual sense, spiritual beauty is experienced. This aesthetic experience of divine beauty, then, becomes a true mark of distinguishing the regenerate from the unregenerate in Edwards's understanding of genuine religious experience.

69. Here, for the detailed purpose of this paper, I will deal with Edwards's explanation of beauty while mainly focusing on its relation with new spiritual sense. Thus, the epistemological aspect of beauty will be mostly treated. For thorough investigations on Edwards's concept of beauty, see Roland Delattre, *Beauty and Sensibility in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards; An Essay in Aesthetics and Theological Ethics* (New Haven, Conn. and London: Yale University Press, 1968); Lee, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards*; and Louis Mitchell, *Jonathan Edwards on the Experience of Beauty*, Studies in Reformed Theology and History (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Theological Seminary, 2003).

70. Edwards, *Works*, 2:260.

71. Edwards, *Works*, 2:271.

72. Edwards, *Works*, 2:272.

73. Edwards, *Works*, 2:302.

In other words, upon regeneration and conversion, the mind of the saints acquires new spiritual sense. Then, the mind of the saints is endowed with the new cognitive ability “to perceive something that it was not able to perceive before,” which is the new simple idea.⁷⁴ Now, the epistemological ability of the saints is elaborated to perceive the supreme beauty and excellency of God, which is impossible to natural men. We might conclude that saving grace and “the epistemological ability to discern beauty” are infused simultaneously to the mind of the saints by the Holy Spirit. Thus, Lee has rightly observed that “Edwards’s philosophical epistemology and theological soteriology merge into one doctrine,” the doctrine of spiritual sense.⁷⁵

This shows how Edwards originally developed his aesthetic epistemology from using Lockean terminology. In *Warranted Christian Belief*, Alvin Plantinga shows Edwards’s use and development of new simple idea, linking it with cognitive ability:

In the fall into sin, Edwards thinks, we human beings lost a certain cognitive ability: the ability to apprehend God’s moral qualities. With conversion comes regeneration; part of the latter is the regeneration (to a greater or lesser extent) of this cognitive ability to grasp or apprehend the beauty, sweetness, amiability of the Lord himself and of the whole scheme of salvation. And it is just the cognitive ability that involves the *new simple idea*. And one who doesn’t have this *new simple idea*—one in whom the cognitive process in question has not been regenerated—doesn’t have spiritual knowledge of God’s beauty and loveliness.⁷⁶

This displays how Locke’s new simple idea has been transformed into Edwards’s spiritual knowledge of God’s beauty.

What, then, is Edwards’s concept of beauty? Edwards states, “All beauty consists in similarness, or identity of relation.”⁷⁷ For Edwards, beauty is a matter of consent and agreement.⁷⁸ Here, Edwards distinguishes two kinds of beauty: primary and secondary. Each corresponds to spiritual and natural. While secondary beauty “consists in mutual consent and agreement of different things in form, manner,

74. Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, 298.

75. Lee, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 143.

76. Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, 299.

77. Edwards, *Works*, 6:334.

78. Edwards, *Works*, 8:562.

quantity and visible end and design,”⁷⁹ primary beauty consists in mutual consent and agreement of beings who are able to choose and love. Thus, when Edwards explains God as the “foundation and fountain” of all beauty,⁸⁰ he describes perfect union and love of the triune God. From this inner-Trinitarian beauty, all kinds of beauty, indeed, all creation, is derived.⁸¹ For Edwards, beauty is “the very structure of being.”⁸² Beauty is not just only an epistemologically perceived concept through spiritual sense, but also constitutes an ontological reality of being. Thus, Roland Delattre observes that “beauty and sensibility may be said to be the objective and subjective components of the moral or spiritual life” in Edwards’s thought.⁸³ Edwards’s doctrine of new spiritual sense becomes the bridge that connects the objective and subjective aspect of beauty.

In the *Religious Affections*, this concept of beauty is mostly used to signify the moral perfection or holiness of the divine nature. Edwards distinctively contrasts those who have a spiritual taste to perceive the beauty of God’s moral perfection with those who just have a natural sense to perceive God’s natural perfection.⁸⁴ Edwards also states that “the beauty of the divine nature does primarily consist in God’s holiness.”⁸⁵ Thus, Edwards says, “the proper and immediate object of a spiritual mind” is the beauty of God’s moral perfection.⁸⁶

This aesthetic experience of God’s moral perfection through the spiritual sense brings two contrasted but interrelated spiritual sensations to the minds of the saints: the beauty of God and the ugliness of sin. That is, every truly affected saint who experiences God’s beauty becomes deeply aware of his sinfulness at the same time. As Edwards noted, “[T]he same eye that discerns the transcendent of beauty of holiness, necessarily therein sees the exceeding odiousness of sin.”⁸⁷ The aesthetic experience of God’s holiness makes one realize that the doctrines of the gospel are true.

79. Edwards, *Works*, 8:561.

80. Edwards, *Works*, 8:551.

81. Mitchell, *Jonathan Edwards on the Experience of Beauty*, 105.

82. Mitchell, *Jonathan Edwards on the Experience of Beauty*, 105.

83. Delattre, *Beauty and Sensibility in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards*, 3.

84. Edwards, *Works*, 2:263.

85. Edwards, *Works*, 2:258.

86. Edwards, *Works*, 2:271.

87. Edwards, *Works*, 2:301.

Due to the work of Holy Spirit as an indwelling principle, the saints do not just passively appreciate God's beauty but actively become partakers of God's beauty, and thus enter into true fellowship with God.⁸⁸ As a result, the saints manifest their proper beauty as the reflection of the moral image of God. "Herein consists the beauty of the saints that they are saints, or holy ones; it is the moral image of God in them, which is their beauty; and that is their holiness."⁸⁹

Taken together, it seems to follow that Edwards's concept of beauty plays the most significant role in his epistemology throughout his *Religious Affections*. It is the "aesthetic perception" of God's holiness through the new spiritual sense by which Edwards identifies genuine religious experience. For Edwards, God's beauty is "the foundation of all genuine affections."⁹⁰

Conclusion

Perry Miller's influential study of Edwards undoubtedly offered a certain insight when he asserted that Edwards's theology is closely connected with Locke's empiricism. Miller was partly right in that Edwards used Lockean terminology and his empirical model in describing religious experience. However, Miller carries his assertion too far when he asserts that Edwards, in the *Religious Affections*, rendered the supernatural religious experience of Calvinism into the comprehensible natural phenomenon by using Locke's concept of new simple idea.⁹¹

This paper has demonstrated that Lockean language was uniquely transformed for Edwards's own purpose and use in the *Religious Affections*. At every point, Edwards's use of new simple idea supposes that the new simple idea is spiritual, supernatural, and divine knowledge. In addition, Edwards's appeal to sense does not transfer the supernatural into the natural, but shows that new simple idea necessarily requires new spiritual sense. Here, Edwards's use of Lockean terminology serves as distinguishing between a notional understanding and a sensible perception of spiritual knowledge. Furthermore, based on the concept of new spiritual sense, Edwards explains his own

88. Edwards, *Works*, 2:201.

89. Edwards, *Works*, 2:258.

90. Mitchell, *Jonathan Edwards on the Experience of Beauty*, 106.

91. See Miller, *Jonathan Edwards*, 186–87.

aesthetic epistemology while being faithful to his Calvinistic tradition. For Edwards, the object of the new spiritual sense is no other than God's beauty.

Therefore, it is too much to say that Edwards's theology is categorized in a wholly Lockean framework. Edwards's use of Lockean terminology, by contributing to develop his concept of new spiritual sense, strengthens his Calvinistic perspectives in the *Religious Affections* and thus reveals his original concept of aesthetic epistemology.

**“A System of Holiness”:
Andrew Fuller’s Evangelical
Calvinistic Theology of Virtue**

RYAN P. HOSELTON

One of the most helpful theological works in recent days has been Ellen Charry’s discussion of virtue and theology.¹ Charry offers the neologism “aretegenic” to capture the “virtue-shaping function of the divine pedagogy of theological treatises.”² The adjective “aretegenic” (“aretology” in its nominal form) is a compound of the Greek terms, *aretē* denoting “virtue,” and *gennaō*, “to beget.” The classic theologians believed that an accurate knowledge of God was aretegenic—it fostered virtue and excellence in the lives of believers. Examining theological texts spanning from the New Testament to the Reformation, Charry’s project aims at “reclaiming a genuine pastoral Christian psychology that grounds human excellence in knowing and loving God.”³ She takes her study up to John Calvin, but she could well have continued it to later theologians in the early modern era who have a similar way of doing theology. In this article, one such theologian, Andrew Fuller (1754–1815), is examined.

Fuller’s Evangelical Theology and the Moral Order

Andrew Fuller was a Baptist minister in Kettering, England, who played a central role in laying the theological foundations for the

1. Ellen Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). The quote in the chapter title is from Andrew Fuller, *The Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined and Compared as to Their Moral Tendency*, in *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller with a Memoir of His Life by Andrew Gunton Fuller*, ed. Joseph Belcher (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1845; repr. Harrisonburg, Va.: Sprinkle, 1988), 2:134. Henceforth abbreviated as *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined*, in *WAF*.

2. Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds*, 19.

3. Charry, *By The Renewing of Your Minds*, 18.

modern missionary movement.⁴ He was an avid apologist for evangelical Calvinistic orthodoxy, writing voluminously against Arminianism, Hyper-Calvinism, Sandemanianism, Antinomianism, Socinianism, and Deism.⁵ Fuller developed his theology of virtue most comprehensively in his writings against two of the most well-known eighteenth-century critics of orthodox Christianity: Joseph Priestley (1733–1804) and Thomas Paine (1737–1809). Although Priestley was a Socinian and Paine a Deist, they had a shared agenda to restore what they regarded as pure religion by replacing traditional Christian beliefs about God and human nature with more optimistic and enlightened ones. They pronounced traditional Christian doctrine a hindrance to moral and social progress.

In his engagement with Socinianism, Andrew Fuller outlined the “principal objections to the Calvinistic system” with regard to the atonement, the glory of God, and “the worship paid to Jesus Christ” as fully God.⁶ The Deists censured the same doctrines but also included an aggressive opposition to the truth of Scripture. Fuller’s aim in both polemical contests was to show that the aretegenic value of Christian doctrine bore witness to its veracity.

Fuller based his theology of virtue on the doctrines that he considered central to the gospel. The truth and import of evangelical beliefs about the righteous character of God, the depravity of mankind, the deity and atonement of Christ, and the veracity of Scripture rested in their aretegenic power to convert moral agents from evil and instill in them holiness and love. For Fuller, the clash between good and evil did not consist merely in rival philosophical axioms; rather, it took place in a cosmic drama in which every moral agent was personally involved. In order to depict the dynamic between God’s moral authority and humanity’s moral insubordination, Fuller employed the analogy of a government. God was like a moral governor who in His love desired to find a means to pardon the rebels without compromising His justice.

4. See Peter Morden, *Offering Christ to the World: Andrew Fuller (1754–1815) and the Revival of Eighteenth Century Particular Baptist Life*, SBHT 8 (Carlisle, U.K.: Paternoster, 2003).

5. See Michael A. G. Haykin, ed., *“At the Pure Fountain of Thy Word”: Andrew Fuller as an Apologist*, SBHT 6 (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2006).

6. Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined*, in *WAF* 2:154.

Fuller considered each doctrine of evangelical Calvinist theology crucial to maintaining the moral order. To negate one belief undermined the harmony of not only truth but also of morality: “There is such a connexion in truth, that, if one part of it be given up, it will render us less friendly towards other parts, and so destroy their efficacy.”⁷ Joseph Priestley confessed belief in the resurrection but denied Christ’s deity and atonement. Paine held to the doctrine of a future life, but he rejected Scripture and challenged the goodness of the Christian God. Fuller countered that his opponents’ moral system was incomplete because their belief system was incomplete. The truth of a belief system and its aretogenic value stood and fell together, for “that which we account truth is a system of holiness.”⁸ Hence, he believed that if he could display “the morality and virtue inculcated by the gospel,” then he could corroborate the truthfulness of its doctrines.⁹ What follows delineates the way Fuller’s theological system shaped his moral worldview.

“The Prime Object of Genuine Love”:

The God of Moral Glory

In *The Gospel Its Own Witness*, Fuller commenced his moral argumentation with the doctrine of God.¹⁰ God’s holy character furnished the standard and source of virtue. He wrote, “There are certain perfections which all who acknowledge a God agree in attributing to him; such are those of wisdom, power, immutability, &c.”¹¹ These attributes constitute God’s natural perfections. “There are others which no less evidently belong to Deity,” Fuller explained, “such as goodness, justice, veracity, &c., all which may be expressed in one word—holiness.”¹² Fuller counted these traits among God’s moral perfections. Although both “natural and moral attributes tend to display the glory of the Divine character,” Fuller claimed that God’s moral perfections exhibited His glory far greater than His natural

7. Fuller, *The Gospel Its Own Witness, or, The Holy Nature and Divine Harmony of the Christian Religion Contrasted with the Immorality and Absurdity of Deism*, in *WAF*, 2:23.

8. Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined*, in *WAF*, 2:134.

9. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:14.

10. The quote in the subheading title is from Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined*, in *WAF*, 2:153–54.

11. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:9.

12. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:9.

perfections. A figure's greatness will win acclaim, but his or her goodness will captivate hearts: "Moral excellence is the highest glory of any intelligent being, created or uncreated. Without this, wisdom would be subtlety, power tyranny, and immutability the same thing as being unchangeably wicked."¹³ Thus, although natural perfections like wisdom and power render God's character "a proper object of admiration," His "justice, veracity, and goodness attract our love" and capture our devotion.¹⁴

According to Fuller, the religions of the world have largely overlooked the divine moral character. The pagans have fabricated deities that represent greatness and power; but when it came to the moral character of their idols—many of which stood for drunkenness, sexual promiscuity, human sacrifice, and deception—they fell considerably short. The Deists emphasized God's natural perfections, praising His transcendent grandeur, might, and intelligence while often ignoring His moral character. Fuller accused both the pagans and Deists alike of imposing their moral norms on their conception of the divine.¹⁵ In contrast, the moral character of God determined Christian belief and its understanding of virtue: "The object of Christian adoration is Jehovah, the God of Israel; whose character for holiness, justice, and goodness, is displayed in the doctrines and precepts of the gospel."¹⁶ The gospel represented not merely a solution for mankind's moral problem—it revealed the moral glory of God.

Fuller's defense of the evangelical doctrine of God against the accusations of vindictiveness and malevolence was driven by his aretogenic goal to promote virtue in his readers. Human beings learned virtue by knowing God, practiced virtue by obeying God, and loved virtue by loving God. Fuller believed that a "cordial approbation of the Divine character is the same thing as a disinterested affection to virtue."¹⁷ Even more, a "holy likeness to God" was equivalent to "the very practice or exercise of virtue."¹⁸ Thus, Fuller deemed it impossible to grow in correct moral thinking and conduct without having accurate beliefs about and affection for God's good character and ways:

13. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:9.

14. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:9.

15. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:13.

16. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:9.

17. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:25.

18. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:25.

it is the character of God that is the prime object of genuine love...the true character of God, as revealed in the Scriptures, must be taken into account, in determining whether our love to God be genuine or not. We may clothe the Divine Being with such attributes, and such only, as will suit our depraved taste; and then it will be no difficult thing to fall down and worship him: but this is not the love of God, but an idol of our own creating.¹⁹

Fuller perceived that one's understanding of God's moral character spoke volumes about his or her own character and moral standards. He charged his opponents with adapting their doctrine of God to their love of self. Their commitment to God was ultimately an “attachment to a being whose glory consists in his being invariably attached to us.”²⁰ The irony of making God subservient to the creature's inclinations was that it divested God of His power to benefit mankind and facilitate its morality and happiness. The god of Enlightenment religion played no role in reforming humanity's moral practices and ideas but merely served to endorse them. Fuller argued that excluding the Christian God from morality was not only ideologically flawed but it also undermined the advancement of virtue.

In Fuller's moral cosmology, God's moral glory comprehended the nature and beauty of virtue. God held the “supreme place in the system of being,” and His existence was the source of all creation.²¹ Likewise, His good character occupied the supreme place in the moral system, and therefore all goodness originated in Him. Thus, Fuller concluded that the best vehicle for becoming a person of virtue was to assign all glory and worship to God as the Supreme Being:

The great God, who fills heaven and earth, must be allowed to form the far greatest proportion, if I may so speak, of the whole system of being; for, compared with him, “all nations,” yea, all worlds, “are but as a drop of a bucket, or as the small dust of the balance.” He is the source and continual support of existence, in all its varied forms. As the great Guardian of being in general, therefore, it is fit and right that he should, in the first place, guard the glory of his own character and government. Nor can

19. Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined*, in *WAF*, 2:153–54.

20. Fuller, *Socinianism Indefensible on the Grounds of Its Moral Tendency*, in *WAF*, 2:270.

21. Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined*, in *WAF*, 2:159.

this be to the disadvantage of the universe, but the contrary; as it will appear, if it be considered that it is the glory of God to do that which shall be best upon the whole. The glory of God, therefore, connects with it the general good of the created system, and of all its parts, except those whose welfare clashes with the welfare of the whole.²²

The ultimate objective of creation rested in ascribing worship, love, and obedience to the God of moral glory. Fuller perceived that the supremacy of God's moral glory in creation held clear implications for human virtue: "That place which God holds in the great system of being he ought to hold in our affections; for we are not required to love him in a greater proportion than the place which he occupies requires."²³ When human beings make God the object of their affections, they will imitate His goodness and live in moral harmony with creation.

Fuller's aretegenic objective to advance the universal welfare of mankind drove his defense of the Calvinist notion of God against its critics. God was no vindictive egotist to promote his glory as primary and require creation to do likewise, for it is "thus that the love of God holds creation together."²⁴ For Fuller, the glory of God provided creation with its universal unifying principle: "He is that lovely character to whom all holy intelligences bear supreme affection; and the display of his glory, in the universal triumph of truth and righteousness, is that end which they all pursue."²⁵ In order for true social justice, compassion, and freedom to prevail universally, mankind needed to find solidarity in an ultimate *telos* to glorify and love God: "Thus united in their grand object they cannot but feel a union of heart with one another."²⁶ Thus, in promoting the glory of God, human beings not only learned to love God but also their neighbor.

God's character embodied goodness, love, and righteousness; to establish His moral glory as supreme resulted in creation's greatest well-being. If God substituted His moral glory for another standard as the end of creation, then true virtue would be eclipsed:

22. Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined*, in *WAF*, 2:159–60.

23. Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined*, in *WAF*, 2:159.

24. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:15.

25. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:15.

26. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:15.

If it were otherwise, if the happiness of all creatures were the great end that God from the beginning had in view, then, doubtless, in order that this end might be accomplished, every thing else must, as occasion required, give way to it. The glory of his own character, occupying only a subordinate place in the system, if ever it should stand in the way of that which is supreme, must give place, among other things. And if God have consented to all this, it must be because the happiness, not only of creation in general, but of every individual, is an object of the greatest magnitude, and most fit to be chosen; that is, it is better, and more worthy of God, as the Governor of the universe, to give up his character for purity, equity, wisdom, and veracity, and to become vile and contemptible in the eyes of his creatures—it is better that the bands which bind all holy intelligences to him should be broken, and the cords which hold together the whole moral system be cast away than that the happiness of a creature should, in any instance, be given up!²⁷

God held an infinitely greater place in the system of being than everything else; therefore, His moral glory was paramount. If God allowed sinful mankind to determine the standard of virtue and assert its warped notions of happiness as the supreme end of creation, then He would fail as a moral judge over evil. Even more, He would fail to benefit His creation, for the “glory of God consists . . . in doing that which is best upon the whole.”²⁸ Contrary to the objections of Fuller’s opponents, God acted for the good of creation in establishing His moral glory as the supreme object of adoration and emulation.²⁹

27. Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined*, in *WAF*, 2:160. Fuller quoted Priestley’s criticism that Calvinists disregarded the happiness of mankind in asserting the glory of God as the supreme end of virtue: “‘Those who assume to themselves the distinguishing title of orthodox,’ says Dr. Priestley, ‘consider the Supreme Being as having created all things for his glory, and by no means for the general happiness of all his creatures.’” Fuller responded that Priestley sorely misrepresented Calvinists, for creatures find true happiness in glorifying God rather than in rebelling against him. Even more, Fuller objected that human notions of happiness are often selfish and would not benefit the good of the whole, making it a deficient standard of morality. If God’s ultimate objective was to promote the creature’s happiness over His glory, Fuller reasoned, then God has so far been immensely unsuccessful since “All creatures, we are certain, are not happy in this world.” Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined*, in *WAF*, 2:158.

28. Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined*, in *WAF*, 2:158.

29. Fuller followed Jonathan Edwards’s reasoning in his treatise, *Concerning the End for which God Created the World*. Edwards wrote, “if God in himself be in

God expressed His moral perfections in His moral law. Fuller designated the moral law as “the eternal standard of right and wrong,” which was “summed up in love to God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to our neighbour as ourselves.”³⁰ The moral law grounded all of God’s precepts—He never issued a commandment that did not brim with His love and goodwill. Like God’s moral character, the moral law was eternal and thus set above the volatile moral standards that finite mankind has invented. The aretegenic value of the moral law consisted in its intention to establish righteous relationships between God and human beings and foster social justice and love between neighbors. Fuller argued that the order of the moral law was crucial to its efficacy. Without first loving God, it was impossible to love one’s neighbor and treat him or her with dignity. The moral law also existed as a standard to judge evil. Every evil action had its source in an absence of love to God, which was the same as an absence of love to virtue itself.

Since the moral law was an extension of God’s moral character, any deviation from it merited God’s righteous judgment:

If the moral law require love to God with all the heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and to our neighbour as ourselves, it cannot allow the least degree of alienation of the heart from God, or the smallest instance of malevolence to man. And if it be what the Scripture says it is, holy, just, and good, then, though it require all the heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, it cannot be too strict; and if it be not too strict, it cannot be unworthy of God, nor can it be “merciless tyranny” to abide by it.³¹

any respect properly capable of being his own end in the creation of the world, then it is reasonable to suppose that he had respect to himself as his last and highest end in this work; because he is worthy in himself to be so, being infinitely the greatest and best of beings.... And therefore if God esteems, values, and has respect to things according to their nature and proportions, he must necessarily have the greatest respect to himself.... To him belongs the whole of the respect that any moral agent, either God or any intelligent being, is capable of. To him belongs all the heart.” Fuller agreed that moral agents realize their chief end and greatest happiness in knowing, loving, and glorifying God. Jonathan Edwards, *Concerning the End for which God Created the World*, in *WJE*, vol. 8, ed. Paul Ramsey (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989), 421–22. For more on this work, see George Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003), 459–63.

30. Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined*, in *WAF*, 2:137.

31. Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined*, in *WAF*, 2:138.

God was no tyrant to hold creation accountable to His standard of moral justice. In guarding His glory and moral character, God maintained moral order and promoted the general good of the universe. Thus, God administered His judgments for the benefit of creation, not its injury. Defending God from the charge of unwarranted vindictiveness,³² Fuller wrote,

God...in the punishment of sin, is not to be considered as acting in a merely private capacity, but as the universal moral Governor; not as separate from the great system of being, but as connected with it, or as the Head and Guardian of it. Now, in this relation, vindictive justice is not only consistent with the loveliness of his character, but essential to it. Capacity and inclination to punish disorder in a state are never thought to render an earthly prince less lovely in the eyes of his loyal and faithful subjects, but more so.³³

God as the Supreme Being and protector of the ultimate good not only possessed the right but also the moral responsibility to judge evil. A God who did not exercise justice would be “neither loved nor feared, but would become the object of universal contempt.”³⁴ Only when moral agents acknowledge God’s moral glory can they understand His equity and goodness in judging sinners.

“The Grand Succedaneum”:

Humanity’s Moral Slavery to Self-love

Fuller attributed considerable aretogenic value to the doctrine of human depravity.³⁵ Since Christian belief held a correct estimation of mankind’s moral state, it alone could offer a remedy. In fact, the

32. Fuller was responding to Priestley’s claim that Calvinists “represent God in such a light that no earthly parent could imitate him, without sustaining a character shocking to mankind.” Quoted Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined*, in *WAF*, 2:155. Priestley argued that this notion of God did not make Him imitable and worthy of love. Fuller’s principal argument against Priestley was that God’s judgments—though against to the benefit of the wicked—were ultimately directed for the good of the whole and were therefore justified. God would in fact be far more malevolent if He did not judge evil but instead allowed it free reign.

33. Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined*, in *WAF*, 2:157–58.

34. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:10.

35. The quote in the subheading is from Fuller, *Dialogues and Letters Between Crispus and Gaius*, in *WAF*, 2:662.

reality of universal corruption attested to the truth of Christianity: “This single principle of human depravity, supposing it to be true, will fully account for all the moral disorders in the world,” and “the actual existence of those disorders, unless they can be better accounted for, must go to prove the truth of this principle, and, by consequence, of the Christian system which rests upon it.”³⁶ As long as human beings continued in the delusion that their desires, passions, and conduct were not sinful but inherently good, they could never turn from evil to the love of God. Therefore, “the system which affords the most enlarged views of the evil of sin must needs have the greatest tendency to promote repentance for it.”³⁷ The doctrine of human depravity possessed singular power to inspire human beings to resist and turn from evil by exposing them to sin’s heinousness.

According to Fuller, the Scriptures taught that the “spring-head whence all the malignant streams of idolatry, atheism, corruption, persecution, war, and every other evil” came, lay in mankind’s refusal to devote their love supremely to God.³⁸ The absence of love for God not only introduced sin into the world but has sustained it ever since:

It has already been observed, that Christian morality is summed up in the love of God and our neighbour, and that these principles, carried to their full extent, would render the world a paradise. But the Scriptures teach us that man is a rebel against his Maker; that his carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; that instead of loving God, or even man, in the order which is required, men are become “lovers of their own selves,” and neither God nor man is regarded but as they are found necessary to subserve their wishes.³⁹

As the “sum of the Divine law is love,” Fuller concluded that the “essence of depravity” consisted “in the want of love to God and neighbor.”⁴⁰ The object of a person’s love determined his or her conformity to the moral law.

Fuller imputed all moral rebellion to the love of self:

36. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:65.

37. Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined*, in *WAF*, 2:116.

38. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:64.

39. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:64.

40. Fuller, *Dialogues and Letters Between Crispus and Gaius*, in *WAF*, 2:662.

All objects set up in competition with God and our neighbour may be reduced to one, and that is *self*. Private self-love seems to be the root of depravity; the grand succedaneum in human affections to the love of God and man. Self-admiration, self-will, and self-righteousness are but different modifications of it. Where this prevails, the creature assumes the place of the Creator, and seeks his own gratification, honour, and interest, as the ultimate end of all his actions.⁴¹

The preoccupation with self-love has retarded rather than hastened the development of human virtue. First and foremost, it eroded and undermined a supreme love for God. Without a love for God, an agent could not have a sincere understanding of and affection for virtue. It also has blinded mankind to its evil. When the self is adored and served as paramount, a person cannot form an accurate opinion about the justice of his or her own character, ideas, and ways. A love of self has inspired creatures to estimate their moral nature according to their own standards rather than by God’s moral law. And it not only made creatures hostile to their Creator but also to their neighbors. A person’s interests drives all of his or her actions, even if they appear benevolent and loving on the surface. If an agent’s motivation was not chiefly the love of God, his or her actions were not in agreement with real virtue.

Fuller understood innate depravity to entail the enslavement of all of mankind under the rule of sin. The human will held no power to reform wickedness because the corrupt will was the very thing that enslaved human beings to sin in the first place. Many Enlightenment thinkers lambasted the Calvinist doctrine of innate depravity because it diminished the moral agent’s freedom, but Fuller flipped the charge on its head: “moral slavery, any more than moral liberty, has nothing to do with free agency. The reason is, that, in this case, there is no force opposed to the agent’s own will.”⁴² Every human being was under the dominion of his or her most dominant inclinations. Thus, when an agent’s will rejected God’s moral law and inclined toward selfishness, the moral slavery involved was voluntary and

41. Fuller, *Dialogues and Letters Between Crispus and Gaius*, in *WAF*, 2:662. Emphasis original.

42. Fuller, *Dialogues and Letters Between Crispus and Gaius*, in *WAF*, 2:656.

self-imposed. No one could be virtuous because no one desired God, the standard and provider of virtue.

Mankind had rebelled against God because His moral character was “not suited to their inclinations.”⁴³ In the place of God, mankind fabricated objects of adoration that gratified their selfish inclinations: “If men be destitute of the love of God, it is natural to suppose they will endeavour to banish him from their thoughts...substituting gods more congenial with their inclinations.”⁴⁴ God’s holiness and righteousness did not appeal to the wicked. Human beings perceived God’s moral character as a threat to fulfilling their selfish desires, and as a result they projected their depraved inclinations on their self-made idols. “If we be enemies to moral excellence, God, as a holy Being, will possess no loveliness in our eyes,” Fuller wrote, and “the further his moral character is kept out of sight, the more agreeable it will be to us.”⁴⁵ All attempts to accommodate the moral character of God to man’s inclinations were rooted in contempt for moral goodness.

“Love of God Wrought in a Way of Righteousness”: Christ’s Moral Atonement

Fuller⁴⁶ regarded the doctrine of the cross as “the central point in which all the lines of evangelical truth meet and are united.”⁴⁷ Christ’s atonement held Fuller’s theology of virtue together, offering the single greatest demonstration of divine justice and goodness. His opponents could not have disagreed more: “The doctrine of atonement, as held by the Calvinists, is often represented by Dr. Priestley as detracting from the goodness of God, and as inconsistent with his natural placability. He seems always to consider this doctrine as originating in the want of love...as though God could not find in his heart to show mercy without a price being paid for it.”⁴⁸ Paine likewise disputed the morality of the atonement: “Moral justice cannot take the innocent for the guilty... To suppose justice to do this is

43. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness* in *WAF*, 2:10.

44. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness* in *WAF*, 2:65.

45. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:10.

46. Quote in subheading is from Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined*, in *WAF*, 2:154.

47. Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined*, in *WAF*, 2:182.

48. Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined*, in *WAF*, 2:154.

to destroy the principle of its existence.... It is no longer justice. It is indiscriminate revenge.”⁴⁹

These Enlightenment thinkers rejected the atonement on the basis of their beliefs about God and human nature. They represented mankind as inherently moral and God as placid and rational—therefore, God had no need to judge mankind or an innocent substitute in its place.

Fuller determined the morality of the atonement by a completely different anthropology and doctrine of God:

Those who embrace the Calvinistic system believe that man was originally created holy and happy; that of his own accord he departed from God, and became vile; that God, being in himself infinitely amiable, deserves to be, and is, the moral centre of the intelligent system; that rebellion against him is opposition to the general good; that, if suffered to operate according to its tendency, it would destroy the well-being of the universe, by excluding God, and righteousness, and peace, from the whole system; that seeing it aims destruction at universal good, and tends to universal anarchy and mischief, it is, in those respects, an infinite evil, and deserving of endless punishment; and that, in whatever instance God exercises forgiveness, it is not without respect to that public expression of his displeasure against it which was uttered in the death of his Son.⁵⁰

All of humanity voluntarily exchanged the love of God and virtue for their immoral passions. God as the sovereign judge of the universe and guardian of righteousness must execute justice on their evil rebellion. Without the cross, Fuller maintained, sinful mankind had no hope for virtue and thus no escape from God’s righteous judgment. Fuller’s aretogenic motive to defend and promote belief in Christ’s atonement was to restore sinners to the love of God and to offer mankind hope for righteousness and moral excellence. He passionately defended the doctrine of the cross because it summoned mankind to rely on God entirely for virtue.

In order to communicate the gravity and moral significance of the atonement, Fuller presented the doctrine in terms of a cosmic

49. Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason in Paine: Political Writings*, ed. Bruce Kuklick (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 285.

50. Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined*, in *WAF*, 2:116.

governmental drama.⁵¹ In *The Gospel Its Own Witness*, Fuller employed a governmental illustration to prove that the use of a mediator was consistent with sober reason. “Let us suppose,” Fuller wrote, “a division of the army of one of the wisest and best of kings...traitorously conspired against his crown and life.”⁵² The empire naturally expected the king to punish the traitors, but the king loved the men and desired to extend mercy. However, the king faced a dilemma as to how he could simultaneously show mercy and maintain moral justice: “‘To make light of the controversy,’ the king said to his friends, ‘would loosen the bands of good government.’”⁵³ The only solution was to find a mediator who met these unique qualifications: he could not have participated in the offence, he must be highly esteemed by both the king and the public, the degree of the mediation must amount to the weight of the crime, he must have compassion for the guilty, and he must have a close relationship with the king in order to fully display his determination to uphold morality in offering mercy.⁵⁴ After deliberating with his counselors as to whom in the kingdom could meet these qualifications, the king sought the advice of his son:

“My son!” said the benevolent sovereign, “what can be done in behalf of these unhappy men? To order them for execution violates every feeling of my heart; yet to pardon them is dangerous.

51. Among the most controversial aspects of Fuller’s theology is his appropriation of governmental language when describing the atonement. The Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) first articulated the governmental theory of the atonement, and many of Jonathan Edwards’s disciples who led the New Divinity Movement adopted it as a central aspect of their theology. Many have debated whether Edwards himself held the theory. Oliver Crisp demonstrates two key differences between Edwards Sr. and the New Divinity on the atonement that could also be said for Fuller. First, Edwards “conceives of the atonement as definite and limited in scope.” Second, “Edwards clearly endorses the doctrine of penal substitution,” an “idea that is abandoned by the representatives of the New Divinity.” Oliver D. Crisp, “The Moral Government of God: Jonathan Edwards and Joseph Bellamy on the Atonement,” in *After Jonathan Edwards: The Courses of New England Theology*, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Douglas A. Sweeney (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 84–85. For more on the subject, see Michael A. G. Haykin, “Particular Redemption in the Writings of Andrew Fuller,” in *The Gospel in the World*, vol. 1, *Studies in Baptist History and Thought*, ed. D. W. Bebbington (Carlisle, U.K.: Paternoster Press, 2002), 122–38.

52. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:76.

53. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:76.

54. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:76–77.

The army, and even the empire, would be under a strong temptation to think lightly of rebellion. If mercy be exercised, it must be through a mediator; and who is qualified to mediate in such a cause? And what expedient can be devised by means of which pardon shall not relax, but strengthen just authority?”⁵⁵

The prince responded, “I feel the insult offered to your person and government.... They have transgressed without cause, and deserve to die without mercy. Yet I also feel for them.... On me be this wrong!”⁵⁶ Motivated by love for the king, for the criminals, and for righteousness, the innocent prince volunteered to take the punishment on behalf of the guilty, “Inflict on me as much as is necessary to impress the army and nation with a just sense of the evil, and of the importance of good order and faithful allegiance.”⁵⁷ The king, full of sorrow and love for the prince yet satisfied at his courage, accepted the offer: “Go, my son, assume the likeness of a criminal, and suffer in their place!”⁵⁸

At first, the criminals remained incorrigible, resistant to the king’s extension of pardon and reconciliation. But the justness and grace of the king and the goodness of the prince ultimately won their allegiance: “The dignity of his character, together with his surprising condescension and goodness, impresses us more than anything else, and fills our hearts with penitence, confidence, and love...we are utterly unworthy.”⁵⁹ The criminals enjoyed a new devotion and affection for the king because they recognized their complete unworthiness of his love. Even more, they honored the king because even though he loved and pardoned the guilty, he did not compromise his justice. The mediation of the prince alone made this reconciliation possible: it manifested the king’s love, satisfied his justice, and restored rebels to righteousness.

The main goal of this illustration was to highlight the importance of Christ’s atonement for maintaining moral order. In upholding the righteousness of God, the atonement caused justice to triumph over evil. It counteracted the forces of the wicked to undermine the moral

55. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:77.

56. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:77.

57. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:77.

58. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:77.

59. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:79.

system by bearing the guilt of the world. It was designed to advance the well-being of the whole and the good of the public by promoting love, reconciliation, and moral justice. The atonement thus displayed “*the love of God wrought in a way of righteousness*.”⁶⁰ It was God’s “appointed medium” to pour “forth all the fullness of his heart.”⁶¹ For Fuller, God did not need the atonement in order to love sinners. Rather, He required a sacrifice for sins due to His goodness—it was necessary in order to preserve the equity of moral government: “receiving them to favour without some public expression of displeasure against their sin would have been a dishonour to his government” and to the moral order of the universe.⁶² As the moral governor, God could not compromise His righteousness when extending His love to sinful creatures: “The incapacity of God to show mercy without an atonement, is no other than that of a righteous governor, who, whatever good-will he may bear to an offender, cannot admit the thought of passing by the offence, without some public expression of his displeasure against it; that, while mercy triumphs, it may not be at the expense of law and equity, and of the general good.”⁶³

Contrary to the objections of Paine and Priestley, belief in the atonement was not inconsistent with the love of God. Fuller affirmed that love and justice must co-exist, and he charged his opponents with sacrificing the goodness of God at the expense of His love in abandoning the atonement.

Moreover, Fuller stressed that Christ’s atonement satisfied moral rather than commercial justice.⁶⁴ He believed that Paine had misrepresented the morality of the atonement by claiming that it had “for its basis an idea of pecuniary justice, and not that of moral justice.”⁶⁵ Paine reasoned thus: “If I owe a person money, and cannot pay him, and he threatens to put me into prison, another person can take the

60. Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined*, in *WAF*, 2:154. Emphasis original.

61. Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined*, in *WAF*, 2:154.

62. Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined*, in *WAF*, 2:155.

63. Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined*, in *WAF*, 2:154.

64. Fuller initially expressed this position in *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*: “the atonement of Christ” proceeded “not on the principle of commercial, but of moral justice, or justice as it relates to crime.” Fuller, *Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, in *WAF*, 2:373.

65. Paine, *Age of Reason*, 285.

debt upon himself...but if I have committed a crime, every circumstance of the case is changed.”⁶⁶ In reply, Fuller explained that when Scripture described sin as a debt, it referred to what the sinner owed God by way of moral duty—not a commercial payment. Since every agent owed moral obedience to the supreme moral governor, humanity’s disobedience and sin created its moral debt. Thus, sinners did not require an economic payment in order to satisfy the governor but a moral reckoning: “As sin is not a pecuniary, but a moral debt, so the atonement for it is not pecuniary, but a moral ransom.”⁶⁷ Fuller thought that the governmental analogy better elucidated the moral nature of the sinners’ debt and Christ’s atonement than the commercial imagery. The prince’s death was not a commercial transaction but a moral redemption. By taking the punishment for the rebels’ moral disobedience in their stead, he atoned for their moral debt and satisfied the king’s “moral justice.”⁶⁸

Whether one rendered the atonement on the basis of pecuniary or moral justice was important to moral order, Fuller argued. The moral atonement maintained the justice of God in extending mercy to the guilty. According to Fuller, a commercial payment downplayed the personal dimension of both the offence and the mercy in the pardon: “Redemption by Jesus Christ was accomplished, not by a satisfaction that should preclude the exercise of grace in forgiveness, but in which, the displeasure of God against sin being manifested, mercy to the sinner might be exercised without any suspicion of his having relinquished his regards for righteousness.”⁶⁹ A commercial atonement “excludes the idea of *free* pardon on the part of the creditor, and admits of a *claim* on the part of the debtor,” but “it is otherwise in relation to crimes.”⁷⁰ Fuller insisted on expressing the atonement in moral rather than commercial terms because it held greater aretogenic weight—it called criminals to not “come before him as claimants, but as supplicants, imploring mercy in the mediator’s name.”⁷¹ The moral nature of the atonement emphasized the evilness of the debt and the judiciousness of the pardon. The goodness,

66. Paine, *Age of Reason*, 285.

67. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:80.

68. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:81.

69. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:82.

70. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:81.

71. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:82.

equity, and grace of the moral atonement were ultimately what stirred the criminals to renounce evil and love the king: “Divine love is the cause, the first cause of our salvation, and of the death of Christ, to that end.”⁷²

Fuller also contended that the divine character of Christ was essential to the success of His moral atonement. “Let it be inquired,” said Fuller, “whether this great end of moral government could have been answered by the sufferings of a mere creature.”⁷³ In Fuller’s moral cosmology, no upright human being could satisfy God’s moral displeasure against a world of criminals, for “an atonement must be of so much account in the scale of being as to attract the general attention.”⁷⁴ Christ’s divine nature uniquely qualified Him to effect atonement for the guilty, for He occupied the same space of being as the Father. Contrary to his opponents, Fuller deemed belief in the deity of Christ as necessary for morality. Mankind had the moral duty to love and worship Christ because He possessed all the same divine natural and moral perfections as the Father:

Further, it ought to be considered that, in worshipping the Son of God, we worship him not on account of that wherein he differs from the Father, but on account of those perfections which we believe him to possess in common with him. This, with the consideration that we worship him not to the exclusion of the Father, any more than the Father to the exclusion of him, but as one with him, removes all apprehensions from our minds that, in ascribing glory to the one, we detract from that of the other.⁷⁵

Since the Son partook in the divine nature, no mortal could question the equity of His satisfaction of the Father’s justice. As Fuller reasoned, “the satisfaction of justice in all cases of offence requires” a punishment “equal to what the nature of the offence is in reality.”⁷⁶ If any other creature could have “satisfied justice,” or if “any gift from the Divine Father, short of that of his only begotten Son, would have answered the great purposes of moral government,” then “there is no reason to think that he could have made him a sacrifice, but would have spared

72. Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined*, in *WAF*, 2:154.

73. Fuller, *The Deity of Christ Essential to Atonement*, in *WAF*, 3:694.

74. Fuller, *The Deity of Christ Essential to Atonement*, in *WAF*, 3:694.

75. Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined*, in *WAF*, 2:161.

76. Fuller, *The Deity of Christ Essential to Atonement*, in *WAF*, 3:694.

him, and not freely have ‘delivered him up for us all.’”⁷⁷ In order to attract attention to the Father’s display of His justice and love, the Son of God Himself had to become a creature and rectify the moral order. Thus, belief in the deity of Christ was critical to moral virtue.

The doctrine of the atonement instructed mankind in justice, grace, love, and humility. According to Fuller, the world rejected the atonement because it questioned human ability to achieve virtue. It especially challenged human pride to rely on a mediator for goodness:

It is far less humbling for an offender to be pardoned at his own request than through the interposition of a third person; for, in the one case, he may be led to think that it was his virtue and penitence which influenced the decision; whereas, in the other, he is compelled to feel his own unworthiness: and this may be one reason why the mediation of Christ is so offensive. It is no wonder, indeed, that those who deny humility to be a virtue should be disgusted with a doctrine the professed object of which is to abase the pride of man.⁷⁸

Fuller regarded humility as essential to virtue. Criminals have no moral ability to redeem themselves; everyone was enslaved to their immoral inclinations and had no personal righteousness to rest on. Belief in the atonement summoned moral agents to humble themselves, renounce their self-love, admit their guilt, and depend on Christ for morality.

In sum, belief in the gospel alone made virtue possible: “The only method by which the rewards of the gospel are attainable, faith in Christ, secures the exercise of disinterested and enlarged virtue.”⁷⁹ Its doctrines enjoined repentance from moral evil and faith in Christ for righteousness. Fuller defined repentance as “a change of mind. It arises from a conviction that we have been in the wrong; and consists in holy shame, grief,” and “a determination to forsake every evil way.”⁸⁰ Repentance from sin and reliance on Christ’s moral atonement thus restored guilty criminals to the love of God and the imitation of His good character.

77. Fuller, *The Deity of Christ Essential to Atonement*, in *WAF*, 3:695. He cited Rom. 8:32.

78. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:74–75.

79. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:82.

80. Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined*, in *WAF*, 2:116.

“The Grand Lesson Which They Teach is Love”: The Moral Wisdom of the Scriptures

Fuller defended the verity of Scripture against Paine and other Enlightenment thinkers influenced by Deism because he believed that its salutary precepts and instructions were vital for understanding and practicing true virtue.⁸¹ Paine regarded the Scriptures as historically false, contradictory, fraught with immoral principles, and inherently discriminatory since all of humanity did not have equal access to them. He argued that nature was sufficient to teach rational mankind morality, equity, and freedom. Fuller countered that while nature had the capacity to reveal humanity’s injustices and rebellion, it could not “recover them from it.”⁸² Mankind needed divine revelation to correct their depraved notions of good and evil and lead them in moral wisdom.

Hence, Fuller argued for the veracity of Scripture on the basis of its intrinsic goodness. He wrote, “it is not on the natural, but the moral, or rather the holy beauties of Scripture that I would lay the principal stress.”⁸³ Since the Scripture originated from God, its design, intentions, and expressions were not only factual but also good: “A divinely-inspired production will not only be free from such blemishes as arise from vanity, and other evil dispositions of the mind, but will abound in those beauties which never fail to attend the genuine exercises of modesty, sensibility, and godly simplicity.”⁸⁴ The Scripture was uncorrupted from human error and selfish interest. Therefore, it alone could serve as humanity’s pure and righteous mentor in moral reformation.

The main aretegenic import of the Scriptures rested in their instruction to love and worship God supremely: “The grand lesson which they teach is love; and love to God delights to express itself in acts of obedience, adoration, supplication, and praise.”⁸⁵ God’s Word not only guided readers in how to love God but it also motivated obedience and devotion: “The Scriptures...both inculcate and inspire the worship of God.”⁸⁶ A love for God and virtue was

81. Quote from Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:12.

82. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:19.

83. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:68.

84. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:64.

85. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:12.

86. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:11.

inextricably connected to an attachment to the revelation of God: “The words of Scripture are spirit and life. They are the language of love. Every exhortation of Christ and his apostles is impregnated with this spirit.”⁸⁷ Love was the very essence of Scripture’s communication. Thus, without love for Scripture, one had no life in God and no love for virtue. Fuller stressed that the desire to love and worship God and cherish virtue was not natural to human beings; creatures needed the direction and appeal that Scripture alone provided. The Bible unfolded the good character of God by highlighting His moral attributes and recording His righteous acts. It made humanity aware of the moral law to love God and their neighbor. By discovering God in the Scriptures and contemplating its exhortations to imitate Him, readers learned love and moral excellence.

Scripture also uniquely exposed the wickedness of the human heart. Fuller likened it to a “mirror” that unveiled the inward person of “individual characters” as well as “the state of things as they move on in the great world.”⁸⁸ As Fuller elaborated,

Far from flattering the vices of mankind, it charges, without ceremony, every son of Adam with possessing the heart of an apostate. This charge it brings home to the conscience, not only by its pure precepts, and awful threatenings, but oftentimes by the very invitations and promises of mercy, which, while they cheer the heart with lively hope, carry conviction by their import to the very soul. In reading other books you may admire the ingenuity of the writer; but here your attention is turned inward. Read it but seriously, and your heart will answer to its descriptions.⁸⁹

Most literature, Fuller perceived, gratified mankind’s lust, pride, arrogance, and vanity. In contrast, the Scripture summoned its readers to forsake those inclinations and find happiness in knowing God.

In contrast to all human creations, the divinely inspired Scripture had the power to speak to the heart and transform the inward person:

It is a distinguishing property of the Bible, that all its precepts aim directly at the heart. It never goes about to form the mere exterior of man. To merely external duties it is a stranger. It

87. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:21.

88. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:64.

89. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:63.

forms the lives of men no otherwise than by forming their dispositions. It never addresses itself to their vanity, selfishness, or any other corrupt propensity. You are not pressed to consider what men will think of you, or how it will affect your temporal interest; but what is right, and what is necessary to your eternal well-being.⁹⁰

Many Enlightenment thinkers promoted social progress and advancement in morality through the medium of education, but Fuller—who was no enemy to education—judged its usefulness for morality limited and temporary at best. In contrast, Scripture “will bring conviction to your bosom.”⁹¹ It penetrated the reader’s deepest passions, seeking to refine men and women’s moral conduct by enabling their hearts and minds to love God’s moral purity.

Fuller questioned the utility of philosophy to profit the morals of men and women: “philosophy is little in comparison with Christianity.”⁹² A philosophical system that attempted to ascertain truth and ethics without God had no hope of leading men and women to the source of goodness. “Philosophy may expand our ideas of creation,” but “it neither inspires a love to the moral character of the Creator, nor a well-grounded hope of eternal life.”⁹³ In contrast, divine revelation offered “the only medium” to know and love virtue; it positioned readers “on nature’s Alps,” where “we discover things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and of which it never hath entered the heart of man to conceive.”⁹⁴

Conclusion

Fuller judged that the aretogenic value of the gospel lay in its invitation to rely solely on God for virtue. The character of God provided the source and standard of goodness, and thus knowing and loving Him was the vehicle to knowing and loving virtue. In loving God supremely rather than the self, men and women learned to love their neighbor and treat others with dignity—fulfilling the moral law. A Calvinist understanding of human nature was salutary even though

90. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:15.

91. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:64.

92. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:97.

93. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:97.

94. Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *WAF*, 2:97.

it could appear quite negative. It humbled men and women to admit their moral inability to achieve virtue, calling them to forsake their evil and turn to righteousness. The moral atonement of Christ furnished mankind with hope for pardon for their sins. It maintained moral order and displayed to creation God’s justice and His merciful love for criminals. Christ’s divine nature was essential to the success of the atonement—it made Him distinctly qualified to satisfy God’s justice and draw creation’s attention to the gravity of God’s willingness to love sinners. The moral law entailed a love of Christ for all of His divine natural and moral perfections—virtue was impossible without it. Faith in Christ’s deity and moral atonement was vital to entering into a life of knowing, loving, and imitating God. Humanity’s conflicting moral inclinations necessitated reliance on divine instruction to know true virtue. Scripture not only taught mankind about God’s character and the gospel but it also held power to pierce and mold the hearts of men and women. Scripture produced moral fruits in the lives of its adherents, testifying to its goodness and veracity.

Fuller challenged the proponents of the new moral philosophy that it was deeply unwise to exclude God from morality. Every doctrine of the gospel proved salutary to the lives of believers, rousing a love for God that pervaded the agent’s entire being:

It might fairly be argued, in favour of the tendency of Calvinistic doctrines to promote the love of God, that, upon those principles, we have more to love him for than upon the other. On this system, we have much to be forgiven; and, therefore, love much. The expense at which our salvation has been obtained, as we believe, furnishes us with a motive of love to which nothing can be compared.⁹⁵

95. Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined*, in *WAF*, 2:116.

Experiential Theology



Experiencing Our Only Comfort: A Post-Reformation Refocus in the Heidelberg Catechism¹

JAN VAN VLIET



Last year marked the 450th anniversary of the publication of the Heidelberg Catechism. In celebration of this momentous occasion and as a reminder of the contemporary applicability of this highly-regarded confessional document, this essay examines the earliest and most complete Puritan commentary extant: that of second-generation Puritan thinker William Ames (1576–1633), protégé of William Perkins (1558–1602), the “father” of the Puritan movement. We examine methodological considerations and two topical issues that arise when the venerated Catechism is placed in the hands of a practically oriented, post-Reformation divine for whom theology was none other than “living to God”: *Theologia est doctrina deo vivendi*.² It will become evident that this package of catechetical instruction carries as much—perhaps more—practical relevance today as when it was first authored four and a half centuries ago.

1. This essay is an edited and abbreviated version of chapter 7 in *The Rise of Reformed System: The Intellectual Heritage of William Ames*, Studies in Christian History and Thought (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2013), 129–61. Used with permission.

2. Guilielmus Amesius, *Medulla Theologiae, ex sacris literis, earumque interpretibus ex-tracta, & methodice disposita* (Amstelodami: Joannem Janssonium, 1623 (fragments), 1627), 1.1.1. The first English language version appeared as *The Marrow of Sacred Divinity, Drawne out of the holy Scriptures, and the Interpreters thereof, and brought into Method* (London: Edward Griffin for John Rothwell, 1642). A more readable version appeared in the second half of the twentieth century as *The Marrow of Theology*, translated from the 3rd Latin ed., 1629, edited and with an introduction by John D. Eusden (Boston-Philadelphia: Pilgrim, 1968; reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997). In this essay I cite the Eusden edition by book, chapter, and section.

William Ames's Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism: Methodological Considerations

In 1635, William Ames's catechetical teaching entitled *Christianæ Catecheseos Sciagraphia* came off the press. This posthumously published work was released in English in 1659 and entitled *The Substance of Christian Religion: Or, a plaine and easie Draught of the Christian Catechisme in LII Lectures, on Chosen Texts of Scripture, for each Lords-day of the Year, Learnedly and Perspicuously Illustrated with Doctrines, Reasons and Uses*.³ This lengthy title underscores both close similarities and differences in method, emphasis, and content with the model from Heidelberg upon which his exposition is based.

According to the author introducing the work, Ames "takes up an especially appropriate text from the word of God, breaks it apart and explains it succinctly, draws out lessons containing the catechetical doctrine, and finally applies them to their use."⁴ With Ursinus, Ames judged the teaching of the substance of Christianity to be presented most effectively in Sunday preaching over the course of the year. Ames's topical choice is also borrowed from his Reformed predecessors: there is one-to-one topical correspondence between each of Ames's fifty-two Lord's Days and those of the Heidelberg Catechism.

It is in the method that the differences are most notable. First is the absence of the unifying topical structure which gives the Heidelberg Catechism its characteristic designation as a manual of instruction for teaching the "three-fold" or "triple" knowledge. Ames certainly teaches of misery, deliverance, and thankfulness, but he ignores the way in which this thematic connection is brought forward in the

3. Guilielmus Amesius, *Christianæ Catecheseos Sciagraphia* (Franekeræ: Bernardum A. Berentsma, 1635). The 1635 posthumous publication was most likely the work of Hugh Peter, Ames's friend in Rotterdam. The first English language version came from London as *The Substance of Christian Religion: Or, a plaine and easie Draught of the Christian Catechisme, in LII Lectures, on Chosen Texts of Scripture, for each Lords-day of the Year, Learnedly and Perspicuously Illustrated with Doctrines, Reasons and Uses* (London: T. Mabb for Thomas Davies, 1659; Ann Arbor: University Microfilms); hereafter, *Catechisme* (Mabb ed.) A much more readable version is found in *A Sketch of the Christian's Catechism: William Ames (1576–1633)*, Todd M. Rester, trans., Joel R. Beeke, ed. (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2008). I am largely making use of this text; occasionally I cite the 1659 Mabb edition.

4. Ames, "To the kind and fair reader," *Catechisme*, 3; in citing this work, I use the designation *Catechisme* to eliminate confusion with the more conventional reference to the Heidelberg Catechism.

Heidelberg Catechism through its employment of the triple-headed motif. Second, the pedagogical sub-structure along which these two instruction manuals are organized can also be distinguished. Following true scholastic form, Ursinus's Heidelberg Catechism moves systematically forward in *quaestio* format.⁵ By contrast, Ames's *Catechisme* is in lecture form, "designed," after all, "for the use of his students...dictated...at their request."⁶ Ames self-consciously distances himself from the *quaestio* method employed in Ursinus's own commentary as well. This *Commentary* commences with the opening question and answer and provides very detailed expositions which occasionally lead to further questions of a polemical nature. Ursinus's entire work attests to his mastery of the Reformed doctrines of the day.

Ames is more exegetical in his approach, introducing with each Lord's Day topic a brief exposition of a leading scriptural passage taken from the Heidelberg Catechism's own proof-texting apparatus.⁷ This leads to a theological explanation in the form of "Doctrines" or "Lessons," each of which is applied very practically. These uses vary. They could be informational, instructional, or directional; some lend themselves more readily to the preacher for "exhortation," or even "admonition" and "reproof." Others invite polemic use to refute and thus reform the enemies of the orthodox Reformed faith, chiefly the "Arminians" and "Papists." Warnings of condemnation follow stern rebuke. While the biblical teaching can serve to the "humiliation" of believers and non-believers, the encouraging theme of comfort and consolation makes frequent appearances. The reader is reminded of the pastoral dimension of Ames, first introduced in his ethical teaching and most characteristic of the soul doctors who graced ecclesiastical life in the early modern Dutch Republic. Occasionally, and true to the emphasis of this work as a guide for ministers of the gospel,

5. From this point forward I refer to Ursinus rather than Ursinus and Olevianus because I will be referring to Ursinus's own commentary. I am using a number of versions for this comparison, but the chief one is *The Commentary of Dr. Zacharias Ursinus on the Heidelberg Catechism*, G. W. Williard, trans. (Columbus: Scott and Bascom, 1852; reprint ed., Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1985); hereafter Ursinus, *Commentary*.

6. Ames, "To the kind and fair reader," *Catechisme*, 3.

7. Proof-texts were a later addition to the Heidelberg Catechism. W. Verboom notes that the first edition had marginally noted scripture chapters only. *De Theologie van de Heidelbergse Catechismus. Twaalf Themata: De Context en de Latere Uitwerking* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 1996), 17.

Ames provides “special admonition to ministers of the Word.” Randomly scattered throughout this prescribed format Ames raises sets of objections and questions on the more controversial topics such as the Reformed teaching of paedo-baptism (Lord’s Day 27) and the use of the Law (Lord’s Day 2). Finally, being more laconic than Ursinus (except when it came to his teaching on the Sabbath), Ames combines some Lord’s Days based on topical similarity.

Consider briefly his teaching on the topic of the Lord’s Supper. This article of faith was highly controversial in the theological and ecclesiological climate of the day and therefore presents itself as a good subject for examination of Reformed expositors. In the Heidelberg Catechism, this topic runs for three Lord’s Days (28–30) and eight questions and answers (75–82), comprising about ten per cent of Ursinus’s entire catechetical commentary as compared to less than five per cent of Ames’s *Catechisme*. Throughout Ursinus’s long description of the doctrine of communion, he addresses questions regarding this sacrament’s essence and design, its distinction from baptism, its verbatim meaning, its Roman Catholic counterpart, its lawful and unlawful use, its institution, and its recipients. The nature of the nine introductory questions gives him occasion to fully address the error of the celebration of the mass, of transubstantiation and of consubstantiation, as well as of the teaching of the Sacramentarians. He draws on arguments from the analogy of faith as expressed in Christ’s human nature, and parallel passages of Scripture and church tradition in order to advance the Reformed understanding of Jesus’ words as He instituted this sacrament. Ursinus brings in the Church Fathers, quoting from Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Cyprian, Basil, Hilary, Gregory Nazianzus, Ambrose, Chrysostom, Theodoret and, most liberally, Augustine. Ursinus’s anti-papal corrective runs almost thirty pages, forty-five per cent of the total allotment for this particular topic covered in the three Lord’s Days mentioned above. As much of his exposition on the Lord’s Supper is devoted to refuting the errors of the papists as it is to positive instruction. In the last few pages, he demonstrates the supercessionist nature of the Lord’s Supper over the Jewish Passover.⁸

The penetrating and exhaustive nature of Ursinus’s commentary is in marked contrast to the more “prudent” method of William

8. Ursinus, *Commentary*, 377–440.

Ames, which is a more accessible teaching instrument for preachers asked to provide practical guidance. We see the classic Puritan homiletical method at work: text, doctrine, and use. Ames's *Catechisme* is one of the earliest teaching documents in which this "plain style" pattern is clearly employed and illustrated, a style introduced by William Perkins.⁹ The textual exposition often includes brief contextual highlights, the doctrinal lecture is expositional and apologetic in nature, and the applicatory emphasis is meant to ensure that preachers of God's Word exhort their congregations to be not only hearers but also doers. "The receiving of the word consists of two parts: attention of mind and intention of will."¹⁰ Under Ames's guiding hand, the Heidelberg Catechism is enlarged from being primarily an exhaustive manual of instruction in the Reformed faith to now serving as a manual for pulpit use. Preachers need to be concise and practical in their orientation, clearly enunciating the use to which each doctrine must be put.

9. For the earliest and best illustration of this "plain style" model, see William Perkins, *The Art of Prophesying with The Calling of the Ministry*, with a foreword by Sinclair B. Ferguson (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1996). This combines the following two volumes: *The Art of Prophesying* (first published as *Prophetica, sive de sacra et unica ratione concionandi* [Cambridge, 1592] and translated into English as *The Arte of Prophecyng, or, A Treatise concerning the sacred and onely true manner and methode of Preaching* [Cambridge, 1606]), and *The Calling of the Ministry*, 1605. Ferguson summarizes: "The form of the plain style was as follows: the preaching portion, be it text or passage, was explained in its context; the doctrine, or central teaching of the passage was expounded clearly and concisely; and then careful application to the hearers followed in further explanation of the 'uses'" (*The Art of Prophesying*, ix). In *The Art of Prophecyng*, Perkins adheres very closely to the Ramist method of exposition and logic. In the introduction to his translation and commentary on William Ames's philosophical work, Lee W. Gibbs notes that Perkins's "one fully Ramistic work" was written when Perkins was a fellow at Christ's College, Cambridge, a position he held for eleven years. Gibbs observes that Perkins "is probably the first Englishman to have written on preaching within the framework of Ramist philosophy" (William Ames, *Technometry*, Lee W. Gibbs, trans. and ed., Haney Foundation Series of the University of Pennsylvania, vol. 24 [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1979], 27; first published as *Technometria, Omnium & singularum Artium fines adaequatè circumscribens* [London: Milo Flesher, 1633] and itself part of a six-piece work published posthumously (1643) as one volume, [*Philosophemata*], *Technometry*, 27). See also Joseph A. Pipa, Jr., "William Perkins and the Development of Puritan Preaching," (Ph.D. diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1985).

10. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.8.7. Lisa M. Gordis provides a highly readable and luminous study on the Puritan use of Scripture and style of preaching in *Opening Scripture: Bible Reading and Interpretive Authority in Puritan New England* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2003).

Topical Examination of the Heidelberg Catechism, Ursinus's *Commentary*, and Ames's *Catechisme*

On Comfort: Lord's Day 1

Ames's commentary on the opening theme of the Heidelberg Catechism is his longest chapter, comprising almost four per cent of his entire *Catechisme*, in contrast to the brevity of Ursinus who devotes less than one per cent of his *Commentary* to this topic. This fact alone invites close comparison.

By way of quick review, Q&A 1 teaches that one's only comfort in life and death resides in Christ and His redeeming, preserving grace. The answer is highly personal, warmly engaging the catechumens with the comfort found in the spiritual felicity granted by the Savior. Although the comfort in view is meant to refer to this-worldly concerns as well, the emphasis is clearly on spiritual deliverance and the assurance of future hope that being found in Jesus Christ yields.

Ursinus begins by noting that comfort "results from a certain process of reasoning, in which we oppose something good to something evil, that by a proper consideration of this good, we may mitigate our grief, and patiently endure the evil."¹¹ Only the "highest good" is sufficient to oppose the evil spoken of, the greatest of which is "sin and death." This highest good is represented by different entities in the variety of philosophical systems Ursinus enumerates as having currency during the sixteenth century. However, it is found in none of these systems. Rather, it is only in the "doctrine of the church" that such a good resides and "imparts a comfort that quiets and satisfies the conscience." Human misery and deliverance through Christ are found in the church's teaching.

This, therefore, is that christian comfort, spoken of in this question of the catechism, which is an only and solid comfort, both in life and death—a comfort consisting in the assurance of the free remission of sin, and of reconciliation with God, by and on account of Christ, and a certain expectation of eternal life, impressed upon the heart by the holy Spirit through the gospel, so that we have no doubt but that we are the property of Christ, and are beloved of God for his sake, and saved forever, according to the declaration of the Apostle Paul: "Who shall separate

11. Ursinus, *Commentary*, 17–18.

us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress,” &c.
(Rom. 8. 35.)¹²

The nature of this comfort is reconciliation with God through Christ’s blood. It brings deliverance from the miseries of sin and death, preservation of this reconciliation, and all other benefits Christ purchased for us to turn our evil into good and for “our full persuasion and assurance of all these great benefits, and of eternal life.” In fact, the only place where the comfort of which Ursinus speaks might be interpreted to apply directly to this present life is in his paragraph on the necessity of this comfort, which is twofold: “on account of our salvation” and “on account of praising and glorifying God.” For, after all, “the substance of our comfort, therefore, is briefly this:—That we are Christ’s, and through him reconciled to the Father, that we may be beloved of him and saved, the Holy Ghost and eternal life being given unto us.”¹³

This comfort is “solid” because it is unailing and unshaken. The Christian is empowered to withstand the various assaults of Satan by pointing to Christ’s satisfaction, reconciliation, redemption, preservation, perseverance on the “long and difficult” spiritual pilgrimage, and assurance of the Holy Spirit’s reassuring presence in times of doubting faith and weakness. He summarizes: “In this most severe and dangerous conflict, which all the children of God experience, christian consolation remains immoveable, and at length concludes: therefore Christ, with all his benefits, pertains even to me.”¹⁴

In answer to Q&A 2 (also Lord’s Day 1), Ursinus teaches that a knowledge of one’s misery is necessary to awaken a desire for deliverance (as sickness awakens a desire for medicine), to motivate to thankfulness, and to enable profitable hearing of the law and gospel. Knowledge of the deliverance through Jesus Christ saves from despair, awakens desire, provides comfort, prevents human substitutes in place of Christ’s redemption, enables faith (for “faith cannot be without knowledge”), and engenders gratitude.¹⁵

Finally, knowledge of gratitude is necessary to one’s comfort because, firstly, God will “grant deliverance only to the thankful.”

12. Ursinus, *Commentary*, 18.

13. Ursinus, *Commentary*, 19–20.

14. Ursinus, *Commentary*, 20.

15. Ursinus, *Commentary*, 21–22.

Secondly, gratitude acceptable to God must be properly exercised according to the rule of His Word. Thirdly, in gratitude we acknowledge the non-meritorious nature of our service to God and neighbor, while, finally, expressions of gratitude work to increase our faith and comfort.¹⁶

A study of the remainder of the Catechism will unfold this almost exclusively soteriological dimension. The spiritual overtones of the primary theme upon which the entire Catechism is constructed call to mind W. Verboom's judgment that the Heidelberg Catechism is soteriological, theological, and experiential, and that, as demonstrated in the pervasive theme of the appropriation of knowledge that yields comfort, it is a document that challenges both the head and the heart.¹⁷

Practical theologian William Ames commences with Psalm 4 as opening text: "The aim of this Psalm is to teach us, by the example of David, how we ought to conduct ourselves when we are whirled into great dangers." Theology is the teaching of living to God. Ames, the logician, is quick to employ Peter Ramus's system. Through a system of dichotomies, Ames asserts that, in this psalm, David accomplishes two things: he prays for deliverance from imminent danger and he shows the encouragement offered his soul through this prayer. David demonstrates that his highest good (*summum bonum*, nomenclature also used by Ursinus) is found in divine favor. This felicity brings a joy far surpassing that of any earthly goods as recipients of such favor are delivered from fear and given to bask in security and safety. And "good" is understood as all that appears delightful, useful, pleasing, or any other thing that seems desirable." Because David's consolation in affliction and life was this *summum bonum*, so must it be for us.¹⁸ Ames continues:

Moreover, "highest good" is specifically understood as that in which our blessedness consists. In this blessedness is contained the confluence of all desirable goods. Moreover, the highest good is called a "consolation," just as it is in the Catechism, since it is like a uniting (consolidation) of the soul and a confirmation

16. Ursinus, *Commentary*, 22.

17. Verboom, *Heidelbergse Catechismus*, 19–24.

18. Ames, *Catechisme*, 5–6.

against griefs, sorrows, or opposing terrors. A proper consolation is a mitigation of griefs, sorrows, and fears.¹⁹

Ames methodically elaborates on this chief good. He explains its teleological nature, the careless risk and cost of ignoring it in favor of this life's "trifles," its governance over and proper grounding of all our actions, and its inherent dignity and excellence. Finally, this doctrine should reprove and refute the irrational and unchristian disregard of those who ignore such chief good since they do so at their own peril.²⁰

From verse 6 of the psalm Ames draws his second doctrinal lesson: that man's felicity is not found in the here and now in material wealth, sensual delight, or reputation. Since such worldly goods are fleeting, often bringing sin and misery with them, and are held in common with the beasts which are incapable of the "capacity for blessedness," the soul and spirit are not perfected by this type of good. In fact, disregard for such worldly wealth is a virtue, a mark of spiritual maturity. This teaching is to be used for reproof towards those in pursuit of blessedness through such external possessions.²¹

Ames finally comes to the heart of the psalm's teaching: it is covenantal. "Our true and highest good consists in the union and communion we have with God." This is "deduced" from verse 6b: "LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us." "God Himself," asserts Ames, "is the true and highest good," both practically and objectively because God is the instrument of that blessing, both in its communication and as its appropriation. In this Scripture, God identifies Himself as the God of the covenant (Yahweh); thus, this communion is true to the covenant axiom: "I will be your God; I will be your ample reward."²² He explains:

[O]ur communion with God is our formal blessedness and is commonly called the *vision of God* and the *beatific vision*. Now to "see God," in the phrasing of Scripture, does not signify either the sight of the eyes or the mere speculation of the intellect, but every sort of enjoyment of God, inasmuch as it causes our blessedness. Moreover, we arrive at this enjoyment or communion

19. Ames, *Catechisme*, 6. Again, notice the remarkable similarity in language between Ames and Ursinus at this point; cf. Ursinus, *Commentary*, 17–18.

20. Ames, *Catechisme*, 6–7.

21. Ames, *Catechisme*, 7.

22. Ames, *Catechisme*, 8.

through Jesus Christ our Lord, and it is precisely this consolation that the Catechism appropriately says is caused by Christ. Everything we receive that pertains to our blessedness refers back to Christ.²³

Fully halfway through this, his longest Lord's Day, Ames finally explains (if ever so briefly) that this chief good and consolation is attained through Jesus Christ. But then, Ames the philosopher is again quick to leave Christ and move directly to the reasons for having God as chief good, supplemented by texts from the Old Testament (Psalms and Isaiah). These reasons focus on the peace that communion with God yields; that God is the first and efficient cause of all things, as well as the end, and therefore in Him alone can be found the goal and perfection of life; that God alone is independent and therefore trust in Him is certain; that He represents the only infinite good since only He can be imparted to all; and that only God is free of any hint of imperfection. There is no further elaboration on Jesus Christ as chief good. The value of this teaching lies in its motivating power to seek God as chief good, and its encouraging tone in reinforcing the blessedness of those in Christ despite life's setbacks.²⁴

The doctrinal teaching of Lesson 4 expands on the all-surpassing "sweetness" of communion with God, the highest good, contrasting it with the fleeting, false, and counterfeit joys of the world that are often overcome by affliction and "suffocating vexations of conscience." True spiritual joy and its consoling power overcome the whole person—body, soul, and spirit—and is eternal. Armed with Acts 5:41 and James 1:2, Ames asserts that, as counter-intuitive as it may seem, worldly affliction often gives cause for rejoicing. The reader is thus warned against the deceptive power of material delights and the duplicity of the ungodly who promote such delight in opposition to piety. The faithful are encouraged to "eagerly contend" for this joy, overcoming impediments through ongoing repentance and amendment of life. The spiritual discipline of uninterrupted fellowship with God is strongly encouraged as the thankful believer meditates on the gift of God's promises and blessings given in Christ Jesus.²⁵

23. Ames, *Catechisme*, 8.

24. Ames, *Catechisme*, 8–9.

25. Ames, *Catechisme*, 9–11.

Ames's commentary on this Lord's Day closes on the strong note of assurance found in the final passage of the psalm: "This joy and holy consolation convey a certain security to the consciences of the faithful." This assurance contrasts with worldly security because it is grounded in God's protecting presence and immutability, features obtained through the means of grace including God's Word—both read and preached—and prayer. Again, in contradistinction from the security of the world based on "vain imagination" and human traditions, only this authentic assurance will deliver from all anxieties and discouragement.²⁶

The key similarities and differences between Ursinus and Ames on the Heidelberg Catechism's introductory chapter can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Both emphasize intellectual apprehension of the Christian faith in attaining comfort. The experiential dimension is somewhat attenuated.
- 2) In this rational process, the philosophical concept of *summum bonum*—the "chief good" or "highest good"—is introduced by Ursinus to demonstrate the remedy for sin and to explain the failure of all competing philosophies as solutions, including the doctrine of the Church of Rome. Sin is overcome only through the *summum bonum*—reconciliation with God through Christ. William Ames more loosely follows Ursinus's reasoning at this point. He is certainly more loathe to let go of the designation "chief good" and his focus is primarily philosophical and practical. The concept regularly reappears throughout his *Catechisme*. Fully halfway through his exposition of Psalm 4 Ames underscores the consoling function of Jesus Christ as the means to that chief good. Although no full scale Christology and soteriology is expected, Ames's teaching on Christ seems rather abbreviated. In fact, while Ursinus points directly to the saviorhood of Jesus, nowhere in Lord's Day 1 does Ames mention the saving, reconciling work of Jesus Christ. This has to wait until much later in Lord's Day 11.

26. Ames, *Catechisme*, 11.

- 3) Permeating Ames's doctrinal exposition is the surpassing nature of that "joy" and "happiness" located in the *summum bonum*." There is an obvious shift from an emphasis on comfort and consolation to one of joy and happiness obtained through Jesus Christ our Lord. While certainly having reference to spiritual issues, this-worldly concerns are predominant if only to warn of their imperfect and sinful nature. Ursinus, on the other hand, never uses the words "happy" or "joy"; "comfort" is everywhere synonymous with "spiritual comfort" and is always to be taken soteriologically.²⁷ The soteriological and eschatological character of the Heidelberg Catechism receives less emphasis from Ames right from the opening theme.
- 4) Ames provides an argument from covenant very early in his work. Although only briefly and in passing, he teaches that it is by the formula of the covenant that Yahweh asserts Himself as both the efficient cause and objective reality of one's happiness. The covenant is the vehicle whereby God communicates Himself to humanity. Indeed, the name "Jehovah" underscores this relational, covenantal character of God. Blessedness and comfort derive from the *hesed* with which Yahweh engages His chosen family. This is in sharp contrast to early covenant theologian Ursinus, who waits until his teaching on Christ as mediator (Lord's Day 6) to introduce his covenant teaching.²⁸ Psalm 4 serves as Ames's scriptural foundation for grounding comfort and consolation in covenant theology from the very outset.
- 5) Yet Psalm 4 warrants further mention. Although everything that Ames says could legitimately be drawn from this passage, it is curious that not one of the many New Testament texts on the comfort of Christ is employed. The Heidelberg

27. Ursinus, *Commentary*, 18.

28. Ursinus, *Commentary*, 96; Christ is the mediator who reconciles opposing parties, says Ursinus; this is the task of mediators and in their work, they bring reconciliation. So it is with Christ: "This reconciliation is called in the Scriptures a Covenant, which has particular reference to the Mediator.... Hence the doctrine of the Covenant which God made with man, is closely connected with the doctrine of the Mediator" (*Commentary*, 96).

Catechism illustrates a few of these as prooftexts which clearly point to the overwhelming soteriological comfort of the gospel. But, the question of the Holy Spirit does not even come up. This work of comfort, argues Ursinus, is a trinitarian task from the start. Perhaps this usage of Old Testament Scripture as his point of departure has obligated Ames's exposition in a direction of muted Christology. This is a marked difference from the biblically, more holistic sweep of the Heidelberg Catechism. Ames exhibited the typical Puritan adherence to the Old Testament, sometimes at the expense of the more illuminated teaching of the New Testament. This would explain teaching on many themes but, chiefly, on the fulfillment of the gospel promises in Jesus Christ. Comfort involves the entire Godhead, as Ursinus emphasized (Q&A 1).²⁹

These differences in emphases between the Heidelberg Catechism and Ursinus's commentary and that of William Ames are not without consequence for the remainder of these respective teaching documents. The expositions of the Heidelberg Catechism and Ursinus have an unmistakable inner coherence, a three-dimensional structure through which the opening theme carries forward almost seamlessly as it weaves its way through the remaining fifty-one Lord's Days. Each of the 128 questions enlarges upon the first. Each points back to this "comfort," understood primarily soteriologically. Although William Ames has borrowed each of his fifty-two "lecture" topics from the Heidelberg Catechism, and even though much of his exposition borrows from Ursinus, the comfort of which Ames's *Catechisme* speaks does not carry the inner coherence of the Heidelberg Catechism, and its elucidation of the notion of "comfort" from a more concrete, this-worldly perspective sets the stage for a more practical approach to the subsequent exposition. At this point, one might also pause to consider whether Ames's more didactic and practical transformation of the Heidelberg Catechism may have been carried forward into the Westminster Standards, notably the Larger and Shorter Catechism.

29. Ursinus, *Commentary*, 18-22.

On the Holy Spirit: Lord's Day 20

Continuing his exposition of the Apostles' Creed, Ursinus now addresses the Holy Spirit. He expands on the singularly soteriological and trinitarian aspect given briefly in the Heidelberg Catechism to explain, in considerably more detail, the Spirit's Person, office, and gifts.

The Spirit is consubstantial with the Father and Son, yet both distinct and equal. He enlightens, regenerates, unites in Christ, and rules His children by directing their actions to the service of God and neighbor as articulated in the Decalogue. The Spirit has a comforting and strengthening presence for the endangered and the weak in faith. He provides gifts at His discretion, both common (to all people) and charismatic (to the early church only). The Spirit is received by faith, and, although He is given invisibly to the church through Word and sacrament, He has been known to have been given visibly (e.g., at Jesus' baptism), "at particular times, and for certain causes." The presence of the Holy Spirit is secured through diligent religious exercises (preaching, sacraments, gospel meditation, prayer, faithful exercise of gifts, penitence, and avoidance of sins that "offend" the conscience). While the truly regenerate never lose the Spirit's gifts, "hypocrites and reprobate sinners" do since they were never truly numbered with the elect. The Holy Spirit is necessary for our salvation, understood broadly to include regeneration, thinking and doing good, knowing and obeying God, and inheriting the kingdom of heaven. Finally, one may authentically know of the Holy Spirit's indwelling through faith and repentance.³⁰ The exposition of Ursinus is permeated with biblical texts attesting to the doctrinal points he makes.

The much briefer exposition of William Ames covers much the same territory and borrows heavily from the Heidelberg Catechism and from Ursinus's *Commentary*. The nature and being of the Holy Spirit within the Trinity is explored as freely given to the faithful. But Ames's deliberately more practical angle is demonstrated by the scriptural text he employs. Ames's emphasis is purity of body. In 1 Corinthians 6:19, Paul asks: "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" Although this text appears in the Heidelberg Catechism and in Ursinus's explanation as well, it is only one among many texts brought to bear from both testaments, and is a

30. Ursinus, *Commentary*, 270–85.

minor force in the highly soteriological context in which this teaching of the Holy Spirit is cast. By contrast, emphasizing purity of the body constitutes the focus of Ames's pneumatology:

These words contain the most efficacious argument against whoring and similar sins. It is sought from the opposite end, because, of course, the purpose of Christian bodies is plainly opposed to this sin. This purpose is declared by the possessor and inhabiter of the subject: the Holy Spirit. The subject is explained through the metaphor of a temple, because certainly our bodies are like houses consecrated for Him. Indeed, in order to render this argument more evident and effective, the apostle adds: The Holy Spirit is the one who has made it subject, as it is also adjoined that He possesses our bodies so that He may have them for his own dwelling place. Further on he illustrates in both respects the relation we have to the Holy Spirit: by His efficient cause, because we have Him from God, and from the consequent effect and its adjunct—that is, by faith and by certain knowledge of the relation that exists between the Holy Spirit and our bodies, which is illustrated by the words “Are you ignorant, brethren...?”³¹

Key to Ames's conception of purity of life is the physical body as both the possession and habitation of the Holy Spirit. Ames's pneumatology is essentially cast in terms of moral theology. Yet the theological lessons Ames draws from this text—certainly the first two—bear an uncanny resemblance to Ursinus's exposition, one grounded in more traditional and directly soteriological biblical teaching on the Holy Spirit.³² Ames anchors both these lessons in the doctrine that one's body, in its capacity as the Spirit's temple, is consecrated to God and thus sacred. The application of this text is to give proper Trinitarian direction to faith and to refrain from grieving or quenching the Holy Spirit.³³ That Ames derives these doctrines from his opening text is rather surprising; he clearly prefers Ursinus's commentary with its theological emphasis based on scriptures with explicit soteriological overtones.

31. Ames, *Catechisme*, 103.

32. Ursinus, *Commentary*, 271; Ames, *Catechisme*, 103–4.

33. Ames, *Catechisme*, 104–5.

It is with Ames's third doctrinal lesson that the reason for his scriptural choice becomes more obvious—again, of course, the importance of maintaining purity of body since the Holy Spirit resides in the complete person—soul and body. Ames is now ready to address the overwhelmingly practical, this-worldly dimension of Paul's teaching anchored firmly in the opening biblical text from 1 Corinthians 6. Believers must purge sin from their bodies, which must be employed to God's glory. Ames explains the contradictory nature of having both sin and the Holy Spirit reside in the temple of God. Application of this teaching is, as expected, overwhelmingly adjuring: the believer is pointed specifically to Christ's behavior at the commerce enthusiastically transpiring in the temple. The implication is clear: cast your demons—lust, carnality, etc.—out of your body, the Holy Spirit's temple.³⁴ Recall Ursinus's comment that one of the Holy Spirit's offices was to rule the actions of men and women to ensure conformity to both tables of the Decalogue.³⁵ Of the sixteen pages Ursinus devotes to explicating the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, this one line will have to suffice as to the practical, immediate use of this doctrine for the believer.

Note that Ursinus's brevity is at the same time much more comprehensive than Ames. Ursinus points to the whole law; Ames only mentions fornication and physical impurity. This particular Pauline statement is obviously all about physical impurity and this clearly explains Ames's focus, but he is not at all prepared to leave the practical implications of pneumatology quite so skimpy with respect to proper care of the physical body, the Holy Spirit's temple. For Ames, the idea of the Holy Spirit's ownership over and residency within the physical body lies at the core of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as he teaches it in *Catechisme*. The point is brought home in the fifth and last lesson on this Lord's Day, a final warning to self-examination, and further encouragement to experiential knowledge of the Holy Spirit's indwelling and purity of life.³⁶

Thus ends the pneumatological teaching of Ames's *Catechisme*. Using a curious Scripture, the whole meaning of which conjures up the idea of moral behavior, and liberally borrowing soteriological

34. Ames, *Catechisme*, 105–6.

35. Ursinus, *Commentary*, 278.

36. Ames, *Catechisme*, 106.

emphasis from Ursinus's teaching, Ames again manages, even in his doctrine of the Holy Spirit, to "direct" and "instruct" preachers-in-training to focus the attention of their listeners upon moral purity of life. The pneumatology of Ames, as it appears here in his *Catechisme*, is a quintessential example of putting a Scripture with an overriding practical emphasis to theological, soteriological use. Whereas most theologians would generally have taken a theological teaching and pointed to its practical implications (as Ursinus does, for example), Ames reverses the order and converts a primarily theological teaching to an exhortation in practical divinity. While not neglecting the soteriological dimension, the Amesian emphasis in pneumatology is the overcoming of sin's reign in the body, the Holy Spirit's temple.

Miscellaneous Emphases

It is worthwhile to briefly underscore some uniquely Amesian emphases. While some of these simply represent Ames's view of what was important in the practice of theology, other emphases, although now part of standard Reformed theological thinking, were only just beginning to develop at this time and should be understood as newly emerging components of Reformed theology. In the category of the former, we can mention his curious departure from the more precise and systematic model of the Heidelberg Catechism. Thus, for example, Ames discusses only the article in the Apostles' Creed on Christ's death, neglecting to examine the topic of His burial and descent into hell (Lord's Day 16).³⁷ In Lord's Day 31, where the Heidelberg Catechism discusses the keys of the kingdom, Ames chooses to address the topic by introducing God as a God of order who has appointed ministers to oversee the church through ministerial powers. The means used for the exercise of this power are identified only briefly at the very end of the exposition of the Lord's Day; discipline is barely mentioned and left entirely unexplained.³⁸ Not surprisingly, the doctrine of the Sabbath is expounded at great length and grounded, as with Ursinus, in the example set by God at creation.³⁹

Our comparison of Ames's and Ursinus's respective expositions of the Ten Commandments introduces Ursinus as an early practitioner

37. Ames, *Catechisme*, 83–87.

38. Ames, *Catechisme*, 144–46.

39. Ames, *Catechisme*, 169–75; cf. Ursinus, *Commentary*, 557–74.

of casuistry. Extended development of the teaching of the Commandments, while in some cases only hinted at in the Heidelberg Catechism, receive full coverage in his *Commentary*. So, for example, the fifth commandment—to honor one’s father and mother—can be extended to cover all relationships between superiors and inferiors. Ames does this as well. And both commentators make frequent use of the term and the concept of synecdoche, explaining it frequently to ensure the reader knows the means whereby generalizations are made from specifics.⁴⁰

Finally, Ames’s doctrine of the church is introduced with the Pauline teaching on the relationship between husbands and wives (Eph. 5:25–27). Paul exhorts husbands to love their wives even as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it.⁴¹ What is at first glance a very practical, unsoteriological passage is used by Ames to introduce a rather experiential theme—the doctrine of the church. Although the coverage is much briefer than that of Ursinus, many of the same elements regarding the church’s essence and character are covered.⁴² And “because the Common Place of the eternal predestination of God, or of election and reprobation naturally grows out of the doctrine of the church: and is for this reason correctly connected with it,”⁴³ Ursinus chooses to handle that central doctrine at this point in his *Commentary*. His exposition on the doctrine of predestination is half again as long as his teaching on the doctrine of the church.⁴⁴ In the *Catechisme* of Ames, on the other hand, one looks in vain for formal and prolonged teaching on the doctrine of predestination.

One area where Ames showed himself to be at the forefront of the development of theological thought occurs in Lord’s Day 15. The issue here has to do with the suffering of Christ. Here Ames brings in the idea of the pre-temporal covenant between God the Father and God the Son. Christ’s expiation, Ames explains, “was the covenant initiated (*pactum initum*) between the Father and Christ: if he should offer this obedience for us, then, since we have been liberated from disobedience and death, we should live in Him (Isa. 53:10). This

40. Ursinus, *Commentary*, 577–83; Ames, *Catechisme*, 176–79; cf. idem, *Conscience*, 5.19–5.20, 5.23; cf. idem, *Marrow*, 2.17.66.

41. Ames, *Catechisme*, 107–10.

42. Ursinus, *Commentary*, 285–93.

43. Ursinus, *Commentary*, 293.

44. Ursinus, *Commentary*, 293–305.

suffering was the consummation of every obedience.”⁴⁵ The concept of a pre-temporal agreement within the Godhead was not yet part and parcel of received covenant theology, and its appearance here is somewhat surprising. Ursinus, one of the earliest covenant theologians, certainly makes no mention of such a covenant when he asks, “What was the Impelling Cause of the Passion of Christ?” He answers: God’s love for the human race, His compassion for those “fallen in sin and death,” and His desire and purpose to avenge Satan who spoiled God’s image in humanity.⁴⁶ This pre-fall covenantal agreement between the Father and the Son, asserts Ames, is of comfort to the faithful because it represents the remedy for sin while admonishing us to abhor sin.⁴⁷

Final Observations

It should be observed that the “ecclesiastical tone” mentioned by Verboom as characteristic of earlier catechisms, if absent from the Heidelberg Catechism proper, is quite prominent in Ursinus’s *Commentary*. The prolegomena of Ursinus is dominated by his “Doctrine of the Church.”⁴⁸ He begins: “These Prolegomena are partly general, such as treat of the entire doctrine of the Church: and partly special, such as have respect merely to the Catechism.” The doctrine of the church “reveals the only way of escape through Christ.”⁴⁹ In the midst of his ecclesiology, he introduces and expands on decretal theology, a central and growing locus in the theological development during this period of early orthodoxy. Moreover, while the pathos and the personal nature of the Heidelberg Catechism certainly are its domineering spirit, Ursinus’s *Commentary* shows that he can engage in polemics with detractors of the Reformed faith when the need arises.

Ames’s method, like that of Ursinus, is replete with Ramism and, to a lesser extent, syllogistic reasoning. It does not carry the soteriological focus of Ursinus even if the overall theme of *Catechisme* is in agreement with Ursinus. Although it is obvious that Ames is prone to wander from this theme, the areas he borrows from Ursinus for his own exposition are clear and unmistakable. Furthermore, as in all his work, Ames ably demonstrates that no theological truth, be it ever so

45. Ames, *Catechisme*, 82.

46. Ursinus, *Commentary*, 216.

47. Ames, *Catechisme*, 82.

48. Ursinus, *Commentary*, 1.

49. Ursinus, *Commentary*, 18.

theoretical or existential, can be without some exhortation to *eupraxia*. This is not conducted in a vacuum, but rather proceeds according to scriptural rules set out in God's revelation. The Heidelberg Catechism is pithy, personal, and pastoral. While Ursinus's *Commentary* is more expository, it also communicates a warm and pastoral sentiment to the heart of the reader. Although there are instances where William Ames does touch the heart in a pastoral way, such pathos does not flow from his mind and pen in a consistent way in his commentary. His concern here is simply for greater immediate application to one's present life. This accounts also for the exhortative tendencies found in his commentary. The preacher seeking to direct the faithful in their soul struggle could not aspire to be the kind of physician of souls bred by the Heidelberg Catechism on the strength of his *Catechisme* alone. For this they would have to go to his *Conscience*.

The Heidelberg Catechism has often been charged with inserting a strong anthropocentric flavor into the teaching of the church. This point is frequently made in the context of comparisons with the Westminster Standards, the catechisms of which, it is argued, are more theocentric from the very outset where the theme is established in Q&A 1 in both the Larger and Shorter Catechism. To enter into this debate, at this point, will take us too far afield, but our study of William Ames has demonstrated that one can move in both directions on this score.

For example, on the one hand, the possibilities for putting an anthropocentric gloss on the Heidelberg Catechism are very real. The "Amesian gloss," as he has given it to us in his *Catechisme*, emphasizes practical divinity. On the other hand, this same document clearly shows instances where it is highly theocentric as well. Ames's long and exhaustive discussion on "God himself" as the "true chief good, as well effectively as objectively" underscores the God-centeredness of this work in the context of the source of comfort for the believer. Perhaps we should remember that, prior to all theologies, Calvin's *Institutes* set the standard by underscoring the need for an understanding of both the Creator and the creature, and the chasm between the two. In the Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 1 teaches that the creature's only comfort is in the re-creative work of the Creator. In both the Larger and Shorter catechisms of the Westminster Standards, Q&A 1 teaches that while the Creator is to be glorified, the creature is to do the enjoying of Him forever.

For Ames, it is essential that the Heidelberg Catechism be adapted to pulpit use—to plain-style preaching form. For when it comes to priorities in preaching a sermon, “which part is most to be insisted on, the explication of the Text, the handling of the Doctrines, or the Use and Explication of them?” While “some speciall occasion may make the large explication of the text, or handling of the Doctrine to be necessary, . . . regularly, and ordinarily the principall worke of the Sermon, if it be not Catechetically, is in the use and application.”⁵⁰ Ames’s commentary has modified the *Catechisme* to perfectly fit his recipe for effective preaching.

At this point, it might also be instructive to recall that the Westminster Larger and Shorter catechisms closely duplicate this Amesian method of exposition and instruction. In the Larger Catechism, Q&A 1–90 teach of God; Q&A 91–196 teach that “Having seen what the scriptures principally teach us to believe concerning God, it follows to consider what they require as the duty of man.” The Shorter Catechism is so organized as well: Q&A 1–38 teach doctrine; the second half begins with the question posed in Q 39: “What is the duty which God requires of man?” The remainder of the Shorter Catechism, through the final question and answer (107), enlarges on this.⁵¹

It is interesting to note that in the opening question of the Westminster Larger and Shorter catechisms, the divines have skipped back over the Heidelberg Catechism to revert back to the first question in Calvin’s catechism which seeks to establish the chief end of man being to know God. But it is not enough to know God. That the divines appropriated William Ames’s emphasis is clear here in their amended (from Calvin’s) declaration of humanity’s goal or chief end. It was not enough to “know” God, however experientially this might be interpreted. Men and women, throughout their daily existence, must work to actively glorify God in thought, word, and deed. Yes, through faith by grace alone was salvation secured. And only through divinely empowered covenantal obedience would the child of God enter into the felicity reserved for the saints and begin, even in this life, to fully enjoy Him forever. It has been demonstrated that William Ames did all he could to ensure that this living and very practical faith

50. Ames, *Conscience*, 4.26.Q11–4.26.Q12.

51. *The Confession of Faith (1647), The Larger Catechism (1648), The Shorter Catechism (1648), The Directory of Public Worship* (Toronto: Presbyterian Publications, n.d.).

was not lost on the continental catechumen nurtured on the Heidelberg Catechism. Ames deliberately revised this popular teaching document to ensure that this emphasis would be impressed upon the student in faith, from both pulpit and podium, through his very practical overlay of the already warm, personal, and experiential Heidelberg Catechism.

In his brief but useful introductory section on some of the historical issues surrounding the origins and development of the Heidelberg Catechism, Verboom mentions approvingly the four-fold purpose that Karl Barth understood that doctrinal standard to serve:

1. The Heidelberg Catechism is a textbook for instruction in the faith for church, home, and school.
2. The Heidelberg Catechism is a guide and rule for preachers, students, and others.
3. The Heidelberg Catechism has a liturgical aspect. According to the Church Order of 1563, each Sunday [Lord's Day] ensures that a portion of it is read during the church service.
4. The Heidelberg Catechism is a guiding principle for the catechism sermon that is held in the Sunday afternoon lesson.⁵²

To these, William Ames would indubitably add purpose number 5: The Heidelberg Catechism is a guidebook for living to godliness.

52. Karl Barth, *Einführung in dem Heidelberger Katechismus* (Zurich, 1960), cited in Verboom, *Heidelbergse Catechismus*, 18–19.

Assurance of Salvation: The Insights of Anthony Burgess

JOEL R. BEEKE AND PAUL SMALLEY



Anthony Burgess (d. 1664) served as a fellow (instructor) at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, before becoming the vicar at Sutton Coldfield, Warwickshire, in 1635. During the Civil War, he took refuge in Coventry and then was summoned to serve in the Westminster Assembly. After the war, in 1647, he returned to Sutton Coldfield where he served until being expelled in 1662 by the Act of Uniformity. A gifted and godly scholar, he wrote major treatises on Christ's prayer in John 17,¹ original sin, justification by faith alone, and the goodness and functions of the law of God.² Burgess's books were not reprinted in the nineteenth century; thus he is not as well known today as other Puritans such as John Owen. The following article is adapted from his masterpiece on assurance and conversion, *Spiritual Refining*.³



Paul commands us, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be probates?" (2 Cor. 13:5).

It is a responsibility of great importance for the people of God to be assured that there is a true and saving work of grace in them, so as

1. See Joel R. Beeke, "Anthony Burgess on Christ's Prayer for Us," in *Taking Hold of God: Reformed and Puritan Perspectives on Prayer*, ed. Joel R. Beeke and Brian G. Najapfour (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011), 83–108.

2. The last of these was recently reprinted as Anthony Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis*, Westminster Assembly Facimile Series (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011).

3. Anthony Burgess, *Spiritual Refining: Or a Treatise of Grace and Assurance* (London: by A. Miller for Thomas Underhill, 1652), 1–59. A second edition of the book was published in 1658 with an additional section on sin. International Outreach reprinted it in the 1990s.

to distinguish them from hypocrites. There are certain signs of grace by which a man may discern what he is.

This involves a practical and experiential knowledge, which is much more than mere head knowledge. There is a great difference between hearing that honey is sweet, and tasting it. This is what the Bible often means by “knowing” something—experiential knowledge, not mere knowledge in the brain.

We need a practical, experiential, and well-tested knowledge of our spiritual condition. That is clear for several reasons. First, Christ our Savior pressed this point upon those who heard His sermons. Consider His parables on the sower and the soils (Matt. 13:1–9, 18–23), the ten virgins (Matt. 25:1–13), and the two builders (Matt. 7:24–27). Second, it is easy to make a mistake on this matter, given our tendency to deceive ourselves and have false confidence (Rom. 2:17). Third, it is very dangerous to make a mistake here. Unless you go beyond mere outward morality and religion, you can never enter the kingdom of heaven. Fourth, it is difficult to see the difference between true grace and its counterfeits.

Furthermore, there are many advantages that experiential knowledge brings. It gives us an inward feeling and sense of holiness in your heart. It’s the difference between seeing a place on a map and going there to see it yourself. It makes our hearts a copy of the Bible, so that all God’s promises and warnings have their echo there. This knowledge of holiness makes us dead to all human greatness and worldly delights. It makes the Word and worship sweet to our souls, and helps us to leave behind empty controversies about religion. It gives us the kind of knowledge that produces godly action. It establishes the truth to us in a way that we will endure persecution rather than let it go.

However, this experiential testing of ourselves faces real obstacles. First, we might approach this question with sinful self-love and self-confidence. “He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool” (Prov. 28:26). Second, we might look at good actions but ignore the motives. Real godliness is inward, not outward (Rom. 2:28). Third, we might test ourselves by false standards. Instead of the Word of God, the Bible, we might take up what is old, or popular, or traditional for our guide. Fourth, we might confuse morality or good manners for godliness.

In general, there are three kinds of people who take the name of Christians. Some have only the name but no power so that they

deny Christ by their works. Others have some influences and operations of the Spirit of God upon them. But they are like embryos that miscarry before the new birth. Their affections are somewhat moved by the truth (Matt. 13:20–22), but the Holy Spirit does not dwell in them as members of the body of Christ. However, some are part of Christ's body, and receive a life-giving influence from Him, as branches do from the vine (John 15:5). The least of believers is far above the best of hypocrites, because he is born again into a true experiential knowledge of Christ's sufferings and resurrection. Someone may have experienced something of the power of spiritual gifts for ministry, the bitterness of sin, a desire for spiritual benefits, an enjoyment of the Word, and a change in their lifestyle—but still be unsaved. The true believer has a different heart (Luke 8:15), for spiritual light dwells in him permanently to make him more holy and dependent on the Lord.

The Bible presents such clear signs of the state of grace that a godly man who faithfully applies them to himself may by the guidance and help of the Spirit of God become assured that he is in that state. There are two main matters to be discussed here: seeking certainty or assurance and using the signs of grace.

Assurance or Certainty about Salvation

Assurance or certainty about a truth in general may come in various ways, such as seeing or hearing something with your eyes and ears, knowing a first principle and making logical deductions from it, or receiving a witness that has authority. No authority is higher than God's revelation. What kind of certainty can the people of God have about their being in Christ? It is a mixed kind of certainty, partly based on faith in God's Word, and partly by a spiritual sense and experience worked by the Holy Spirit.

A man who lives in the habit of serious sins should be assured that he is presently in a damnable condition, and will be so as long as he lives that way. The works of the flesh are manifest or plainly visible, and those who live that way have no inheritance in God's kingdom (Gal. 5:19–21). If this is your life, do not flatter yourself but wake up. However, no one has warrant to be assured that he is eternally rejected by God, for the Bible does not tell the names of the reprobate and God does not reveal such things directly to anyone.

Paul's command to examine ourselves is not merely a call to test whether your particular church is a true, visible church. It is easier for a particular church to know it is a true church than for a particular Christian to know he is a true believer, for a true church is any congregation where the Word is preached in its purity and there is an external submission to it, but a true Christian has the secret and powerful operation of God's Spirit in his heart.

No one by his natural powers of understanding can come to an assurance of saving grace in his soul. No one can see the sun except by the light of the sun; no one can see Christ in his soul except by the Spirit of Christ. He is the Spirit of adoption who assures the believer. This is why God's people have spiritual combat, not only between sin and holiness, but also between doubt and faith.

A Christian may be assured in this life of four special mercies: election by God, forgiveness of sins, sanctification of his nature, and perseverance in holiness unto future glory. However, the foundation of all the others is assurance of our sanctification. There can be no certainty that God predestined us, justified us, and will glorify us, unless there is certainty that God has made us new within and we see the fruit of sanctifying grace.

It is a very sad delusion when an ungodly man is persuaded that he is in a state of grace, when in fact he is in a state of sin and death. This is worse than being possessed by demons. It is like the condition of the church in Laodicea, who thought they were rich and full, when they were naked and empty (Rev. 3:17). It is like the condition of an insane man who thinks he is a prince with a large estate but in fact is locked in chains in a dungeon. Therefore beware lest your self-love blind your eyes and harden your heart, and pray for God to make you know yourself.

The soul of man has two kinds of acts. One kind is direct acts, as when I take Christ and cling to Him by faith. The other kind is reflective acts where a man perceives his own direct acts, as when I perceive that I cling to Christ and love God. Certainty or assurance is a reflective act, a feeling or perceiving of one's own faith.

The assurance of a believer is within his own heart and cannot be made known to another person. Just as only those who have been a father or mother understand what it is like to have such a relationship, so this certainty is only for those who have experienced it. It is compared to a white stone that no one knows except the person who has

it (Rev. 2:17). We can have a judgment of certainty towards ourselves, but only a judgment of charity towards others. As sweet as fellowship among brothers may be, many whom the godly admired like stars later have fallen out of the skies, and others of questionable hope have remained faithful.

The certainty of all acts of faith, whether direct or reflex, depends more upon the work of God's Spirit than the evidence. Christians can have a firm faith in the Scriptures by the power of the Spirit even when they cannot answer all the arguments of their persecutors. In the same way, a believer's confidence that he has real, saving grace depends more upon God's Spirit releasing him from fear and bondage than it does upon the greatness and beauty of grace within him.

A human being in his natural life knows his natural motions to see, hear, touch, feel, taste, and think. In the same way, a Christian in his spiritual life knows his spiritual motions to love his brothers and God (1 John 3:14). However, natural motions are not opposed by temptations, but spiritual motions are and thus are more difficult.

The Bible speaks of this certainty with words such as persuaded (*peithō*), know (*ginōskō*), faith (*pistis*), confidence (*pepoithēsis*), boldness (*parrēsia*), and assurance (*plêrophoria*). We must be careful, however, not to confuse faith, confidence, and assurance—as some theologians have done. One may have justifying faith without assurance. Ephesians 3:12 teaches us that faith has three effects: confidence, boldness or assurance, and freedom to draw near to God in prayer as one welcomed by Him. Some say that faith, confidence, and assurance are the same thing in three different levels of maturity. Others say they are distinct graces. I will not argue about it. This is certain, that faith must apply Christ to us or it cannot justify us.

So do not let your heart despair if you have not attained to assurance. The God that has made you desire Christ, and who has supported you in your doubts and fears, can bring you to assurance one step at a time. In the end your doubts may produce a much stronger faith, as trees shaken by the wind will have stronger roots. In fact, the Christian's assurance is not so high and full that it excludes all doubting. Nothing in this life is perfect, whether it be our obedience or comfort. Our certainty will be painfully assaulted by Satan and our own unbelief. We may even say that he who never doubted, never believed. There is some bitterness in all our honey.

The Possibility, Necessity, Difficulty, and Excellency of Assurance

It is possible for a Christian to have an assurance of his salvation. We see in Scripture that God's people have enjoyed it. David called God his God and his portion, and thanked Him for forgiving his sins. Paul showed his assurance, and based it not on a special revelation from God but on grounds that belong to all the people of God (Rom. 8). If a man can confess that he believes in God and in other divine truths of the Word, surely he can also know he believes. God gave the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper as signs and seals of His covenant. To throw away the possibility of assurance is to throw away God's seals. If assurance is not possible, then there must be some problem with its object or the means by which we get it. But the object of assurance is the promises of God, which are yes and amen in Christ (2 Cor. 1:20), and the means of assurance is the Spirit of God, who renews the heart to sincerity and effectively works assurance.

We need assurance. The nature of faith is to establish and settle us. It is a pillar and anchor to the soul. Though one can have faith without assurance, doubting and fear are the opposite of believing. Trusting in God is compared in the Bible to rolling ourselves on Him, staying the mind on Him, and resting the heart on Him. Strong and regular exercises of faith in Christ will, over time, bring us to assurance. It is also needed so that we can praise God for His mercies, have more joy and peace in our hearts, and be stirred up to serve Him with greater holiness. Hope leads a Christian to purify himself (1 John 3:3), promises move him to cleanse himself (2 Cor. 7:1), belief motivates him to speak (2 Cor. 4:13), and knowledge of the Father's love makes the child willing and ready to obey (Eph. 5:1; Col. 3:12).

The attaining of assurance faces many difficulties. When a person feels the guilt of his sins, he is quick to look upon God as an enemy and an avenger. Our hearts are deceitful. We are prone to neglect our walk with God and be spiritually careless, but assurance is preserved by a continual exercise of grace (2 Peter 1:10). Satan attacks us with his fiery darts, and if he cannot hurt us in our obedience, he will attack us in our comforts. Pirates wait for the ships most full of gold, and Satan leaves the wicked in peace while tempting the godly with many fears. Even God sometimes hides Himself so that we will not take assurance for granted and grow lazy.

How excellent though is this privilege! It keeps Christians in close fellowship with God, so that they can say, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine" (Song 6:3). The Spirit of adoption puts in their hearts the attitude of a humble child, motivated to serve the Father with pure motivation (Rom. 8:14–15). Assurance will support them when everything else in life is misery and trouble, so that they triumph over all difficulties (Rom. 8:37). It inflames them in prayer with burning desires, strong hopes, and boldness with God. It makes them walk with great sensitivity to sin, lest they lose their experience of heaven on earth. It makes them sincerely long for Christ's coming so that they can be with Him (Phil. 1:23). Finding full rest and peace in God and Christ makes them content no matter what they lack, for He is sufficient (Ps. 73:25–26). Therefore, how blessed is he who has God for his God, and Christ for his Christ!

Assurance versus Presumption

We must carefully distinguish between assurance and presumption. A false assurance is the worst delusion and insanity, but too many people bless themselves even while they are outside the door of the kingdom. Assurance and presumption come from different root causes. Assurance comes from the Spirit of God enlightening the heart and working childlike affections. Presumption comes from a lack of experiential knowledge of the depth and danger of one's sin and the clinging presence of self-love and self-flattery (Prov. 16:2).

Assurance and presumption also differ in their motives and basis. Assurance comes from the Spirit of God working through the Word of God to produce spiritual comfort (Rom. 15:4). Presumption comes from a natural understanding of regeneration, which cannot be spiritually understood without the Spirit's work (John 3:10). Presumption leans at least in part upon one's own merits and worthiness, but assurance looks only for sincerity of grace mingled with many faults that Christ's blood must wash away. People often presume that God loves them in a saving way because they have outward prosperity in riches, children, or honors—but they stand in slippery places and may be horribly surprised (Luke 16:25).

God generally works assurance in a manner quite differently than presumption springs up. Though the Spirit is free to save as He pleases (John 3:8), God's ordinary way is to bring a person to sincere humiliation under the burden of his sins (Matt. 11:28). Assurance is

often attained after a conflict with doubts and unbelief, for it is the work of the Spirit, and the flesh wars against the Spirit (Gal. 5:17). Assurance with never a doubt is too much like the man who said, "All these have I kept from my youth" (Luke 18:21). It is a good sign when a sense of God's grace in us comes with a feeling of our imperfections, so that we cry, "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

Assurance also produces effects that go far beyond anything presumption can do. Godly assurance makes a person diligent to use the means of grace and careful to obey God's commands, but the neglect of them weakens assurance (2 Peter 1:10). Sinful self-confidence swells all the bigger even while neglecting prayer and living in sin. Godly assurance ignites the heart with love to God, like a magnifying glass focuses the light of the sun to start a fire. Presumption works more lust for this created world and a proud abuse of God. Assurance has the power to support the heart when discouragements and disruptions abound and sinful confidence fails. True metal proves itself on the anvil.

We may also see the difference in the spiritual companions and enemies of assurance and presumption. Assurance comes with holy fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12), and humility and low self-appraisal (Luke 1:46–48). Presumption keeps out godly fear, and comes with a flattering self-comparison to other sinners (Luke 18:11). The only enemies of assurance are sin and coolness of zeal, for it is produced by God's Spirit and sin grieves the Spirit (Eph. 4:30). Presumption may be shaken by outward troubles or psychological depression, but not by sin's offense against God.

God has powerful weapons to destroy the fortresses of sinful self-confidence. This is a mercy, for no one has higher obstacles against coming to Christ than the falsely assured Christian. God can, however, destroy these strongholds by a powerful, soul-searching preacher (2 Cor. 10:4–5). Another weapon is an explanation and application of God's laws to the motives of the soul, as Christ did in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5). God might also show people from the Bible how complete and necessary a Savior Jesus Christ is, for if He is everything, then we have nothing in ourselves. God may also accompany the thunder of the Word with the afflictions of earthly grief to awaken sinners. He can use the frightening examples of people who seemed so spiritual (and thought so highly of themselves) but then fell horribly. Indeed, God can use stupid decisions people make in other

areas of life to show them that they may be fooling themselves about their spiritual state too.

The Lack of Assurance

What should a person do if he has true saving grace in him, but lacks assurance? This is agonizing, more painful than broken bones. Let him consider whether he is living in some sin, that he knows is sin yet has not repented (Ps. 32:3–5; 51:8; Eph. 4:30). Let him also ask whether he is neglecting the means of grace. Assurance comes through diligent pursuit of godliness (2 Peter 1:5–10) and prayer (Phil. 4:6–7).

If he still lacks assurance, let him remember that it is a gift of God's sovereign grace, not a natural consequence of what we do (Rom. 8:15–16; 2 Cor. 1:3–4). Even if you lack assurance, keep exercising love, faith, and obedience toward God. Though God often gives new converts a sense of His love because they need it most, solid assurance generally belongs to those who know God over a long time and endure in His ways.

Someone might ask, "Why doesn't God always give us assurance when He works saving grace in our souls?" A prophet told David that his sins were forgiven (2 Sam. 12:18), but David still prayed earnestly for forgiveness and joy (Ps. 51). This implies that God caused the promise to be declared to him outwardly, but he had not yet by His almighty power persuaded his heart.

God has reasons why He may not speak peace to our consciences even after He puts grace in our hearts. This causes us to taste how bitter sin is. It keeps us low and humble. It makes us prize assurance and take more care not to lose it. It gives the Christian the opportunity to show his obedience to God and honor him by faith even when lacking joy and peace. Lastly, it produces a mature Christian who can use his experience to comfort others in their distresses.

Using Signs of Saving Grace

There are signs of grace by which a man may know whether he is in a state of grace or not. I need to discuss this more because many today criticize ministers that preach signs of grace. Furthermore, this subject takes wisdom to handle so as to avoid doing yourself spiritual harm.

God's sanctifying grace produces a supernatural life within us. It is the infused principle of a holy life, a new creation produced by regeneration (2 Peter 1:4; 2 Cor. 5:17). Our essence does not change,

but the Spirit of God works gracious habits and qualities in us. It is a spiritual resurrection from the dead. We do not have God's essence, but we do have God's image. This supernatural, permanent principle becomes part of the Christian's inner constitution and produces effects and signs that people can see. We are not talking about the gifts of miracles such as those performed by the apostles. Nor are we talking about the common graces of God's Spirit that produce bare belief in the historical facts of the gospel and an outward change of religion and lifestyle. We are talking about holiness in the heart that produces holy actions.

The Bible speaks of some marks of grace that others may see and know that we belong to God, and some marks that we may see in our own hearts. For an example of the first, consider John 13:35, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Thus the work of the Spirit in Christians is said to make them into "an epistle of Christ" (2 Cor. 3:3), for people around them can see evidences that they are saved. But the reality of salvation is in the hidden things of the heart that a man may know only about himself.

The signs of grace given in Scripture belong only to the godly. It is not that the godly have more of them than the wicked, but that hypocrites do not have them at all. There are positive signs and negative signs, and the positive signs are more important. It is deceitful and futile to argue that you are saved just because of what you do *not* do (Luke 18:11). The positive signs appear in the Bible's descriptions of the properties of true believers (Gal. 5:25). For them to function as signs, a Christian must see them and see past them to their causes in God's election, justification, adoption, and regeneration. In other words, the signs point beyond themselves to Christ and the Spirit in the soul. The presence of these signs in a person's life does not automatically give him assurance. The Spirit of God must remove his darkness.

Signs of grace must not be abused.

- We must be careful that when we look into ourselves to find graces in our hearts, we do not forget to keep relying upon Christ alone for our justification. This is one reason why some people oppose using the signs of grace. Christ is better than all the graces within us.
- The Bible attributes salvation to several signs, and if a godly man sees any one of these signs in himself, he may

conclude that he is saved and justified. Temptation may hinder us from seeing all the signs in ourselves.

- Do not let the dreams of hypocrites discourage you from using the signs. The fact that they have a false confidence does not mean that we cannot have a true confidence based upon the Scriptures.
- Do not demand perfection in the signs. The graces of a truly saved Christian are not perfect, and neither are the signs of grace perfect. Do not doubt your salvation just because you find some hypocrisy, wrong motives, or coolness of zeal in the signs of your graces. Comfort comes from seeing that grace is real in your soul, not from trying to make it the cause or merit of your justification before God.

It is right to seek evidence of our justification by signs of our sanctification. Indeed, it is our duty as Christians. The question is not whether a Christian in his first act of faith, by which he comes to Christ and is engrafted into Him, should see signs of his sanctification. This is the order laid down in 1 John 2:5, "But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him." We must first be in Christ before we can see fruits of being in Christ. We grasp hold of Christ out of a sense of our guilt and unworthiness. No preacher should say, "You may not rely on Christ for justification until you have evidence of grace in your heart." Scripture calls people to Christ who are burdened, not those who are assured (Matt. 11:28). Nor should a Christian in great temptations, doubts, and darkness search for grace in his soul. It is hard to find treasure in muddy water. In such cases the godly man must throw himself upon the promises and invitations of God.

This is not legalism. The duty of Christians to look for evidence of their salvation in the signs of their sanctification should never be an attempt to live up to the perfect standard of the law. Nor should it be done apart from God's Spirit, for the Spirit seals the believer (Eph. 1:13). Nor should it be a quest after finding the cause or merit of our justification in ourselves. It is rather finding certainty about our regeneration by the fruits of holiness flowing from it.

The Bible commends this method of seeking assurance when it gives us descriptions of the characteristics of true saving grace in

distinction from counterfeits. For example, Christ does this in the parable of the soils (Matt. 13:1–9, 18–23), or the parable of the sheep (John 10:4–5). Other Scriptures command us to examine ourselves and our works (2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 6:4) and to make our calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10). We have examples of godly believers who used their graces as comforting signs of God’s love to them (2 Kings 20:3; Neh. 13:14, 22; 2 Cor. 1:12; 2 Tim. 4:7–8).

Our Savior lays down this principle, “the tree is known by his fruit” (Matt. 12:33). If this is true of knowing each other, how much more can a man’s spirit know himself (1 Cor. 2:11)? So also the Bible contains many promises to those who have particular graces (Matt. 5:3–10), which would be for nothing if a man could not recognize those graces in himself and by logical deduction apply the promises to himself by the help of the Holy Spirit.

John’s first epistle is full of this method of assurance, saying, for example:

- “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.” (1 John 2:3–5).
- “In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother” (1 John 3:10).
- “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death” (1 John 3:14).

Therefore let us test ourselves by the biblical marks of grace. In a time when so many find their confidence in their opinions, disputing about doctrine, or special revelations from God, the true power of putting sin to death and living for God is completely neglected. Our Savior did not describe the branches in Him by their leaves or blossoms, but by their fruit (John 15:1–8). Let us not rest in head knowledge; let us look for holiness.

The Holy Spirit bears witness with the spirit of the children of God so that they may know they are children of God (Rom. 8:16).

God seals them with His Spirit (Eph. 1:13), impressing upon them His image to show they are His just as a seal impresses its image upon the wax to ratify a document. Thus the Spirit witnesses to believers even now on earth (1 John 5:8). His testimony through the graces within believers does not replace faith in God's promises, but assists them in their weakness to believe those promises. This is not hearing an immediate voice from God's Spirit. Just as the Spirit convinces people that the Bible is God's Word by enabling to see its divine qualities, so the Spirit assures Christians that they are saved by enabling them to see the fruits of grace in themselves.

Cautions about Signs of Grace

Let me close with some cautions about using signs of grace to gain assurance.

First, be careful how you define the marks of grace. On the one hand, do not require such signs of yourself as no Christian has in this life. A true Christian keeps God's commandments (1 John 3:24), but no Christian ever comes to the point where he may say he has no sin (1 John 1:8). Although he does not hunger and thirst for God as much as he should, he does sincerely hunger and thirst for God.

On the other hand, do not make signs of saving grace out of qualities that unbelievers can have. Taking the sacraments, having right doctrinal beliefs, and exercising great ability in Christian service may all appear in a person who is not born again.

Second, only test your graces by the true standard, the Word of God. Scripture alone is the light to guide our feet (Ps. 119:105), God's wisdom to make us wise for salvation (2 Tim. 3:15).

Third, never use the signs in a way that hinders you from receiving and applying Christ for your souls. Rest on Christ alone for reconciliation with God and atonement of your sins. Your graces are but signs of Christ; they are not Christ Himself.

Fourth, do not make signs of salvation into grounds and causes of salvation. We wrong our souls when we take pride in the evidences of God's grace in our lives and place sinful confidence in the signs. Find comfort in signs but rest in Christ.

Fifth, test yourself with signs only while simultaneously casting out your self-love and self-flattery. Many lie to themselves like the ancient Jews who cried, "the temple of the Lord!" We can only know ourselves by the supernatural teaching of the Holy Spirit. At the

same time, however, you must cast out your unbelief which refuses to acknowledge the work of God in your heart. How can you thank God for His grace to you if you will not acknowledge it?

Sixth, do not examine yourself for signs of grace when your soul is full of darkness, doubts, and temptations. You cannot see clearly then.

Seventh, do not think that no sign will be sufficient unless you first persevere to the end. Arminians insist that no one can be sure of his election by God until he has persevered in faith and obedience. Thus no man can be happy until he dies. Perseverance is a promise to the godly (Phil. 1:6), but it is not the only distinctive sign of true godliness.

Eighth, when you examine yourself, pray to God for His Spirit to enlighten your eyes. The Spirit of God is the effective cause of assurance. Just as only the Spirit can bring biblical truth home to the soul, so you can have all kinds of evidence of grace but your heart will not be persuaded until the Spirit establishes you in certainty.

Ninth, never think that a person may not take hold of Christ until he has this certainty by signs of grace within himself. Do not look for spiritual qualifications before trusting Christ for your justification. Though it is popular to say that faith is a strong persuasion that my sins are forgiven, in reality justifying faith is not assurance. Assurance is a fruit of faith.

Lastly, do not resist God's Spirit with unbelief when He comes to assure you with evidences of your salvation. It is a great sin to rebel against the Spirit when He convinces a person of sin, but it is a greater sin to rebel against Him when He moves us to claim God as our Father, for His greatest glory lies in being the Spirit of adoption (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6).

Conclusion

Therefore, test yourself by the signs of grace laid in Scripture: obedience to God's commandments (1 John 2:3), sincerity before God (2 Cor. 1:12), turning from sin (1 John 3:9), willingness to be searched by God (Ps. 26:2), growth in grace (John 15:2), serving God out of inner motives of Spirit-worked faith and love (1 John 4:13), and love for other Christians (1 John 3:18). And where such things are present, may the Spirit of adoption work assurance.

Pastoral Theology and Missions



The Mouth of the Morningstar: John Wycliffe's Preaching and the Protestant Reformation

CALEB CANGELOSI



The fourteenth-century English scholar and pastor John Wycliffe is well known as a forerunner of the Reformation, primarily because he instigated the translation of the Latin Vulgate into the vernacular English, and because of his Augustinian understanding of the church and his rejection of the doctrine of transubstantiation. It is often overlooked, however, that the newly translated Scriptures and Wycliffe's revolutionary doctrines most often made their way to the sixteenth century through the vehicle of preaching. In the days before the printing press¹ and because of widespread illiteracy even after Gutenberg's mid-fifteenth-century invention, the proclamation of God's Word by Wycliffe's followers (known as the "Lollards," the "Bible-men," or the "poor preachers") was integral to promulgating his views to God's people in England and beyond.² Yet it is the sermons of Wycliffe himself that had a foundational influence on the Reformation—not only because they communicated his teachings to the people directly,³ but also because they were preached and published for the sake of the

1. J. Patrick Hornbeck II, Stephen E. Lahey, and Fiona Somerset, eds., *Wycliffite Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Pres, 2013), 39.

2. Margaret Aston asserts, "It was taken for granted at the outset [of the Lollard controversy], that if the people were learning false doctrine, they were learning it from preachers." She cites another authority who states, "Christianity in the fourteenth century was still an oral religion.... [P]reaching was considered the fundamental didactic tool for reaching a wide audience." Margaret Aston, "Wyclif and the vernacular," in *From Ockham to Wyclif*, ed. Anne Hudson and Michael Wilks (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 289n21. Cf. also T. M. A. Macnab, "The Beginnings of Lollardy in Scotland," *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* 11 (1953): 257; he writes, "In an unlettered age, preaching was the chief means of instruction."

3. Ian Christopher Levy, "Wyclif and the Christian Life," in *A Companion to John Wyclif, Late Medieval Theologian* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 302.

preachers who heard and read them, so that they might use them as a guide in their own preaching.

Sean Otto recently noted that the importance of preaching to John Wycliffe has long been understood, yet “few have taken the time to read his extensive preaching corpus...[and] little has as yet been written about his pastoral theology and his preaching itself.”⁴ Even Hughes Oliphant Old chose not to include Wycliffe in his incredibly full survey of Christian preaching, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*.⁵ This article aims to throw a few shovels of dirt into the lacuna by examining Wycliffe’s understanding and practice of preaching, drawing much from his sermons themselves. It will also discuss the way his influence pervaded Europe, particularly his home island. The “Morningstar of the Reformation” shone brilliantly in his preaching, and he continues to lighten our path today.

The Man and His Times

Before John Wycliffe tells us his thoughts on preaching, it is important to recall his life in brief fashion to set his homiletics in context. The year of Wycliffe’s birth cannot be determined with confidence, though scholars pinpoint it sometime around 1330, in northern England.⁶ He studied at Oxford University, in connection with which most of his life was spent. He became a Fellow of Merton College at Oxford in 1356, which means that he certainly had his Bachelor

4. Sean Otto, “The Authority of the Preacher in a Sermon of John Wyclif,” *Mirator* 12 (2011): 77, www.glossa.fi/mirator/pdf/i-2011/theauthorityofapreacher.pdf (accessed December 30, 2013). One reason few have read Wycliffe’s sermons is that they are almost entirely in Latin and Middle English.

5. Old laments, “Regrettably, this volume does not have a study of John Wycliffe. In a work of this sort selections have to be made, and I have chosen to study Hus, and the circle around him, rather than Wycliffe because he seems more typical of the late medieval revival of prophetic preaching.” Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Medieval Church*, vol. 3 of *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 472n30.

6. For discussions of Wycliffe’s family background and birthday, see Herbert B. Workman, *John Wyclif: A Study of the English Medieval Church*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), 1:21ff; and G. R. Evans, *John Wyclif: Myth and Reality* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 14ff. For a succinct biography, see the entry for “Wycliffe, John,” in F. L. Cross, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1781.

of Arts by this year.⁷ In 1360, he became a Master of Balliol College (a position akin to a residence hall tutor).⁸ In May 1361, Wycliffe was ordained and installed as the parish priest of Fillingham in Lincolnshire, but, in 1363, the bishop of Lincoln granted him a non-residency license so that he might return to Oxford to study for his doctorate of theology. In 1368, he transferred his priestly living to Ludgershall in Buckinghamshire, and, in 1374, he added Lutterworth to his ostensible pastoral charge—"ostensible," for as a full-time teacher and student in the doctoral program, he was an absentee priest for most of the time of his pastoral service.⁹ In 1372, he was awarded his doctorate, and he remained at Oxford until 1381, when his doctrines could no longer be endured.

Wycliffe wrote voluminously, and many of his writings landed him in hot water with the university and ecclesiastical authorities. His book *On Civil Dominion* led to his first censure in 1377, by Pope Gregory XI himself, who condemned nineteen articles.¹⁰ Conflict between the Roman Catholic Church and the kingdom of England, as well as Wycliffe's political connections and the Great Schism of 1378, prevented him from being convicted by the Roman Catholic Church. But his next books, *On the Church*, *On the Eucharist*, and *On the Truth of Sacred Scripture*, were too controversial for even Oxford to tolerate, and when the University publicly condemned his views, he was forced to retire to his parish of Lutterworth.¹¹ There he preached and wrote until his death on December 31, 1384, somewhere around the age of fifty-four.

As evidenced from Wycliffe's early life, the state of the pastorate and the preaching office was far from exemplary in fourteenth-century England. The practice of preaching was common enough; in a period bereft of the mass media that we take for granted in the twenty-first century, preaching was a mainstay of entertainment in the public square as well as a primary means of communicating information about political and theological controversies.¹² There was a vast num-

7. Evans, *John Wyclif: Myth and Reality*, 87.

8. Evans, *John Wyclif: Myth and Reality*, 89.

9. Evans, *John Wyclif: Myth and Reality*, 95.

10. See Evans, *John Wyclif: Myth and Reality*, 172, for a summary of Wycliffe's condemned teachings.

11. Evans, *John Wyclif: Myth and Reality*, 181ff., gives a detailed account of Oxford's rejection of Wycliffe's positions.

12. Evans, *John Wyclif: Myth and Reality*, 126–27.

ber of preachers in an array of venues willing and able to preach: in addition to the regular pulpiteers (bishops and “curates,” or the beneficed priest), preaching was performed by those monks, mendicant (begging) friars, university graduates in theology, vicars, chaplains, pardoners, and others who had been licensed by the bishops.¹³ As we have already noticed, some who should have been preaching were not. Owst cites “the failures, the negligences and ignorances” of bishops and curates, and Evans notes that absenteeism and pluralism (“the holding of several livings and benefices so that it was impossible to provide pastoral care personally in all of them”) were common problems in Wycliffe’s day.¹⁴

“Pardoners,” monks, and friars were three primary sources of preaching, and they supplied Wycliffe with much fodder for criticism; the first and last were itinerants, while the monks typically preached in their cloisters. Pardoners, or “questors,” traversed the land hawking relics and selling indulgences. In the opinion of Oxford scholars, they preached for filthy lucre:

Whereas the shameless pardoners purchase their vile traffic in farm with Simon, sell Indulgences with Gehazi, and squander their gains in disgraceful fashion with the Prodigal Son: but what is more detestable still, although not in holy orders, they preach publicly, and pretend falsely that they have full powers of absolving both living and dead alike from punishment and guilt, along with other blasphemies, by means of which they plunder and seduce the people, and in all probability drag them down with their own person to the infernal regions, by affording them frivolous hope and an audacity to commit sin: therefore, let the

13. G. R. Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England: An Introduction to Sermon Manuscripts of the Period c. 1350–1450* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926), 1. Canon 10 of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215–1216 had mandated that bishops ordain “capable men to profitably carry out the office of holy preaching...whom the bishops might use as their helpers and co-workers, not only in the office of preaching but also in hearing confessions and imposing penances and doing whatever else belongs to the salvation of souls.” Quoted in Siegfried Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections from Later Medieval England: Orthodox Preaching in the Age of Wyclif* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 229. Discussions of the preaching in Wycliffe’s day can be found in these two sources and in H. Leith Spencer, *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993). These books supply a far more detailed and qualified account than I am able to give in this article.

14. Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England*, 25; Evans, *John Wyclif: Myth and Reality*, 95.

abuses of this pestilential sect be blotted out from the threshold of the Church.¹⁵

The golden era of monastic preaching had been the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and Owst states that by Wycliffe's time, "all the great names in the history of monastic eloquence have disappeared, and the pulpit here seems to share in the general decline of cloister fame and cloister influence.... [V]ital, potent interest in preaching... appears to be dead."¹⁶ According to Thomas Renna, Wycliffe's attacks on the monks fell into seven categories:

1. Monks constitute a private sect within the single body of the church. As a sect they promote schism and discord. Their isolation is the result of their arrogant belief that they embody a unique state of perfection, spiritually superior to all other states in the church.
2. Monks own land in excess of their basic necessities.
3. Their ascetic practices are unnatural and unnecessary. Their overly long prayers, both liturgical and private, benefit nobody. At any rate, they only pretend to pray.
4. Monks are the agents of Antichrist.
5. They waste their time in activities outside the cloister. Monks have no business teaching in universities or ministering in parishes.
6. They do not follow their own Rules or the intentions of their holy founders.
7. Many monks adhere to heretical doctrines, particularly those relating to the eucharist, the papacy, and sacerdotal power.¹⁷

Wycliffe's fiercest criticisms, however, were reserved for the friars. Though unlike pardoners they were members of holy orders (Dominicans, Franciscans, Carmelites, and Augustinians¹⁸), they too were widely tainted by a love of money and controversial practices.

15. Quoted in Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England*, 105.

16. Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England*, 49.

17. Thomas Renna, "Wyclif's Attacks on the Monks," in *From Occam to Wyclif*, 268.

18. Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections from Later Medieval England*, 288; Hornbeck II, Lahey, and Somerset, *Wycliffite Spirituality*, 35.

One of their own number, John Bromyard (a noted antagonist of John Wycliffe), contended, “Preachers must not preach for gain of money, but for the gain of souls.”¹⁹ In one of Wycliffe’s sermons, he lays seven charges at the feet of the friars:

[T]hey select preachers for their ability to entertain large crowds rather than their ability to teach; they do not direct their sermons toward repentance from sin; they choose an audience based on its capacity to produce the greatest income; they neglect preaching where gain is not to be had; the richer friars do not preach at all; friars in general refuse to preach to the very poor; and friars are more interested in the collection than in assuming the role of pastors to the people.²⁰

He vigorously attacked the friars for taking money that they did not need: “Also friars say, that it is needful to leave the commandment of Christ, of giving alms to poor feeble men, to poor crooked men, to poor blind men, and to bed-ridden men, and give alms to hypocrites, that fain them holy and needy, when they be strong in body, and have over much riches, both in great waste houses, and precious clothes, in great feasts and many jewels and treasure...”²¹ David Fountain remarks that the friars filled their sermons with “legends of saints, insipid stories, tragedies, fables, coarse buffooneries, unwholesome illustrations and interpretations of dreams.”²²

19. Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England*, 87.

20. Cited in Edith Dolnikowski, “The Encouragement of Lay Preaching as an Ecclesiastical Critique in Wyclif’s Latin Sermons,” in Beverly Mayne Kienzle, et al. (eds.), *Models of Holiness in Medieval Sermons: Proceedings of the International Symposium (Kalamazoo, 4–7 May 1995)* (Louvain-la Neuve: Federation internationale des instituts d’études médiévales, 1996), 202.

21. John Wycliffe, *Tracts and Treatises of John De Wycliffe, D. D.* (London: Blackburn and Pardon, 1845), 224. For more on Wycliffe’s views of the friars, see Workman, II:103ff.

22. David Fountain, *John Wycliffe: The Dawn of the Reformation* (Southampton: Mayflower Christian Books, 1984), 58. Owst provocatively opines that “Wycliffe and his followers owed a good deal to the very men they abused the most”—including the fact that the friars had sometimes given the sermon a superior place to the Mass; they had accustomed the ears of the people to criticisms of the bishops; they had accustomed the people to political sermons; and they had paved the way for (in his words) an “unhappy” and “abnormal” Puritanism in the church. See Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England*, 93.

It was in this milieu that John Wycliffe ministered, and it was to abuses such as these that he responded so vigorously. To be sure, not every bishop, curate, monk, or friar was guilty as charged, and Wycliffe was not the only one to criticize the low state of affairs in the church's preaching.²³ In the words of Owst, "The defiance of [Wycliffe and his followers]...we must consider as a last word in that long pulpit condemnation of prelacy, its utter incapacity, its foul behavior, and its negligence of this same instruction."²⁴ But that last word resounded the longest, and so is best remembered by friends and foes of the Morningstar of the Reformation. To his understanding and practice of preaching we now turn.

John Wycliffe: The Preacher

His Audience

Wycliffe's views influenced the Reformation as they did, in large part, because he aimed his sermons²⁵ not merely at his congregations, but at the preachers who followed in his train and propagated his doctrines. Scholars are agreed that such an aim was his deliberate intention. Johann Loserth writes,

[M]ost of his sermons are school or model sermons...with a view to and for the use of his travelling preachers.... Most frequently we find in the sermons instructions how to deal with the matter of a sermon, whether to compose it elaborately or shortly. In a good many passages he observes that the preacher must adapt his discourse to the capacities of his hearers. The

23. See Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England*, chapters 1–4, for a more encouraging picture of preaching in the medieval period, though the reader must realize that Owst does not take a very favorable view of Wycliffe or the Puritans of the seventeenth century.

24. Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England*, 134.

25. Some modern scholars dispute the assertion that Wycliffe actually wrote what is attributed to him. See Hornbeck II, Lahey, and Somerset, *Wycliffite Spirituality*, 4; Anne Hudson, *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 9–10; cf. Anne Hudson, "Wyclif's Latin Sermons: Questions of Form, Date and Audience," *Archives D'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age* 68 (2001), 223–48. Evans is skeptical that the English Wycliffite sermons can be considered Wycliffe's work. Evans, *John Wyclif: Myth and Reality*, 235.

Cf. Peggy Knapp, *The Style of John Wyclif's English Sermons* (Paris: Mouton, 1977). The question of authorship is worthy of further consideration, but in this article I follow the scholars who attribute the English Wycliffite sermons to Wycliffe himself.

character of these sermons as models for preachers was clearly perceived by the early copyists: thus one of them has inserted in the margin of the MS. the words: Magistri et students, notate.²⁶

As an example of that which Loserth notes, in Wycliffe's sermon on 2 Corinthians 6:1, after pointing out twenty-eight characteristics ("conditions") that Paul says the church "should keep now," he ends the sermon by declaring, "Each of these points that Paul tells may be enlarged to the people, and declared diffusely depending on how God moves the speaker."²⁷ Likewise, in his sermon on John 15:12, he ends by saying, "This sermon should be adapted for the people, adding to what has been said here, as is suitable."²⁸ In his sermon on Lazarus and the rich man, he concludes by directing the priests, "In this Gospel may priests tell of false pride of rich men, and of lustful life of mighty men of this world, and of long pains of hell, and joyful bliss in heaven, and thus lengthen their sermon as the time allows."²⁹ Again, he finishes another sermon with the words, "Here may men touch of all manner of sin, and especially of false priests, traitors to God, that should truly call men to bless and tell them of the way of the law of Christ, and make known to the people the deceits of Antichrist."³⁰ Another clear indication that spurring on the priests was clearly Wycliffe's purpose is the series of sermons he preached on what he called "the six yokes"—six relationships in which the Christian life is lived. These six yokes were explained primarily with a view

26. Iohannis Wyclif, *Sermones, Volume I*, ed. Johann Loserth (London: Wyclif Society, 1887), xv–xvi; see also Hudson, "Wyclif's Latin Sermons," 233–34; Knapp, *The Style of John Wyclif's English Sermons*, 23; Hornbeck II, Lahey, and Somerset, *Wycliffite Spirituality*, 71.

27. John Wyclif, *Select English Works: Volume II*, ed. Thomas Arnold (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1871), 271 (my translation). Cited in Knapp, *The Style of John Wyclif's English Sermons*, 24. These English sermons by Wycliffe are in Middle English and are difficult to read; modern English translations are found in Fountain, *John Wycliffe: The Dawn of the Reformation* 106ff. (unfortunately with no accompanying bibliographic citations); and in Ray C. Petry, ed., *No Uncertain Sound: Sermons That Shaped the Pulpit Tradition* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1948), 250ff.

28. Hornbeck II, Lahey, and Somerset, *Wycliffite Spirituality*, 71.

29. John Wyclif, *Select English Works: Volume I*, ed. Thomas Arnold (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1869), 3 (my translation). The editor's note reads, "The language of this concluding paragraph shows that these homilies were written rather with a view to publication than to delivery from the pulpit."

30. Wyclif, *Select English Works: Volume I*, 6.

to preachers who could then expound them to their people: “So that the simple priests with zealous souls may have material for preaching, there are six yokes that draw Christ’s plow along in our age.... The dove of the church should choose and sing a song of love and peace for all of these....”³¹ Further illustrations of the way Wycliffe instructed preachers directly through his preaching could be multiplied *ad nauseum*.

In light of the above, it is not surprising to find that Wycliffe elucidates his conception of the pastoral ministry in general and preaching in particular not only in his books, including *On the Pastoral Office*,³² and *On the Truth of Holy Scripture*,³³ but also in his sermons, written, preached, and published for the preachers. Both his books and his sermons are replete with explanations of the vital importance of preaching, and how preachers should understand and approach the task to which God has called them.

The Good Shepherd’s Life and Preaching

Wycliffe believed that there were “two things which pertain to the status of pastor: the holiness of the pastor and the wholesomeness of his teaching.”³⁴ Regarding holy living, in *On the Pastoral Office* he particularly emphasizes the importance of imitating Christ in “evangelical poverty,” summarized in the Apostle Paul’s statement in 1 Timothy 6:8, “Having food and wherewith we are clothed let us be content.” He attacks the four “sects” (the bishops, monks, canons, and friars³⁵), stating that they “have departed from this principle of faith. For all these four ‘sects’ heap up for themselves superfluous goods by exceeding too far that apostolic rule, and this is clear from their withdrawal of their service in the labor of the people.”³⁶ According to Wycliffe, holi-

31. Hornbeck II, Lahey, and Somerset, *Wycliffite Spirituality*, 71–72. The six yokes were the yokes between Christ and the simple, faithful viators [travelers]; between spouses; between parent and child; between master and servants; between secular lord and subjects/tenants; and between those who are neighbors.

32. English translation found in Matthew Spinka, ed., *Advocates of Reform: From Wyclif to Erasmus* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1953), 32–60.

33. John Wyclif, *On the Truth of Holy Scripture*, trans. Ian Christopher Levy (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001).

34. Spinka, *Advocates of Reform: From Wyclif to Erasmus*, 32.

35. Spinka, *Advocates of Reform: From Wyclif to Erasmus*, 44.

36. Spinka, *Advocates of Reform: From Wyclif to Erasmus*, 33. Workman explains the reason Wycliffe called these four groups “sects”: “When we try to disentangle

ness of life is so important to the preacher because a lack of holiness would make his preaching useless: “[T]he first condition of the pastor is to cleanse his own spring, that it may not infect the Word of God.... God ordains for a good reason that by the teaching of the pastor and his own manner of life his preaching to his sheep may be made efficacious, since this acts more effectively than mere preaching.... The life of a good pastor is of necessity a mirror to be imitated by his flock....”³⁷ It is no wonder, therefore, that Wycliffe’s followers were “poor preachers,” for they had listened well to their teacher.

In his sermon on John 10:11, “I am the good shepherd,” after indicting popes and friars as evil shepherds and wolves, respectively, Wycliffe lays out three functions of a good shepherd: “It falls to a good shepherd to lead his sheep in whole pastures, and when his sheep are hurt or stabbed, to heal them and to grease them; and when other evil beasts assail them, then help them. And hereto should he put his life to save his sheep from such beasts. The pasture is God’s law, that ever more is green in truth, and rotten pasture[s] are other laws and other fables without ground.”³⁸ In *On the Pastoral Office*, he even more explicitly connects these three functions to the preaching of the Word: “The pastor has a threefold office: first, to feed his sheep spiritually on the Word of God.... The second pastoral office—is to purge wisely the sheep of disease, that they may not infect themselves and others as well. And the third is for the pastor to defend his sheep from ravaging wolves, both sensible and insensible. In all these the especial office of the pastor seems that of sowing the Word of God among the sheep.”³⁹

Wycliffe believed that preaching was the most important act of a pastor. In one of his sermons, he asserts, “The first and greatest work

Wyclif’s main argument against monasticism from the mass of his polemics we find that it lies in Wyclif’s conception of the Church as one body—‘the order of Christ’—without hierarchy, and without divisions. Distinctions of a sort there must be, but such distinctions should not be of spiritual status; they are, as we should now express it, distinctions of convenience or function. Essentially all are one, just as presbyter and bishop originally were one. Against this unity the monks and friars were at war by their proclamation of a religion founded upon a law superior to the law of the Gospel.... They profess a ‘private religion’ as distinct from the religion laid down for all....” Workman, *John Wyclif: A Study of the English Medieval Church*, 2:93.

37. Spinka, *Advocates of Reform: From Wyclif to Erasmus*, 48.

38. Wyclif, *Select English Works: Volume I*, 140 (my translation).

39. Spinka, *Advocates of Reform: From Wyclif to Erasmus*, 48. See also Wyclif, *On the Truth of Holy Scripture*, 288ff.

of the priest is the promulgation of religious truth.... The proclamation of the gospel is the most important pastoral duty."⁴⁰ It was "on this basis that they retain the dignity of their office," since "[i]nsofar as the...preached word is the truth, it is essentially God himself."⁴¹ That preaching is "the special work of the curate" is evident from the fact that "Christ advances more in his apostles by preaching to the people than by doing any miracle which in his own person he did in Judea."⁴² To Wycliffe, preaching was even more important than prayer or administering the sacraments: "Preaching the gospel exceeds prayer and administration of the sacraments, to an infinite degree.... Spreading the gospel has far wider and more evident benefit; it is thus the most precious activity of the Church."⁴³ Elsewhere he asserted, "[I]t is evident that preaching God's word is a more solemn act than consecrating the sacrament, since only one person receives the word of God when accepting the body of Christ. It is a far better thing, therefore that the people received God's word than that a solitary person receive Christ's body."⁴⁴

In light of Wycliffe's obvious concern with rightly expounding the nature of the Lord's Supper in his book *On the Eucharist*, it is likely that Evans is correct that "this [assertion of the superiority of preaching] is not a weighing of the sacramental and the pastoral ministry against one another in favour of the pastoral," and that "we must be careful here not to read into this the thinking of the sixteenth-century Reformation."⁴⁵ In contrasting the preached Word and the visible Word (the sacraments) as he does, Wycliffe is speaking in hyperbole (e.g., "to an infinite degree") to make his point: preaching is paramount for the minister of the gospel. It is the principal task of the pastor primarily because it is "the work which most directly produces children of God."⁴⁶

Not only does the preaching of the Word create heirs of the kingdom of God, it powerfully fits them for that kingdom. Johann Loserth

40. Cited in Wyclif, *Sermones*, Volume I, iii.

41. Wyclif, *On the Truth of Holy Scripture*, 280, 287.

42. Spinka, *Advocates of Reform: From Wyclif to Erasmus*, 49.

43. Spinka, *Advocates of Reform: From Wyclif to Erasmus*, 49.

44. Wyclif, *On the Truth of Holy Scripture*, 286. Spinka, *Advocates of Reform: From Wyclif to Erasmus*, 49n54, also cites Wyclif, *Sermones*, Volume I, 110.

45. Evans, *John Wyclif: Myth and Reality*, 123.

46. Wyclif, *On the Truth of Holy Scripture*, 287.

writes that, for Wycliffe, “the preaching of the word of God is the work of a priest which contributes most to the building up of the Church, for God’s word is the seed which overcomes the strongly armed, which softens hard hearts, renews men brutalized by sins and departed far from God, and transforms them into men of godliness.”⁴⁷ Similarly, Gotthard Lechler has argued, “Before everything else Wycliffe lays stress upon the truth that the preaching of the Word of God is that function which serves, in a degree peculiar to itself, to the edification of the Church; and this is so, because the Word of God is a seed.”⁴⁸ These two authors have rightly recognized that one of Wycliffe’s favorite images in regard to the Word and its power is the Word as the seed, an image taken from the parable of the sower. In Wycliffe’s sermon on Luke 8:4, he declares, “This gospel tells in a parable how that holy Church grows by the gracious sowing of Christ, and the growing of his holy seed...the seed is God’s word.”⁴⁹ In another sermon, he exults in the power of this seed: “O marvelous power of the divine seed which overthrows strong soldiers, softens hearts made hard as stones, and recalls men, turned into beasts by sin and thus removed infinitely distant from God, and transforms them into men made godly.”⁵⁰ It is through the verbal sowing of this seed that faith is engendered and strengthened, and sin is consequently eradicated:

The more strength that sin gathers, the more essential it is to preach, since it is certainly impossible for anyone to sin unless he lacks faith. Now if anyone sins he fails to believe in God, and thus lacks the first article of faith. And since believing in God means firmly adhering to him through love, it is clear that the more someone sins the more he fails to adhere to God as he should.... How could anyone consent to sin, as much by act as by habit, if he fully believes both in the goodness and the retribution of God, as well as the falsity of the carnal world and that of the devil? Every sinner sins as a result of a poor choice, choosing what appears good to him because he thinks it is more useful

47. Wyclif, *Sermones, Volume I*, v.

48. Quoted in Otto, “The Authority of the Preacher in a Sermon of John Wyclif,” 79.

49. Wyclif, *Select English Works: Volume I*, 102.

50. Quoted in Otto, “The Authority of the Preacher in a Sermon of John Wyclif,” 79–80.

to him than the suitable good he rejects. But he clearly does this because he lacks faith.⁵¹

Wycliffe elsewhere specifies nine ways the Word works in the heart of God's elect (quoting the Scripture referenced after each phrase):

It breaks our heart through fear [Jeremiah 23:29]...it crushes through sorrow [Psalm 51:17]...it melts through love [Song of Solomon 5:6]...it draws upward through desire beyond the hardness of heart [Song of Solomon 1:4]...it drinks in through delight [Psalm 77:3]...it gives life through inspiration [Hebrews 4:12; John 5:25]...it heals the sick [Psalm 107:20]...it cuts off diseased limbs and inflicts wounds in order to save [Hebrews 4:12]...it illuminates so that the splinters of sin might be seen [Psalm 119:105].⁵²

For Wycliffe, the Word of God preached is effective and powerful to convert and sanctify; therefore, it must be proclaimed widely and promiscuously.

Who Could Preach?

We noted above that during the medieval era, many people other than bishops and beneficed clergy could preach in the medieval church, but only by license of the episcopacy. Wycliffe's vision of a perfect church, however, according to Dolnikowski, was one "in which the Gospel was preached freely and openly by all believers," as compared to the church of his own day, "in which the Gospel message was controlled, trivialized and distorted by the religious establishment."⁵³ Wycliffe believed that all Christians, especially all priests (whether beneficed or not⁵⁴), should be free to preach without the permission and control of a bishop. Indeed, one of Wycliffe's positions condemned as erroneous at the end of his life was that "any priest or deacon could preach without a license by virtue of his ordination."⁵⁵ Owst calls this view "an innovation indeed...the crowning heresy of the Lollard position," and cites one of Wycliffe's sermons: "Christ was not prevented by

51. Wyclif, *On the Truth of Holy Scripture*, 291.

52. Wyclif, *On the Truth of Holy Scripture*, 286–87.

53. Dolnikowski, "The Encouragement of Lay Preaching as an Ecclesiastical Critique in Wyclif's Latin Sermons," 193.

54. Levy, "Wyclif and the Christian Life," 303.

55. Levy, "Wyclif and the Christian Life," 303.

feigned jurisdiction to preach among the folk, as if he feared the prelates; for this use in jurisdiction was not yet brought in by deceit of the fiend, as it now is, to prevent true preaching.”⁵⁶

Related to the desire for freedom from ecclesiastical control, Wycliffe believed his disciples should be free to preach wherever they would like. “And this is another note, how Christ bade them...go and preach the gospel freely to all manner of men. And woe be to them that forsake this, for jurisdiction or other cause....”⁵⁷ Again, he proclaims in one of his sermons:

The gospel [Matthew 9:35] says how, ‘Jesus went about in the country,’ both to more places and less, ‘as cities and castles,’ to teach us to profit generally to men, and not to refrain to preach to a people for they be few, and our fame should be little.... Christ went to small uplandish towns, as to Bethphage and to Cana in Galilee; for Christ went to these places, where he knew to do good and he travelled not for winning of money; for he was not smitten with pride nor with covetousness....⁵⁸

With these controlling views in place, in Wycliffe’s later years a group of “poor preachers” gathered around and were sent out by him.⁵⁹ The effect of his views on those who came after him is most clearly evidenced by Archbishop Arundel’s 1409 legislation, which sought to diminish the influence of these unlicensed preachers. Not only did his mandates insist that beneficed priests preach only simple topics to the laypeople, and confine their criticism of the clergy to audiences of clergy alone,⁶⁰ but most significantly there was a

56. Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England*, 134 (my translation).

57. Wyclif, *Select English Works: Volume I*, 361.

58. Wyclif, *Select English Works: Volume I*, 197–98.

59. In some ways, Wycliffe’s vision was very similar to that of the friars; Ian Levy argues that the reason the mendicant orders receive the harshest criticism from Wycliffe is precisely because “their ideal was all the more noble.” Levy, “Wyclif and the Christian Life,” 302. Some scholars (cf. Evans, *John Wyclif: Myth and Reality*, 254) reject the notion that Wycliffe sent out this band of poor preachers, arguing from the absence of evidence. But the editors of *Wycliffite Spirituality* write, “More recently, scholars have adopted the corollary that an absence of evidence does not indicate evidence of absence and, following Michael Wilks and Anne Hudson, have regarded the ‘poor preachers’ movement as having been instigated by Wyclif.” Hornbeck II, Lahey, and Somerset, *Wycliffite Spirituality*, 33; cf. Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, 62ff.

60. See Spencer, *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages*, 66.

rigid tightening up of the system of licenses, by which no secular or regular might now venture to preach under any circumstances, to clergy or people, in church or outside, without prior examination by diocesans, and the subsequent issue of letters of authority. Moreover, there is further stipulation that licenses should be granted “to one specified parish, or more, as seems expedient to the Ordinary aforementioned, according to the quality of the person to be admitted.” Henceforth any “curate” who admitted a preacher lacking adequate credentials was to be dealt with severely.⁶¹

As we shall see when we trace Wycliffe’s influence on the Reformation, however, nothing could ultimately stop the preaching of the Word of God; indeed, the Word of God is what Wycliffe’s disciples preached.

What Did They Preach?

Wycliffe and those who imitated him were committed to the Pauline dictum, “Preach the word!” (2 Tim. 4:2). They preached God’s Word in the language of God’s people. Peggy Knapp has argued that the sufficiency of the Bible in preaching was the one element of Wycliffe’s views of preaching that can be seen as a new concept in the church.⁶² Owst concurs, citing Wycliffe’s “insistence on ‘the naked text’ or exposition of the Gospel message” as his chief contribution to English medieval preaching.⁶³ According to Owst, “the ignorance and silence of parochial clergy [and] the scholastic refinements and analogues of the doctors and friars had made such a demand sooner or later inevitable.”⁶⁴ God raised Wycliffe up in the midst of pulpit abdication to call pastors back to their primary task.

61. Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England*, 140–41. Owst notes the views of one Dr. Gascoigne, who judged Arundel’s Constitution of 1409 to be a “cruel death-blow to English preaching,” for it “was little else than the official seal of approbation upon [the] policy of silence [by the bishops]. The non-preaching bishops had at last their full opportunity, and...right well they used it. Hardly for great sums of money or gifts would they now concede even a temporary license to preachers, much less preach themselves. Pulpit silence became golden. Worthy and unworthy together were excluded from the privilege of exhortation and rebuke, the word of God was as it were imprisoned and in chains with the prophet, and evil ran riot unchecked.” Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England*, 41.

62. Knapp, *The Style of John Wyclif’s English Sermons*, 31.

63. Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England*, 132.

64. Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England*, 132–33.

We see this emphasis on preaching the pure Word of God repeatedly in his sermons. In a sermon on Luke 2:33, Wycliffe declares, “To some men it pleases to tell the tales that they find in saints’ lives, or outside holy writ; and such thing pleases often more the people. But we hold this manner good—to leave such words and trust in God, and tell surely his law, and especially his gospel; for we believe that they came of Christ, and so God says them all. And these words, since they are God’s, should be taken as believed; and more better they quicken men than other words that men know not.”⁶⁵ Wycliffe took exception to the preaching of the friars (as well as those who permitted them to preach) because they failed to preach the Word: “Lord! what reason should drive hereto, to prevent true priests to preach the gospel freely...and give leave to these friars to preach fables and heresies, and afterward to spoil [rob] the people, and sell them their false sermons. Certainly the people should not suffer such falsehood of Antichrist.”⁶⁶ He desired not only to avoid fables, but speculation as well. Knapp explains that, for Wycliffe,

The arguments of the schools have no place...but simple “practik, put in dede, how men shulde lyve by Goddis law...not speculative, or gemetrie, ne other sciencis” (I, 241). Nor do we need to “dreeme” about newe pointes that the gospel levethe” (I, 13). Therefore, “muse we not”, says Wyclif time and again, about the name of Tobies hound (I, 13), how the martyr Zacarie was killed (I, 323), how Jonah got out of the whale (II, 52), what Thomas doubted (II, 140), what country the three kings came from (II, 243), or how many thousands God killed for fornication (II, 334). Such “veyn curiouste were a tempting of God,” and a flaw in our belief that “Crist wroot here as myche as was needful us to cunne” (II, 88).⁶⁷

Preachers should preach the Word of God, especially the gospel, because that is what Christ Himself preached: “Christ preached not fables, but the Gospel of God, that was good tidings of the kingdom of heaven.”⁶⁸

65. Wyclif, *Select English Works: Volume I*, 332 (my translation).

66. Wyclif, *Select English Works: Volume I*, 176 (my translation).

67. Knapp, *The Style of John Wyclif’s English Sermons*, 25. Her references are to the several volumes of Wycliffe’s *Select English Works*.

68. Wyclif, *Select English Works: Volume I*, 198 (my translation).

Specifically, Wycliffe notes five things that a good shepherd should preach, in contradistinction to the wicked shepherds of Ezekiel 34:4 (“You did not strengthen the weak, did not heal the sick, did not bind up the broken, did not bring back the abandoned, did not seek after the lost, but you ruled over them with severity and might.”). In a hermeneutically questionable manner, he closely compares Ezekiel’s five censures to the “five words” that Paul desires to speak in the church in 1 Corinthians 14:19. The first word “in which the others are founded is the word of faith, on account of which he says, ‘you did not strengthen the weak.’” Second, pastors must teach people to turn away from sin; “in a certain way, rejecting what is evil comes before doing what is good. As such, it is significant that he says secondly, ‘You did not heal the sick.’ For sin is the disease of the soul, whose healing only begins when sin is extracted.” Third, the preacher must “instruct his sheep to proceed down the path of good moral conduct, which is expressed under these words: ‘you did not bind up the broken.’” Fourth, good shepherds “preach the terror of everlasting punishment, which is noted when he says fourthly, ‘You did not bring back the abandoned.’” Wycliffe views this sort of preaching as an antidote to wandering; “it is meant to frighten them with the very opposite of consolation, so that they will return to the flock. Though hardened by their vices, they are led back to Christ by revealing the grievousness and everlasting duration of hell’s punishment when compared to a bit of fleeting happiness.” The final word that preachers must preach is the enticing “hope of beatitude, which is noted in this saying: ‘You did not seek after the lost.’”⁶⁹ These five words are a pithy summary of Wycliffe’s understanding of the preacher’s general content: the doctrine of the gospel/the Word of faith; putting off sin; putting on righteousness; warnings of judgments to those who walk away from the Lord; and allurements of God’s grace and mercy to those who return to Him (note the parallels to 2 Timothy 3:16–17 and to the book of Hebrews).

Like Jesus, Wycliffe also sought to preach in the language of the people. To be sure, to scholars he preached in Latin. But to the common people, he spoke the common language. “By authority of the law of God men should speak her words as God’s law speaks, and strange not in speech from understanding of the people, and always

69. Wyclif, *On the Truth of Holy Scripture*, 296–98.

beware that the people understand well, and so use common speech in their own person....”⁷⁰ In his *On the Pastoral Office*, he sounds the same refrain: “It seems first that the knowledge of God’s law should be taught in that language which is best known, because this knowledge is God’s Word.”⁷¹ His conviction to translate the Bible into the vernacular English was an extension of beliefs that he first applied in his own preaching.

Fountain notes that there were three methods of preaching popular in Wycliffe’s day: “declaring,” or taking a subject or text and delivering an oration on it; “dividing” a text into many branches; and “postillating,” or reading a portion and explaining it.⁷² Wycliffe’s method was the last. As one can quickly see from a glance at the table of contents of his *Select English Works*, each of his sermons arose from a text of Scripture (primarily the gospels, but he preached from the epistles as well), and his method was to preach the literal sense of the text, working through the text sentence by sentence, then applying the truth of the text to his hearers.⁷³ His applications were often particular to the abuses he saw in the church of his day, whether regarding the Pope, the friars, or the monks.⁷⁴ Wycliff was a man of his medieval times, holding that there were four levels on which Scripture should be read. “It is said commonly that holy writ has four understandings. The first understanding is plain, by letter of the story. The second understanding is called allegorical, when men understand by knowledge of the letter, what thing shall fall here before the day of doom. The third understanding is called tropological, and it teaches how men should live here in virtues. The fourth understanding is called anagogical, and it tells how it shall be with men that are in heaven.”⁷⁵ Wycliffe’s sermons contain many examples of hermeneutical allegorizing (to use the word in the way we most often do today, i.e., to see in the literal meaning a deeper “spiritual” meaning that is not

70. Wyclif, *Select English Works: Volume I*, 78–79 (my translation).

71. Spinka, *Advocates of Reform: From Wyclif to Erasmus*, 49.

72. Fountain, *John Wycliffe: The Dawn of the Reformation*, 62.

73. Cf. Knapp, *The Style of John Wyclif’s English Sermons*, 28.

74. See, for example, Sermon 52 in Wyclif, *Select English Works: Volume I*, 148ff.

75. Wyclif, *Select English Works: Volume I*, 30 (my translation). For more on this topic, see Evans, *John Wyclif: Myth and Reality*, 117ff.; Wyclif, *On the Truth of Holy Scripture*, 41ff.; and Evans, “Wyclif on Literal and Metaphorical,” in *From Ockham to Wyclif*, 259ff.

warranted by the text itself), as we saw above with his handling of Ezekiel 34 and 1 Corinthians 14, and as illustrated when he waxes eloquent on Peter's fishing net in his sermon on Luke 5:1:

Two fishings that Peter fished betokeneth two takings of men unto Christ's religion, and from the fiend to God. In this first fishing was the net broken, to token that many men be converted, and after break Christ's religion; but at the second fishing, after the resurrection, when the net was full of many great fishes, was not the net broken, as the gospel saith; for that betokeneth saints that God chooseth to Heaven. And so these nets that fishers fish with betokeneth God's law, in which virtues and truths be knitted; and other properties of nets tell properties of God's law; and void places between knots betokeneth life of kind, that men have beside virtues. And four cardinal virtues be figured by knitting of the net. The net is broad in the beginning, and after strait in end, to teach that men, when they be turned first, live a broad worldly life; but afterward, when they be dipped in God's law, they keep them straitlier from sins. These fishers of God should wash their nets in his river, for Christ's preachers should chevely [chiefly] tell God's law, and not meddle with man's law, that is troubled water; for man's law containeth sharp stones and trees, by which the net of God is broken and fishes wend out to the world. And this betokeneth Gennesaret, that is, a wonderful birth, for the birth by which a man is born of water and of the Holy Ghost is much more wonderful than man's kindly birth. Some nets be rotten, some have holes, and some be unclean for default of washing; and thus on three manners faileth the word of preaching. And matter of this net and breaking thereof give men great matter to speak God's word, for virtues and vices and truths of the gospel be matter enough to preach to the people.⁷⁶

We see the same in the way he expounds Jesus' entering into Jerusalem: the disciples put their cloaks upon the foal and the ass in Matthew 21:7 "to teach us that heathen men, that were wanton as fools, should receive Christ and his laws, and after Jews as asses, for they shall bear to the end of the world the weight of the old law, as foaled asses bear

76. Henry Craik, *English Prose: Volume I, Fourteenth to Sixteenth Century* (New York: Macmillan, 1916), 30ff.

loads what so ever be laid on him.”⁷⁷ Sometimes, as in the case of Jesus’ turning the water into wine, Wycliffe sees symbolism that is clearly a part of the inspired author’s meaning, though it is mixed with unwarranted hermeneutical leaps.⁷⁸ Yet in spite of his excesses, he was committed to unpacking and applying the plain meaning of the text to his own day and age.⁷⁹

A good example of this commitment is seen in Wycliffe’s sermon on Philippians 4:4 (“Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I will say, rejoice!”), found in the second volume of his *Select English Works*.⁸⁰ From this verse and its context he expounds “five manners that a man should have.” The first manner “that God bids is to be joyful and glad.” Wycliffe connects joy to the three virtues of faith, hope, and love:

And without this manner of life Christian man fails always in faith, in hope, and love. The ground of joy that man should have should stand cleanly in his God, and this joy should evermore be here in part, and in heaven fully. For what man may have these three, faith, hope, and love, but if he think on God’s goodness, and by this have joy thereof? And thus he fails in faith that wants this joy in God. And who hopes to come to bliss, that faith tells is in heaven, but if he joy in this hope that he has of this bliss? Or who loves God by charity, but if he joy in God’s highness? And since each man should have these three, either in root or in fruit, each man should ever joy in God that is Lord of all.

The second manner that men should have is a “sober rejoicing in God, and suffering for him with glad cheer.” To move men to joy even in the midst of great suffering, Paul says that the Lord is nigh. Wycliffe compares the Christian to a wife waiting for her husband: “Christian men take as faith, that Christ is the Lord and spouse of the Church; and that time till the day of doom is nigh to regard. But well we know that a wife, when she shall soon meet with her husband, she gladdens her heart and her cheer, in hope to be comforted by him. Why should not Christian souls do so, when they hope their Spouse is nigh?”

77. Wyclif, *Select English Sermons, Volume I*, 66 (my translation).

78. Wyclif, *Select English Sermons, Volume I*, 86ff.

79. See Knapp, *The Style of John Wyclif’s English Sermons*, 26.

80. Wyclif, *Select English Sermons, Volume II*, 232ff. All translations from this sermon are my own.

The third manner to which Paul exhorts us is a heart free from anxiety. “These men are anxious for naught, that are anxious for vanity,” writes Wycliffe. The fourth manner is that we should pray in the name of the Trinity.⁸¹ And the fifth manner is the peace of God that will keep our wills and understandings, “and give us hearty lasting in these five manners to our Spouse.” Sober joy in suffering, a lack of anxiety, prayer, and peace—these are the things Paul calls us to in Philippians 4, and therefore these are the things Wycliffe points us to in his sermon on the text.

This summary of Wycliffe’s understanding of preaching has been short but full. He preached to the sheep of God and to the shepherds of the sheep, purposefully pointing the latter to becoming more skillful in the way they fed the flock with the Word. He called these shepherds to live a holy life and to preach a holy Bible. Both were necessary, and taken together they accomplished the work of building up the sheep in the faith and in holiness. He believed that all Christians should be allowed to preach freely, unhindered by ecclesiastical bureaucracy, and that the matter of their preaching was to be the Word of God alone in the language of the people. There is certainly more to discover from his writings and sermons, but these are some of the most important elements of his homiletical stance.

John Wycliffe: His Influence on the Reformation

John Wycliffe is called the “Morningstar” of the Reformation for ample reason. But how did the light of his teachings shine forth and spread? To answer this question, we approach it from the perspective of the European continent, on the one hand, and of the island of Great Britain on the other. In God’s providence, ecclesiastical and civil politics combined to catapult Wycliffe’s ideas onto the continent. France and England had already been opponents, but the Great Schism of 1378 divided France from Rome as well. Since England naturally followed the Roman pope rather than the French pope, Rome sought to persuade Bohemia to sever ties with France and to form an allegiance with England. The occasion of this alliance was a marriage between Princess Anne of Bohemia with King Richard II of England

81. Wycliffe quotes the text thus: “in all manner pray in the name of the Father of heaven; and all manner special prayer in the name of God the Son; and in all manner of thanksgiving in the name of the Holy Ghost.”

in 1382 (though Katherine Walsh notes that this marriage alliance “did not emerge in a vacuum,” as Anne’s birth had been announced to the English court in 1366).⁸² When Anne arrived in England, she brought with her scholars to study at Oxford. Exposed to Wycliffe’s teachings and writings, the Bohemian scholars carried both back to their countrymen.⁸³ Wycliffe’s published sermons were brought to the Continent, and Johann Loserth tells us that a comparison of Hus’s and Wycliffe’s sermons demonstrates that the Bohemian Reformer in some cases took from Wycliffe’s work almost word for word.⁸⁴ Translating Wycliffe’s writings into Czechoslovakian contributed to Hus being burned at the stake.

Hus’s influence on the sixteenth-century Reformation was great. At and after the Disputation at Leipzig in July 1519, Luther acknowledged that he was a Hussite. When the debate turned to the subject of the church, Eck exclaimed, “No Pope, no Church!” Luther responded in Wycliffite fashion, “The Greek Church has existed without a Pope, and you are the first to call it no Church.”⁸⁵ When Eck accused Luther of being “as bad as Wycliffe and Hus,” Luther answered, “Every opinion of Hus was not wrong”—which belief on Luther’s part ended the debate as far as Eck was concerned.⁸⁶ Luther believed that he was the fulfillment of Hus’s prophecy from prison: “Jan Hus has prophesied about me when he wrote from his prison in Bohemia: ‘Now they roast a goose, but in a hundred years they shall hear a swan singing, which they will not be able to do away with.’”⁸⁷ He was unmoved by

82. Katherine Walsh, “Wyclif’s Legacy in Central Europe in the Late Fourteenth and Early Fifteenth Centuries,” in *From Ockham to Wyclif*, 402.

83. Christopher K. Lensch, “The Morningstar of the Reformation: John Wycliffe,” *Western Reformed Seminary Journal* 3, no. 2 (August 1996), 18. There was already a native reformation movement in Bohemia, and Wycliffe’s teachings only spurred on these forerunners.

84. Wyclif, *Sermones, Volume I*, xxiii–xxvii. For more on the connection between Wycliffe and Hus, see Walsh, “Wyclif’s Legacy in Central Europe.”

85. John Wycliffe was one of the first to use this form of argumentation. See N. R. Needham, *2,000 Years of Christ’s Power, Part Two: The Middle Ages* (London, Grace Publications Trust, 2005), 387.

86. T. M. Lindsay, *The Reformation: A Handbook* (1882; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2006), 12.

87. Quoted in Heiko Oberman, *Forerunners of the Reformation* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), 18. Oberman states that Luther did not receive a copy of Hus’s work *On the Church* until October 3, 1519, and that in response to reading it he wrote, “I have taught and held all the teachings of Jan Hus, but thus far did not

the prospect of his *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* being labeled as “Wycliffite.”⁸⁸ Thus, while Luther obviously did not agree with everything Wycliffe or Hus wrote,⁸⁹ it is not improper to call Wycliffe, through Hus, a great-grandfather of the Lutheran Reformation.

Wycliffe’s impact on the Protestant Reformation in England and Scotland is more direct, though perhaps not as substantive in England as one would imagine. N. R. Needham states, “Wyclif’s ideas had a far greater success in the Holy Roman Empire than they did in England.”⁹⁰ T. M. Lindsay is more explicit:

It is very doubtful indeed whether his influence lasted among the English people down to the sixteenth century in such force at least as to count for much in the longings for reformation which were filling the minds of many pious people.... Lollardy was undoubtedly a preparation for the Reformation, and the Bible-men, as they were called, must have exercised great influence in preparing the people of England for a revival of heart-religion, if they had been in actual communication with the generation in whose midst the Reformation arose. It seems difficult, however, to trace any such direct connection, and, at all events, no trace of widespread sympathy with Bible-reading or the poor preachers is visible in England either during the reign of Henry VII or at the accession of Henry VIII. The English people as a whole seem to have had very little sympathy with the Reformation until the time of Elizabeth.⁹¹

The reason for the lack of influence in England is not hard to see, when one remembers that Wycliffe’s bones were exhumed and burned by the church in December 1427, and that the history of Oxford University “from the late fourteenth century down to the Reformation has

know it. Johann von Staupitz has taught it in the same unintentional way. In short we are all Hussites and did not know it. Even Paul and Augustine...” (212). The date of his receiving Hus’s book is after the Leipzig Disputation, so it is unclear why Luther would write at this particular point that he did not realize that he held Hussite views, since he had already acknowledged his familiarity with Hus’s writings at the Disputation.

88. Guy Fitch Lytle, “John Wyclif, Martin Luther and Edward Powell: Heresy and the Oxford Theology Faculty at the Beginning of the Reformation,” in *From Ockham to Wyclif*, 466.

89. See, for example, Oberman, *Forerunners of the Reformation*, 10.

90. Needham, *2,000 Years of Christ’s Power, Part Two: The Middle Ages*, 389.

91. Lindsay, *The Reformation: A Handbook*, 166–67.

to be seen as a reaction to Wyclif and his legacy.”⁹² The largely personal, rather than theological, nature of Henry VIII’s later break with the Roman Church also leads one to be unsurprised by an unwillingness to embrace Wycliffe’s views wholeheartedly. Yet Spencer, astutely observing that “the significance of a movement is not reducible to its visible success or failure,” hastens to remind us that the conservative reaction to Lollardy in fourteenth-century England proves that the Reformers were getting their point across: “[T]he strength of feeling evinced by those who felt themselves or their principles under threat is itself a testimony to [the Lollards’] potency.”⁹³

In Scotland, the story was somewhat different. Wycliffe’s influence began with Scottish students studying at Oxford while he was teaching.⁹⁴ It expanded as English Wycliffites escaped to Scotland, and as the Lollards went forth into Scotland in the fifteenth century in numbers large enough that W. Stanford Reid regards them as one of the significant sources of the Reformation in Scotland.⁹⁵ It is known that the Scottish Lollards in the early 1400s had a correspondence relationship with the Hussites in Prague, and the founding of St. Andrews University was directly related to the impact of Lollardy in the area.⁹⁶ John Knox, in his history of the Reformation in Scotland, mentions a James Resby, “an Englishman by birth, scholar of Wycliffe,” who, in 1407, was “burnt for having said, that the pope was not the vicar of Christ; and that a man of a wicked life was not acknowledged to be pope.”⁹⁷ He spread his Lollardy through his preaching.⁹⁸ Paul Crawar also held Wycliffite views; he was a Hussite Bohemian,

92. Lytle, “John Wyclif, Martin Luther and Edward Powell,” 469.

93. Spencer, *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages*, 7.

94. W. Stanford Reid, “The Lollards in Pre-Reformation Scotland,” *Church History* 11, no. 4 (1942): 269–70; Lindsay, *The Reformation: A Handbook*, 144.

95. Reid, “The Lollards in Pre-Reformation Scotland,” 269.

96. Reid, “The Lollards in Pre-Reformation Scotland,” 271–72.

97. John Knox, *The History of the Reformation of Religion in Scotland* (Glasgow: Blackie, Fullarton, & Co., 1831), 3. This note states that the reference to Resby is found in David Buchanan’s edition. Cf. Reid, “The Lollards in Pre-Reformation Scotland,” 270.

98. Macnab, “The Beginnings of Lollardy in Scotland,” 257. He opines, “In all probability Resby was one of [Wycliffe’s poor preachers]. It was in this way, at any rate, that he gained the ear of the simple and unlettered by whom he was held in high esteem.”

and came to St. Andrews in 1432, most likely to evangelize the Scots. He was put to death there shortly after his arrival.⁹⁹

From the 1440s to the 1490s, we do not have much proof of Lollardy in Scotland, but, in the 1490s, in Ayrshire, Reid affirms that there is “definite evidence that the heresy was gaining considerable influence.”¹⁰⁰ One Murdock Nisbet, forced out of Scotland because of his heretical views, came back later with a Wycliffite translation of the Scriptures, which he translated into Scots. The Campbells in particular embraced Wycliffe’s teachings; Reid argues, “It was these people who prepared the way religiously for the Reformation. Tracing their spiritual ancestry to the English refugees and Bohemian missionaries at the beginning of the fifteenth century, they had laid the ground for a religious revolution.... When Lutheran teachings began to filter into the country, the preparation laid by the Lollards became immediately apparent.”¹⁰¹

Thus John Wycliffe, though he died over a century previous to the epochal events of the Protestant Reformation proper, is clearly connected to this great revival of religion both on the European continent and the British Isles. In both locations, it was his preaching in particular, and the preaching of those who followed him, that tilled the ground and sowed the seed for the great harvest that was to come.

Lessons for the Modern Church

John Wycliffe’s preaching impacted the church in his own day and through the centuries. It is a shame that his sermons remain locked behind Latin and Middle English, and scholars would do the church a fitting service to translate them into the vernacular English. The Morningstar of the Reformation continues to shine brightly in the sky, and we have much to learn from his understanding of preaching as we approach our own ministries.

First, Wycliffe’s example of preaching with an eye to the preachers is exemplary for those involved in training men for the ministry. As

99. Reid, “The Lollards in Pre-Reformation Scotland,” 276.

100. Reid, “The Lollards in Pre-Reformation Scotland,” 278, 280ff.

101. Reid, “The Lollards in Pre-Reformation Scotland,” 283. For more on the way that Lollardy influenced the Scottish Reformation, see also James Edward McGoldrick, *Luther’s Scottish Connection* (1989; repr., Birmingham, Ala.: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2008), 9ff. McGoldrick also discusses the way that Patrick Hamilton brought Luther’s teachings into Scotland (37).

professors (or even pastors who have seminary students in their congregations) preach, whether in seminary chapels or local churches, they must be aware that their students are going to imitate the manner and matter of their preaching. They ought not to ignore this reality, but at times should capitalize upon it by interspersing their sermons with hints and directions to the preachers-to-be. Modern homileticians may frown upon students using their sermons, or even sermon outlines, verbatim, but even as they encourage students to do their own spadework, they should take the opportunity in their own preaching (as well as in their homiletics classrooms) to instruct in the difficult art of proclaiming God's Word.

Second, Wycliffe teaches us the importance of preaching the Word in the language of God's people. Our calling as preachers is to preach and teach God's Word. That means, first, that preachers need to be preaching. As our denominations grow bigger, far too many ministers become administrators and bureaucrats alone, ignoring their call to proclaim the gospel from pulpit and lectern. A minister who does not sense the compelling need to open the Scriptures with God's people ought to question his call to the ministry. When preachers do preach, Wycliffe powerfully reminds us to stick to the text. His medieval commitment to expounding the Scriptures puts some modern evangelicals to shame.

Likewise, Wycliffe's commitment to preaching, publishing, and translating the Bible into the vernacular is an ever-present reminder of the great need of all of God's people for all of God's Word. We may not have to deal with the Scriptures being in a foreign tongue that none of the sheep can read or comprehend, but we still have to deal with the reality that the sheep do not understand many of the words and concepts God Himself uses in the Bible. We must beware of throwing around terms like "propitiation" or "justification" and assuming that our flock knows what we mean. Certainly, we must familiarize them with the words that God has chosen to use in His Word, but we must be conscious about defining terms and explaining ideas in ways that even the most uneducated of God's people might be able to grasp and understand.

Third, Wycliffe's twin emphasis upon the life and the preaching of the minister must be heeded. "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine," wrote the Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 4:16. Particularly helpful is Wycliffe's reminder that the effectiveness of our teaching is

related to the holiness of our life. Because of his ecclesiological milieu, he was keen to call preachers to a standard of poverty in imitation of Christ Himself. While we might disagree with the depth of poverty that he expects ministers to endure, yet the Gehazian “golden handcuffs” are a constant temptation for those who labor among God’s people. We must learn to be content with whatever the Lord provides us. In a day in which pastors build eight thousand square-foot mansions and have reality TV shows touting their wealth, Wycliffe’s words are extremely apropos.

Fourth, the history of John Wycliffe and the impact of his preaching across Europe and down through the ages is an encouragement to those who preach and wonder if anyone is listening. The Lord has promised that His Word will not return void (Isa. 55:10–11), and Wycliffe stands as a living example of the way the Lord delights to use the foolishness of preaching and teaching to overturn centuries of false doctrine and unbiblical ecclesiology. We never know who our preaching is reaching, nor how or when the Lord might choose to leverage His Word through our mouths on behalf of the church at large.

Yet we must not embrace Wycliffe’s views unhesitatingly. In particular, his understanding of who may preach and where they may preach raises questions. Though the distance in time and the difference in situation make an exact comparison difficult, his views are reminiscent of the Old Side/New Side controversy in eighteenth-century American Presbyterianism. During this time of dissension, preachers from one presbytery were travelling into other presbyteries and preaching without permission of the presbyteries in whose geographic bounds they preached.¹⁰² Wycliffe’s practices were not very different from that of the New Side men. It is easy to look favorably on the Lollards’ free preaching of the Word of God. Yet few presbyteries today would smile upon an unordained or unlicensed member of one of her churches, or even an ordained or licensed man from another presbytery, beginning to preach within her bounds without any oversight. The Presbyterian Church in America, for one, insists that anyone who preaches regularly must be at least licensed by the presbytery, and that candidates for the ministry must be under the care of a local session and their presbytery.

102. D. G. Hart and John R. Muether, *Seeking a Better Country* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 2007), 56–57.

Conclusion

We conclude our examination of John Wycliffe's preaching by hearing from one of his contemporaries. In the late fourteenth century, just a few years after John Wycliffe's death in 1384, Geoffrey Chaucer wrote *The Canterbury Tales*. It is likely that Chaucer knew Wycliffe, and his depiction of the Parson is credibly held to be a picture of one of Wycliffe's "poor preachers," possibly even Wycliffe himself.¹⁰³ In the General Prologue, we see and hear the elements of Wycliffe's life and ministry that have been presented above:

A holy-minded man of good renown there was, and poor, the
Parson to a town,

Yet he was rich in holy thought and work. He also was a learned
man, a clerk,

Who truly knew Christ's gospel and would preach it devoutly to
parishioners, and teach it.

Benign and wonderfully diligent, and patient when adversity
was sent

(For so he proved in much adversity) he hated cursing to extort
a fee,

Nay rather he preferred beyond a doubt giving to poor parish-
ioners round about

Both from church offerings and his property; he could in little
find sufficiency.

Wide was his parish, with houses far asunder, yet he neglected
not in rain or thunder,

In sickness or in grief, to pay a call on the remotest, whether
great or small,

Upon his feet, and in his hand a stave. This noble example to
his sheep he gave

That first he wrought, and afterwards he taught; and it was from
the Gospel he had caught

Those words, and he would add this figure too, that if gold rust,
what then will iron do?

For if a priest be foul in whom we trust no wonder that a com-
mon man should rust;

103. For a recent discussion of this question, see Hudson, *The Premature Reformation*, 390ff.

And shame it to see—let priests take stock—a shitten¹⁰⁴ shepherd and a snowy flock.

The true example that a priest should give is one of cleanness, how the sheep should live....

Holy and virtuous he was, but then never contemptuous of sinful men,

Never disdainful, never too proud or fine, but was discreet in teaching and benign.

His business was to show a fair behavior and draw men thus to Heaven and their Savior....

Christ and His Twelve Apostles and their lore he taught, but followed it himself before....¹⁰⁵

“You’ll get no fable or romance from me, for Paul in his Epistle to Timothy

Reproves all those who waive aside the truth for fables that are wretched and uncouth.

And unclench my fist on your behalf, I that can scatter wheat, to give you chaff?

And therefore if you care to hear my preaching I’ll offer virtuous matter, moral teaching.

So if you’ll hear me, granting that sufficed, I would be glad in reverence of Christ

To give you lawful pleasure if I can.”¹⁰⁶

As we spend time getting to know the writings and preaching of John Wycliffe, he by God’s grace can give us lawful pleasure as well as a sound education in preaching God’s Word, the most important aspect of a pastor’s ministry.

104. I.e., “covered in excrement.”

105. Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, trans. Nevill Coghill (London: Penguin Books, 1977), 32–33.

106. Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, 504.

Knowing God from the Heart: Samuel Davies on the Means of Grace

JOSEPH C. HARROD



Now the ordinances of the gospel are, as it were, the places of interview, where God and his people meet, and where they indulge those sacred freedoms [of communion]. It is in prayer, in meditation, in reading or hearing his word, in communicating at his table; it is in these and like exercises that God communicates, and, as it were, unbosoms himself to those that love him.¹

In the tradition of Reformed piety, genuine Christian spirituality is rooted in a monergistic work of God who graciously rescues sinners. Yet the Christian life after conversion also involves various means of grace in the pursuit of personal holiness and divine communion. This article considers the thinking of a prominent Presbyterian, Samuel Davies (1723–1761), of Virginia, on the exercise of the means of grace. Davies is remembered as the reluctant fourth president of the College of New Jersey (later Princeton), a champion for religious toleration and civil rights for dissenters in Virginia, and a poet whose verses constitute some of the earliest North American hymnody. He was also a pioneer missionary to African slaves and a New Side Presbyterian revivalist whom D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones has described as “the greatest preacher” America ever produced. Yet a decade into the twenty-first century, Davies remains relatively unnoticed by American Evangelicals.² Davies’s relative absence from contemporary discussions of early

1. Samuel Davies, “The Nature of Love to God and Christ Opened and Enforced,” in *Sermons by the Rev. Samuel Davies, A.M. President of the College of New Jersey*, vol. 2 (Morgan, Penn.: Soli Deo Gloria, 1993), 464. This work will be henceforth cited as *Sermons*.

2. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Knowing the Times: Addresses Delivered on Various Occasions 1942–1977* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1989), 263. The standard biography of Davies is that of George William Pilcher, *Samuel Davies: Apostle of*

Evangelicalism is indeed lamentable, for in his day, and for the better part of a century thereafter, Davies was recalled as a gifted herald of divine truth. This article helps to bring Davies into wider appreciation, especially with regard to his understanding of the vehicles God has designed to enable Christians to live lives to His glory.

The Means of Grace in the Puritan and Early Evangelical Traditions

Samuel Davies placed himself within the Puritan tradition with regard to his doctrine of conversion, and his insistence upon certain means of grace also indicates his reliance upon this tradition for devotional expressions of Christian spirituality.³ According to Simon Chan's excellent work on the discipline of meditation, the Puritan doctrine of the means of grace states that "God does not work directly in the world but chooses to operate at the natural and human level. Thus if he regenerates a soul, it is by a process that could be easily discovered via faculty psychology, namely, from the understanding to the affections and will."⁴ Puritans suggested a variety of means

Dissent in Colonial Virginia (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1971). See also George William Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad: The Diary of a Journey to England and Scotland, 1753–55* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1967). Although Pilcher's work is the standard monograph, the best biography is that of George H. Bost, "Samuel Davies: Colonial Revivalist and Champion of Religious Toleration" (Ph.D. diss., The University of Chicago, 1942). Other noteworthy biographical treatments include Iain H. Murray, *Revival and Revivalism: The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism 1750–1858* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), 3–31; John B. Frantz, "Davies, Samuel," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography: From the Earliest Times to the Year 2000*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, vol. 15 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 405–6; Mark A. Noll, "Davies, Samuel," in *Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicals*, ed. Timothy Larsen (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 181–83, and "Davies, Samuel," in *American National Biography*, ed. John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes, vol. 6 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 159–61; and Ernest Trice Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South, Volume One: 1607–1861* (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1963), 52–61.

3. In a letter to Joseph Bellamy, Davies indicated that his pastoral ministry, specifically his work for the conversion of sinners, was grounded in the pattern of his Puritan forbearers. Samuel Davies, *The State of Religion among the Protestant Dissenters in Virginia; In a Letter to the Rev. Mr. Joseph Bellamy, or Bethlehem, in New-England: From the Reverend Mr. Samuel Davies, V. D. M. in Hanover County, Virginia* (Boston, Mass.: S. Kneeland, 1751), 25.

4. Simon K. H. Chan, "The Puritan Meditative Tradition, 1599–1691: A Study of Ascetical Piety" (Ph.D. diss., Cambridge, 1986), 9.

that the believer might use to draw near to God. Such means “consist of those practical duties, the regular performance of which were thought to lead, in some inexplicable way, to an increase in virtues or godliness.”⁵ Chan notes that the various means “invariably includes prayer, meditation and conference as private means; ministry of the word, sacraments, and public prayer as public means,” and as these means were divinely ordained, they were to be practiced regularly.⁶

Michael Haykin suggests that “prayer, the Scriptures, and the sacraments or ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper” were key means practiced by Puritans and later Christians who were heirs to their heritage.⁷ Charles Hambrick-Stowe’s work on the spirituality of seventeenth-century colonial Puritans shows significant overlap between the various means of grace practiced in England and New England. He includes such disciplines as psalm singing, Scripture reading, the sacraments, conference, family devotions, study, meditation, personal writing, and especially prayer as common means practiced by Davies’s ministerial predecessors.⁸ Richard Lovelace, in his treatment of Cotton Mather’s ascetical practices, noted that the disciplines of meditation, prayer, family devotions, Sabbath keeping, and the sacraments remained constant into the second and third generation of New England Puritans.⁹ In their respective recent studies of Jonathan Edwards’s piety, Whitney and Strobel indicate that practices such as hearing, reading, or meditating on Scripture, as well as prayer, attending the ordinances, family worship, Sabbath keeping, fasting, and journaling, among other disciplines, marked this evangelical contemporary of Davies.¹⁰ Even closer to Davies was fellow New Side Presbyterian Jonathan Dickinson, who compiled a similar

5. Chan, “Puritan Meditative Tradition,” 14.

6. Chan, “Puritan Meditative Tradition,” 14.

7. Michael A. G. Haykin, “‘Draw Nigh unto My Soul’: English Baptist Piety and the Means of Grace in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century,” in *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 10, no. 4 (2006): 54.

8. Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, *The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 136–93.

9. Richard F. Lovelace, *The American Pietism of Cotton Mather: Origins of American Evangelicalism* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 1979), 110–45.

10. Kyle Strobel, *Formed for the Glory of God: Learning from the Spiritual Practices of Jonathan Edwards* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 83. See also Donald Stephen Whitney, “Finding God in Solitude: The Personal Piety of Jonathan

list of religious exercises intended to help one walk closely with God: prayer, biblical and occasional meditation, family worship, public worship, and observing the ordinances.¹¹ Leonard J. Trinterud has shown that the use of these various means of grace was commonplace among other New Side Presbyterians who were contemporaries of Davies.¹² Davies also inherited a set of devotional practices from his own religious tradition.

The Westminster Confession addressed various means of grace under the heading of religious worship. According to the divines, all people knew that God existed and was worthy of devotion, yet only those patterns of devotion revealed in Scripture were appropriate means to seek fellowship with God.¹³ The Confession noted that prayer was required of all and was to be “made in the name of the Son, by the help of His Spirit, according to His will, with understanding, reverence, humility, fervency, faith, love and perseverance; and, if vocal, in a known tongue.”¹⁴ Prayer was restricted for the living or those who were yet to be born, but was never offered for the dead. Nor was prayer’s efficacy strengthened by location, “but God is to be worshipped everywhere, in spirit and truth; as, in private families daily, and in secret, each one by himself; so, more solemnly in the public assemblies.”¹⁵ The Confession also addressed the special use of Sundays as a means of grace. From creation forward, God had appointed Saturday for holy observance, but because of the resurrection of Christ from the dead, Christians were to observe Sunday as the “Christian Sabbath,” marked by rest, worship, and merciful works.¹⁶

While the confession drafted at Westminster provided doctrinal cohesion for Reformed Christians in Great Britain, the pastor-theologians who framed the statement also produced directories for both

Edwards (1703–1758) and its Influence on his Pastoral Ministry” (Ph.D. diss., University of the Free State, 2013), 163–207.

11. Jonathan Dickinson, *Familiar Letters upon a Variety of Religious Subjects*, 4th ed. (Glasgow: John Bryce, 1775), 349–68.

12. Leonard J. Trinterud, *The Forming of an American Tradition: A Re-Examination of Colonial Presbyterianism* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1949), 179.

13. Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF), 21.1.

14. WCF, 21.3.

15. WCF, 21.4 and 6.

16. WCF, 21.7–8.

public and private worship which encouraged various means of grace for the purpose of godliness. These works both replaced and surpassed the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* in their scope of suggesting various disciplines for congregations, families, and individuals.

The *Directory for the Publick Worship* of God offered ministers directions on praying during the worship service, during the administration of the ordinances, and during pastoral visitations or special ceremonies.¹⁷ It directed congregations on conducting fasts and keeping the Lord's Day holy.¹⁸ Similarly, the *Directory for Family Worship* encouraged individual "secret" worship through the means of prayer and meditation, "the unspeakable benefit whereof is best known to them who are most exercised therein; this being the mean whereby, in a special way, communion with God is entertained, and right preparation for all other duties obtained."¹⁹ For families, the divines suggested that the "ordinary duties" included prayer, praises, reading Scripture, and catechetical instruction.²⁰ It suggested ways in which families could sanctify the Lord's Day, namely, through meditation and conference upon the day's sermon.²¹ It also offered specific directions for prayer:

So many as can conceive prayer, ought to make use of that gift of God; albeit those who are rude and weaker may begin at a set form of prayer, but so as they be not sluggish in stirring up in themselves (according to their daily necessities) the spirit of prayer, which is given to all the children of God in some measure: to which effect, they ought to be more fervent and frequent in secret prayer to God, for enabling of their hearts to conceive, and their tongues to express, convenient desires to God for their family.²²

17. *Directory for the Publick Worship of God* (DPW), Of the Publick Prayer before the Sermon, Of Prayer after the Sermon, Of the Administration of the Sacraments, The Solemnization of Marriage, Concerning Visitation of the Sick, and Concerning Burial of the Dead.

18. DPW, Concerning Publick Solemn Fasting, and Of the Sanctification of the Lord's Day.

19. *Directory for Family Worship* (DFW), 1.

20. DFW, 2.

21. DFW, 8.

22. DFW, 9.

The Means of Grace in Samuel Davies's Ministry

Samuel Davies insisted that certain devotional practices were hallmarks that characterized and sustained a vital Christian piety. In a sermon on Acts 11:26, Davies linked the practice of various disciplines such as “prayer, . . . meditation, . . . fasting, and every religious duty” to the believer’s imitation of Christ, who Himself “abounded” in these activities as well as in certain virtues.²³ Davies concluded that “this resemblance and imitation of Christ is essential to the very being of a Christian, and without it, it is a vain pretence.”²⁴ In a sermon on Galatians 4:19–20, Davies identified secret and family prayer as well as public worship, the sacraments, and fasting as the “outward duties of religion.”²⁵ In a New Year’s sermon preached just a month before he died, Davies encouraged his congregants to hear and read Scripture, meditate “upon divine things,” and have fellowship with wiser Christians “as means instituted for your conversion.”²⁶ In other sermons Davies reiterated the importance of prayer, hearing and reading Scripture, meditation, the Lord’s Supper.²⁷ Nothing about Davies’s lists of disciplines is surprising, but it was through these simple, reliable means of grace that Davies believed communion with God was sustained. In what follows, the means of prayer, fasting, conference, the ordinances, and the Lord’s Day are especially explored.

Prayer

Though the means of accessing Davies’s own personal piety are few, those artifacts that do survive indicate that he was a man of prayer. Nowhere was his commitment to prayer more evident than during his fundraising journey to Great Britain, on behalf of the College of New Jersey, from 1753–1755. During this trip, Davies maintained a private diary, which has preserved some of his habits and forms

23. Samuel Davies, “The Sacred Import of the Christian Name,” in *Sermons*, 1:348.

24. Davies, “Sacred Import,” in *Sermons*, 1:348.

25. Samuel Davies, “The Tender Anxieties of Ministers for their People,” in *Sermons*, 2:413.

26. Samuel Davies, “A Sermon on the New Year,” in *Sermons*, 2:207.

27. Samuel Davies, “The Nature of Love to God and Christ Opened and Enforced,” in *Sermons*, 2:464; and *idem.*, “Christians Solemnly Reminded of their Obligations,” in *Sermons*, 3:608.

of prayer.²⁸ Davies had promised his wife, Jane, that he would set apart Saturday evenings for special times of prayer for her during his voyage, and on Saturday, December 7, 1753, Davies noted that he had “[f]ound more Freedom than usual in Intercession for my dear absent Friends, particularly for Mr. Rodgers, and my Chara.”²⁹ Though the content of these prayers was undoubtedly richer than Davies left in his diary, his brief written prayers show the tenor of his concern for his beloved spouse during their separation: “O! Thou God of our Life, with all the importunity so languid a Soul is capable of exerting, I implore thy gracious Protection for her, that she may be supported in my Absence, and that we may enjoy a happy Interview again.”³⁰ Two months later, as Davies thought of his wife and children, he prayed, “To thee, O Lord, I then solemnly committed them and now I renew the Dedication. I know not, if ever I shall see them again; but my Life and theirs is in the Hand of divine Providence; and therefore shall be preserved as long as is fit.”³¹ Just two weeks later, Davies’s family weighed heavy on his heart: “Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me.”³²

The following Saturday, Davies “was much depressed in Spirit at the Prospect of the Voyage, and the Tender Tho’ts of Home,” when he prayed, “May the God of my Life support me!”³³ Just two days later, Davies recorded that his “[t]ho’ts often take a sudden Flight to Hanover, and hover over my Chara, and my other Friends there.” He implored, “O may indulgent Heaven preserve and bless them!”³⁴ Davies’s ship sailed in the early morning of November 18, and the following evening he asked, “O Lord, bless my dear Family.”³⁵ During the treacherous voyage home in 1755, Davies recounted that he “often fell upon my Face, praying in a Kind of Agony, sometimes for myself, sometimes for the unhappy Ship’s Company, and sometimes for my

28. George William Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad: The Diary of a Journey to England and Scotland, 1753–55* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967).

29. Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 34. Mr. Rodgers was John Rodgers (1727–1811), a close ministerial friend of Davies. “Chara,” from the Greek for “joy,” was Davies’s nickname for his wife.

30. Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 7.

31. Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 9.

32. Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 12.

33. Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 15.

34. Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 16.

35. Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 29.

dear, destitute Family, whom the nearest Prospect of Death could not erase from my Heart.”³⁶

Gilbert Tennent, the renowned Presbyterian pastor from New Jersey, accompanied Davies on the journey to England. During the voyage, the two ministers encouraged one another through prayer. Davies was seasick for about the first ten days of the voyage, yet, on November 26, he and Tennent “prayed in our Room together in the Morning and Afternoon with some Freedom.”³⁷ They began these meetings a day earlier: “Yesterday and today we prayed together alternately in our Room; and I felt some Tenderness and Importunity in so doing. O that we may in this inactive Season be laying up proper Furniture for active Life upon Shore!” They maintained this pattern of regular prayer during the voyage across the Atlantic: “Since I noted it last, Mr. Tennent and I have prayed each of us twice in our Room, and one of us alternately in the Cabin in the Evening.”³⁸ Moreover, Davies and Tennent maintained this pattern of praying twice daily once they arrived in Great Britain.³⁹ One Wednesday night, after spending the evening with the “Wonder of the Age,” George Whitefield, “Mr. Tennent’s heart was all on Fire, and after we had gone to Bed, he suggested we should watch and pray; and we rose, and prayed together ’till about 3 o’clock in the Morning.”⁴⁰ Tennent and Davies prayed often during their trip. When they encountered difficulty raising funds, they prayed for God’s direction.⁴¹

Davies also prayed in the pulpit, sometimes experiencing God’s blessing and at other times feeling confused.⁴² When he heard others pray, Davies could not help but noting the impressions they made upon him. When in Northampton, Davies visited the late Philip Doddridge’s congregation, then under the oversight of Robert Gilbert (d. 1760), and was “pleased to find him a weeping Petitioner to Heaven in Prayer.”⁴³ At Yarmouth, Davies visited Congregationalist pastor Richard Frost (1700–1778), who “[i]n Prayer...has an

36. Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 144.

37. Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 30.

38. Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 32.

39. Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 48.

40. Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 44.

41. Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 60.

42. Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 83 and 113.

43. Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 118.

uncommon Dexterity in descending to particulars.”⁴⁴ In Halesworth, Davies stayed with the Congregationalist minister Samuel Wood (d. 1767), and recounted that “His Expressions in Prayer are remarkably striking and solemn.”⁴⁵ What do reflections such as these say about the place of prayer in Davies’s personal life?

First, Davies’s own prayers reveal that he was theologically consistent in recognizing God’s sovereign control over every aspect of life and death. Although he loved and missed his family, he expressed confidence in God’s ability to protect and bless them during his absence. Then, when he was fearful, Davies sought consolation in prayer, entrusting his own life to God’s mercy. His mention of praying from the pulpit shows that he recognized his effectiveness as a preacher was linked to God’s blessing and not primarily his own rhetorical abilities. Further, Davies’s reflections on his habit of praying at set times with Gilbert Tennent indicates that he found such discipline helpful and spiritually edifying, not stifling or ritualistic. This sentiment is reinforced by their especially rich time of watching and praying until the early morning. Finally, the fact that Davies recalled the specific gifts or abilities of others in prayer shows that prayer was something that he valued enough to notice, especially when one showed a particular freedom in conversing with God. Davies’s various diary entries have the cumulative force of showing that prayer was a normal and significant part of his Christian experience. With regard to prayer, Davies preached what he practiced.

Samuel Davies’s delight in prayer carried over from the closet to the pulpit. In his sermons, Davies prayed for his hearers, both believers and unbelievers, and exhorted both to draw near to God through prayer. Although Davies never set down a systematic treatment of prayer, frequent references to prayer abound in his sermons. In examining Davies’s theology of prayer and its implications for Christian piety, a key question is that of the relationship between prayer and communion with God.

Those who love God and Jesus delight in prayer, the exercise of which was the believer’s chief experience of communion with God:

44. Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 123. For Frost’s biography, see John Browne, *History of Congregationalism and Memorials of the Churches in Norfolk and Suffolk* (London: Jarrold and Sons, 1877), 246.

45. Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 125.

Friends, you know, delight to converse together, to unbosom themselves to one another, and to enjoy the freedoms of society. They are fond of interviews, and seize every opportunity for that purpose; and absence is tedious and painful to them.... Now, though God be a spirit, and infinitely above all sensible converse with the sons of men, yet he does not keep himself at a distance from his people. He has access to their spirits, and allows them to carry on a spiritual commerce with him, which is the greatest happiness of their lives.⁴⁶

Believers foster such communion through prayer. For Davies, true prayer bespoke of a Trinitarian faith in the Father, Son, and Spirit. Warning his congregants of the danger of Laodicean tepidity in religion, Davies encouraged them to pray, “Lord, fire this heart with thy love.”⁴⁷ Prayer was the proper remedy for a lukewarm heart; only God could instill this “sacred fire,” and Davies exhorted believers to “fly to him in agony of importunity, and never desist, never grow weary till you prevail.”⁴⁸ The God to whom Davies directed his prayer was omniscient, the “Supreme Majesty of heaven and earth,” and the human petitioner was variously a criminal who sought pardon or a “famished beggar” who sought relief.⁴⁹ Davies characterized prayer as the “natural language” of the spiritually poor.⁵⁰ For Davies then, prayer was no less than worship, which could be offered fittingly or poorly, and therefore genuine prayer could never become a cool, detached ritual.

At various points in his sermons, Davies emphasized prayer as the pathway of vital spiritual communion between the believer and each member of the Godhead. Davies insisted that the Father was indeed a prayer-hearing God and insisted that Christians ought to approach Him in prayer reverently and confidently (cf. Ps. 65:2). The Bible contained a rich history of God acting upon the prayers of His people: God heard Moses’ cry, “Show me, I Pray thee, thy glory”

46. Samuel Davies, “The Nature of Love to God and Christ Opened and Enforced,” in *Sermons*, 2:463.

47. Samuel Davies, “The Danger of Lukewarmness in Religion,” in *Sermons*, 1:421.

48. Davies, “Danger of Lukewarmness,” in *Sermons*, 1:422.

49. Davies, “Danger of Lukewarmness,” in *Sermons*, 1:415.

50. Samuel Davies, “Poor and Contrite Spirits the Objects of Divine Favour,” in *Sermons*, 1:222.

(cf. Exod. 33:18–19) and revealed His glorious name and character to the aging prophet-leader.⁵¹ God heard Hezekiah’s prayer for deliverance from the Assyrians (cf. 2 Kings 19:14–19) and rescued His people.⁵² For Davies, however, the Father was even more willing to hear the prayers of believers.

Christians have been born again, and one of the signal benefits of regeneration is that they are now adopted into God’s family and relate to God as children relate to a father. Just as in human relationships, where a child has freedom to approach a loving father, so Christians enjoy the “peculiar privileges” and a “liberty of access” to their heavenly Father, especially in prayer.⁵³ “As the children of God have liberty to address their Father, so they have the privilege of having their petitions graciously heard and answered. A human parent is ready to give gifts to his children, and much more is our heavenly Father” (cf. Luke 11:11–13 and Matt. 6:6–9).⁵⁴

With regard to the Son, Davies insisted that Jesus was “precious to believers as a great High Priest.”⁵⁵ In His death on the cross, Jesus had atoned for sin; yet through His ongoing heavenly session, Jesus continued to pray for sinners.⁵⁶ Though Davies certainly emphasized the centrality of the cross, he also rejoiced in the mediation of Christ. Jesus stands before the Father as a slaughtered lamb (cf. Rev. 5:6), “bearing the memorials of his sacrifice, and putting the Father in remembrance of the blessings purchased for his people.”⁵⁷ Just as Jesus had prayed for His followers during His time on earth (cf. John 17:24), so He now prays that the blessing He secured on the cross would be applied to the faithful. Such thoughts moved Davies to exclaim, “Now how precious must Christ appear in the character of Intercessor! That the friendless sinner should have an all-prevailing advocate in the court of heaven to undertake his cause!”

51. Samuel Davies, “The Name of God Proclaimed by Himself,” in *Sermons*, 1:442.

52. Samuel Davies, “Ingratitude to God and Heinous but General Iniquity,” in *Sermons*, 1:653.

53. Samuel Davies, “The Nature and Blessedness of Sonship with God,” in *Sermons*, 2:180–81.

54. Davies, “Sonship with God,” in *Sermons*, 2:181.

55. Samuel Davies, “Christ Precious to all True Believers,” in *Sermons*, 1:386.

56. Davies, “Christ Precious,” in *Sermons*, 1:386.

57. Davies, “Christ Precious,” in *Sermons*, 1:387.

As believers prayed on earth, so Jesus prayed in heaven, offering up “the great incense of his own merit” comingled with the petitions of the saints. Davies appealed to the covenant of grace between the Father and the Son as the believer’s grounds for praying with assurance. Further, he insisted that Christians could pray with the confidence, even in their weakest moments, that Jesus was ever available to hear their petitions and to plead their cause with the Father.⁵⁸ Prayer, however, was more than merely asking Jesus for needs and blessings; it was the chief means through which the believer maintained fellowship, or in Davies’s words, “intercourse,” with the ascended Christ.⁵⁹ Prayer, for Davies, was a key way in which one looked to Christ for saving relief. In an unforgettable illustration, Davies asked his hearers to picture one of their own dear children kidnapped by a murderer. If the parents were to arrive in time and were to lock eyes with their terrified son or daughter before the death blow was struck, how loud would be the child’s unspoken cry for deliverance in that moment? In the same way, when the sinner came to apprehend his desperate state, she cried out to God in prayer.⁶⁰ Such a sinner would not only pray in public but in secret, shaking off the tendency of so many to go through life as in a trance, ever ready to seek help from Christ.⁶¹

Davies also encouraged his hearers to pray for the work of the Holy Spirit among them. For Davies, the Spirit awakened benighted sinners to see the glory of Christ; therefore he encouraged Christians to pray that the Spirit would communicate God’s love and other “sacred influences” among them and so bring a general reformation to the colonies.⁶² By looking at Paul’s frequent prayers for divine assistance, Davies concluded that such prayers were necessary, for who would pray for what they already possess? More particularly, Davies recognized that it was the Holy Spirit Himself who strengthened believers’

58. Davies, “Christ Precious,” in *Sermons*, 1:387–88.

59. Davies, “Christ Precious,” in *Sermons*, 1:402. See also Samuel Davies, “The Christian Feast,” in *Sermons*, 2:154–55.

60. Samuel Davies, “The Nature of Looking to Christ Opened and Explained,” in *Sermons*, 2:344.

61. Davies, “Looking to Christ,” in *Sermons*, 2:345.

62. See, for example, Samuel Davies, “The Nature of Love to God and Christ Opened and Enforced,” in *Sermons*, 2:479–80; “The Crisis, or The Uncertain Doom of Kingdoms at Particular Times,” in *Sermons*, 3:145; and “Serious Reflections on War,” in *Sermons*, 3:301.

weakness in prayer and devotion (cf. Rom. 8:24).⁶³ Christians also depended on the Spirit's aid in prayer during times of spiritual adversity: "Sometimes, alas! they fall; but their general lifts them up again, and inspires them with the strength to renew the fight. They fight most successfully upon their knees."⁶⁴ Davies likened Christians to soldiers, engaged in ongoing warfare. This warfare was both internal and external: from without, Christians faced a nearly continuous stream of temptations; from within, they battled sin's insurrection. Given the unceasing nature of their battle, Christians ought not to be surprised when beset with weakness and fatigue in their fight, yet through prayer they had hope of success. Such prayer was the "most advantageous posture for soldiers of Jesus Christ," through which their Captain would send reinforcements to assist in battle, enabling even the weakest soldier to "overcome, through the blood of the Lamb."⁶⁵

Though all Christians were soldiers in God's "spiritual army," ministers were especially called to prevail in prayer, arming themselves with the "humble doctrines of the cross" to "rescue enslaved souls from the tyranny of sin and Satan."⁶⁶ For the minister, to pray was to wage an attack against the forces of evil. Davies modeled such attacks in his sermons, especially with regard to the success of the gospel. When Davies considered the universality of spiritual death, he was astonished that "the generality of mankind are habitually careless about the blessed Jesus; they will not seek him, nor give their hearts and their affections, though they must perish for ever by the neglect of him!"⁶⁷ This sad state drove him to pray, "Father of spirits, and Lord of life, quicken, oh quicken these dead souls!"⁶⁸ He expected his congregants to unite their

63. Samuel Davies, "The Success of the Ministry Owing to a Divine Influence," in *Sermons*, 3:22–23. Elsewhere, describing the seriousness with which Christians were to seek eternal life, Davies appears to have taken Romans 8:26 to apply to Christians, when he stated that Christians are those who "pray with unutterable groans." In Roman 8:26, it is the Spirit, not believers, who prays with unutterable groans on behalf of believers. See Samuel Davies, "Saints Saved with Difficulty and the Certain Perdition of Sinners," in *Sermons*, 1:591.

64. Samuel Davies, "The Mediatorial Kingdom and the Glories of Jesus Christ," in *Sermons*, 1:303.

65. Davies, "Mediatorial Kingdom," in *Sermons*, 1:303.

66. Davies, "Mediatorial Kingdom," in *Sermons*, 1:303–4.

67. Samuel Davies, "The Nature and Universality of Spiritual Death," in *Sermons*, 1:183.

68. Davies, "Spiritual Death," in *Sermons*, 1:183.

voices also in prayer: “Oh, Sirs, while we see death all around us, and feel it benumbing our own souls, who can help the most bitter wailing and lamentation? Who can restrain himself from crying out to the great Author of life for a happy resurrection?”⁶⁹ As a pastor preaching to spiritually dead hearers, Davies likened himself to the prophet Elijah, praying over the Shunamite widow’s son, “Oh Lord my God, I pray thee, let this sinner’s life come into him again” (cf. 1 Kings 17:21).⁷⁰ Davies’s commitment to battling for souls through prayer extended well beyond his own congregations in Virginia; he had a more global perspective. Davies rejoiced that Christians had a benevolent divine king who ruled an “empire of grace,” and asked his hearers to pray that this kingdom would be expanded: “Let us pray that all nations may become the willing subjects of our gracious Sovereign.”⁷¹

Fasting

Samuel Davies had been back in Virginia less than a month after his trip to England when his Hanover congregation spent Wednesday, March 5, 1755, in fasting and prayer.⁷² Though Davies undoubtedly led his congregation in observing this sacred day, aimed at securing God’s gracious intervention on behalf of the British against the French and their Indian allies, he made no mention of his own habits of fasting. As he stood in the pulpit, he declared,

If God dispose the victory as he pleases, then it is most fit, and absolutely necessary, that we should seek to secure his friendship. If we have such an Almighty Ally, we are safe; and if we have provoked his displeasure, and forfeited his friendship, what can we do but prostrate ourselves in the deepest repentance and humiliation before him? for that is the only way to regain his

69. Davies, “Spiritual Death,” in *Sermons*, 1:183.

70. Samuel Davies, “The Nature and Process of Spiritual Life,” in *Sermons*, 1:208.

71. Samuel Davies, “The Divine Government the Joy of our World,” in *Sermons*, 1:437. The concept of praying for the conversion of the nations is not as frequent in Davies’s published works as it was for his contemporary, Jonathan Edwards. Perhaps this paucity of references indicates that the subject was not often one he considered, or perhaps it is due to the fact that only a fraction of Davies’s sermons have survived.

72. Davies appended a note to his sermon that March 5, 1755 was “a day of fasting and prayer.” See Samuel Davies, “God the Sovereign of All Kingdoms,” in *Sermons*, 3:329.

favour. This is the great design of a fast; and from what you have heard, you may see it is not a needless ceremony, but a seasonable and important duty.⁷³

In his sermons, letters, and diary, Davies has left no record of his own practice of this “important duty.” Perhaps he took Jesus’ admonition to “appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret” (Matt. 6:16–18) seriously, believing that to discuss his own practices would forfeit the discipline’s blessings. Or maybe Davies thought fasting so commonplace as to need no elaboration. One can reasonably assume that Davies would not have been guilty of hypocrisy on this count. His sermons reveal a twofold message on fasting: positively, fasting was a sign of heartfelt repentance; negatively, it could become a form of works-righteousness.

Although not wholly unknown in England, fast-day observances were commonplace in New England and the other American colonies.⁷⁴ In New England, ministers relied on a simple pattern of using Sunday sermons as vehicles of primarily spiritual concern and used weekday sermons or lectures for more civil matters.⁷⁵ This pattern does not mean that Puritan ministers separated spiritual and civil affairs, but rather serves as a reminder that the coextensive nature of the covenantal relationship of the political fabric of New England with the covenant of grace necessitated careful attention lest eternal salvation and moral obedience be conflated. Puritan New England valued its seasons of fasting from its earliest days forward; yet, by 1755, other colonies held similar days.⁷⁶ Though the practice of setting apart fast-days appears to have been less common in Anglican Virginia than in Puritan Massachusetts or Connecticut, Virginians had indeed observed such days.⁷⁷ Davies’s sermons recount three

73. Davies, “God the Sovereign,” in *Sermons*, 3:350–51.

74. For an excellent survey of the development of public fasts in New England, the best study is still that of W. DeLoss Love, *The Fast and Thanksgiving Days of New England* (Boston: The University Press, 1895). See also Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England*, 25th anniv. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 27–31 and 77–78.

75. Stout, *New England Soul*, 27.

76. Love, *Fast and Thanksgiving Days*, 299–304.

77. Love, *Fast and Thanksgiving Days*, 304. With regard to Anglicanism, Davies himself observed that the Anglican calendar included no less than ninety-five stated fast days. See Samuel Davies, “A Christmas-Day Sermon,” in *Sermons*, 3:570.

fast days during his ministry in Virginia, each occurring during the tumult of the Seven Years' War.⁷⁸

Stout has well noted the serious nature with which congregations and communities observed fast days.⁷⁹ Due to the fact that the regular patterns of life and commerce were interrupted to implore God's special grace or favor, Davies used such days to remind his hearers of both the blessings and dangers of such religious observances. As already mentioned, Davies described fasting as a "seasonable and important duty" which expressed a believer's genuine mourning over sin.⁸⁰ He based this assessment on Joel 2:12–18, which called God's people to employ fasting as a sign of repentance. Following General Braddock's defeat in the summer of 1755, Davies returned to this theme and this text, encouraging his Hanover congregation to "join earnest prayer to your repentance and fasting."⁸¹

Yet Davies knew that some of his hearers might take pride in their religious austerity and warned such against trusting ceremonies instead of Christ.

Can you pretend that you have always perfectly obeyed the law?
That you have never committed one sin, or neglected one duty?
Alas! You must hang down the head, and cry, guilty, guilty....
Set about obedience with ever so much earnestness; repent till
you shed rivers of tears; fast, till you have reduced yourselves to
skeletons; alas! all this will not do, if you expect life by your own
obedience to the law.⁸²

In another setting, Davies remarked that the message of the cross was "unnatural" to sinners, who were more apt to "submit to the

78. Davies, "God the Sovereign," in *Sermons*, 3:329 captured the earliest fast day of this period, occurring in the spring of 1755. See also Samuel Davies, "Serious Reflections on War," in *Sermons*, 3:280, which was both a New Year's sermon and a fast-day sermon for January 1, 1757, called by the Presbytery of Hanover. Finally, see Samuel Davies, "The Crisis, or the Uncertain Doom of Kingdoms at Particular Times," in *Sermons*, 3:120, for a fast-day sermon called by the Synod of New York for October 28, 1756. Unlike New England, where government-sponsored fasts were more common, two of the three fasts Davies mentioned were called by Presbyterian leaders rather than civil magistrates.

79. Stout, *New England Soul*, 27–28.

80. Davies, "God the Sovereign," in *Sermons*, 3:351.

81. Samuel Davies, "On the Defeat of General Braddock, Going to Fort Duquesne," *Sermons*, 3:320.

82. Samuel Davies, "The Law and Gospel," in *Sermons*, 2:614–15.

heaviest penances and bodily austerities” and to “afflict themselves with fasting” rather than to trust in the righteousness of Christ alone for salvation.⁸³ Fasting, then, was an appropriate spiritual practice by which God’s people expressed genuine repentance, but it was a practice which might be easily subverted as a form of self-righteousness.

Baptism and the Lord’s Supper

Samuel Davies was certain that all true Christians used the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper as means to closer fellowship with God. For Davies, the neglect of these ordinances was an indication of a spiritual malady: “You have not the love of God in you, if you do not delight to converse with him in his ordinances.”⁸⁴ He challenged those who had “no pleasure in devotion, no delight in conversing with God in his ordinances” to question the genuineness of their religion.⁸⁵ In these ordinances, Christians “do in a more solemn public manner, engage ourselves to the service of God.”⁸⁶

Davies did not address baptism often, yet his reflections emphasized the significance of this rite for the Christian life. Davies understood baptism as “a badge of Christianity, and a mark of our being the disciples, the followers, and servants of Jesus Christ.”⁸⁷ Like a soldier who had volunteered to serve in the army, so were Christians who underwent baptism. It was a token of one’s commitment to follow Christ as well as one’s “initiation into the church of Christ.”⁸⁸ Of course, many of the congregants whom Davies addressed did not volunteer as soldiers but rather were baptized as infants, having received it most likely in the Anglican Church. Still, Davies believed they had the obligation to honor this covenant.⁸⁹

Baptism was also an outward “sign of regeneration, or of our dying to sin, and entering into a new state of existence, with new

83. Samuel Davies, “The Nature of Justification and of Faith in it,” in *Sermons*, 2:656.

84. Samuel Davies, “Evidences of the Want of Love to God,” in *Sermons*, 3:466.

85. Samuel Davies, “The Vessels of Mercy and the Vessels of Wrath Delineated,” in *Sermons*, 2:372.

86. Samuel Davies, “Christians Solemnly Reminded of their Obligations,” in *Sermons*, 3:591.

87. Davies, “Christians Solemnly Reminded,” in *Sermons*, 3:592.

88. Davies, “Christians Solemnly Reminded,” in *Sermons*, 3:592–93.

89. Davies, “Christians Solemnly Reminded,” in *Sermons*, 3:593.

principles and views, to walk in newness of life.”⁹⁰ Yet Davies knew that some who had undergone the physical rite of baptism lacked a genuinely new heart:

Here then, you that have been baptized, and had the sign, inquire whether you have had the thing signified? Whether you have been so thoroughly renewed, in the spirit of your mind, and so have entered upon a new course of life that you may be justly said to be born again, to be quickened with a new life, and to be new creatures? Have you any evidence of such a change?⁹¹

Perhaps more significantly, Davies understood baptism as “a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, and of our dedication to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”⁹² Here Davies linked baptism with the gospel and understood baptism as evidence that Christians were “devoted to the sacred Trinity, and each person in the Godhead, under that relation which they respectively sustain in the economy of man’s redemption.”⁹³

Davies offered a more thorough reflection on the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. The ordinance was commemorative, and thoughtful preparation for the Supper was a mark of one’s piety:

In so solemn a posture as at the Lord’s table, in so affecting an act as the commemoration of that death to which we owe all our hopes of life and happiness, and with such solemn emblems as those of bread and wine in our hands, which represent the broken body and flowing blood of Jesus, we are to yield ourselves to God, and seal our indenture to be his.⁹⁴

The meal had replaced the Jewish Passover and commemorated God’s might act of delivering people from sin.⁹⁵ The Lord’s Supper was a sacrament because “it is intended to represent things spiritual by material emblems or signs which affect our senses, and thereby enlarge our ideas and impress our hearts in the present state of flesh and blood.”⁹⁶ Here, Davies described a strong connection between body

90. Davies, “Christians Solemnly Reminded,” in *Sermons*, 3:595.

91. Davies, “Christians Solemnly Reminded,” in *Sermons*, 3:595.

92. Davies, “Christians Solemnly Reminded,” in *Sermons*, 3:597.

93. Davies, “Christians Solemnly Reminded,” in *Sermons*, 3:597.

94. Samuel Davies, “Dedication to God Argued from Redeeming Mercy,” in *Sermons*, 2:118.

95. Samuel Davies, “The Christian Feast,” in *Sermons*, 2:141.

96. Davies, “The Christian Feast,” in *Sermons*, 2:143.

and mind in one's spirituality: "God consults our weakness, and... makes our bodily senses helpful to the devotions of our minds."⁹⁷

In the sacrament, Christians can see Jesus portrayed clearly. Davies described the Lord's Supper as "a bright ray of evangelical light; and it helps you to see the love and agonies of Jesus, the great atonement he made for sin, and the method of your pardon and salvation. Come then, ye children of light, come and gaze, and wonder at these astonishing sights!"⁹⁸ Elsewhere, having described the glories of God and how they are manifest in the suffering of Christ, Davies turned to the table: "these things may endear the institution of the Lord's supper to you as exhibiting these glories, by sacred emblems, to your senses: therefore you should esteem it, and reverently attend upon it."⁹⁹

The supper was "a token of love, or memorial left by a friend at parting among his friends, that whenever they see it they may remember him."¹⁰⁰ Like baptism, the Supper was a "badge" and "seal" of true faith, and as such, believers were to afford it great attention: "this remembrance of a suffering Savior must be attended with suitable affections."¹⁰¹ More significantly, God used the ordinance as a means to "[maintain] communion with his people, and they with him."¹⁰² In the celebration of the meal,

there is a spiritual intercourse carried on between [God] and [believers]. He communicates his love in the influences of his Spirit to them; and they pour out their hearts, their desires, and prayers before him. He draws near to them, and revives their souls; and they draw near to him, and converse with him in prayer, and in other ordinances of his worship.¹⁰³

Further, at the table, "[God] favors them with his spiritual presence, and gives them access to him; and they draw near to him with

97. Davies, "The Christian Feast," in *Sermons*, 2:144.

98. Samuel Davies, "A Sight of Christ the Desire and Delight of Saints in All Ages," in *Sermons*, 2:593.

99. Samuel Davies, "The Divine Perfections Illustrated in the Method of Salvation through the Sufferings of Christ," in *Sermons*, 2:272.

100. Davies, "The Christian Feast," in *Sermons*, 2:145.

101. Davies, "The Christian Feast," in *Sermons*, 2:145–49.

102. Davies, "The Christian Feast," in *Sermons*, 2:153.

103. Davies, "The Christian Feast," in *Sermons*, 2:154–55.

humble boldness, and enjoy a full liberty of speech in conversation with him.”¹⁰⁴

As the Lord’s Table was indeed such a place of intimate spiritual communion, those who would receive the supper must be reconciled to God, and “delight in communion with him.”¹⁰⁵ The Lord’s Supper was no converting ordinance, but rather a place where the converted experienced spiritual intimacy with God. Here Davies offered his own view of the efficacy of the table, a view that differed significantly from Solomon Stoddard of Northampton: “to what purpose do you communicate? This will not constitute you Christians, nor save your souls. Not all the ordinances that ever God has instituted can do this, without an interest in Christ, and universal holiness of heart and life.”¹⁰⁶

As Christians prepared to receive the Lord’s Supper, Davies used the occasion to point believers toward the cross, arguing that their daily carriage was to reflect the significance of what was commemorated in communion. They depended upon God: “Alas! if you separate yourselves from him, you are like a stream separated from its fountain, that must run dry; a spark separated from the fire, that must expire; a member cut off from the body, that must die and putrefy.”¹⁰⁷ He took such preparation seriously and encouraged congregants to use other appointed means such as encountering Scripture, meditation, and prayer to prepare themselves to receive the meal: “read, and hear, and meditate upon his word, till you know your danger and remedy. Take this method first, and when you have succeeded, come to this ordinance, and God, angels, and men will be due welcome.”¹⁰⁸

While the occasion of Holy Communion afforded Davies an opportunity to remind Christians of their devotion to God, he pleaded with them to make this dedication “fixed and habitual”: “it is not a formality to be performed only at a sacramental occasion, not a warm, transient purpose under a sermon, or in a transport of passion; but it must be the steady, uniform, persevering disposition of your souls to be the Lord’s at all times, and in all circumstances, in life, and death, and through all eternity.”¹⁰⁹

104. Davies, “The Christian Feast,” in *Sermons*, 2:156.

105. Davies, “The Christian Feast,” in *Sermons*, 2:157.

106. Davies, “The Christian Feast,” in *Sermons*, 2:166.

107. Davies, “Dedication to God,” in *Sermons*, 2:132.

108. Davies, “The Christian Feast,” in *Sermons*, 2:167–68.

109. Davies, “Dedication to God,” in *Sermons*, 2:138.

Family Worship

Family worship nowhere appears in Davies's list of various means of grace, but it was one of the common means that he practiced and enjoined other Christian families to use to promote godliness. No sources survive that describe worship in Davies's household, yet a few sources illuminate Davies's thoughts on the discipline. During his trip to Great Britain, Davies observed some families gathering for devotions and recorded their attention to "examining [their] Children, reading a Sermon, Singing and praying" in his diary.¹¹⁰ As already noted, the Westminster theologians issued a directory that encouraged family worship as part of its program of national reformation.¹¹¹ This directory exhorted families to attend to prayer, Bible reading, and catechizing.¹¹² Perhaps Davies had this directory in mind when he cautioned his congregants against the neglect of gathering their families morning and evening for prayer and worship.¹¹³ It is reasonable to assume that he followed these general guidelines in his own family.

Davies set down his thought on the matter of family worship most fully in a sermon on 1 Timothy 5:8.¹¹⁴ "The heads of families are obliged," Davies preached, "not only to exercise their authority over their dependents, but also to provide for them a competency of the necessaries of life." Such provision did not stop with material provision, which Davies understood to be the primary point of his chosen text, but extended also to their immortal souls.¹¹⁵ Davies considered those who forsook family worship to be worse than infidels.¹¹⁶ In keeping with his ecumenical spirit, Davies suggested that family religion "be not the peculiarity of a party," but was a common expectation of all believers.¹¹⁷ Davies sought to prove the necessity of family worship from nature and from Scripture, to discuss its frequency, to show heads of households their specific responsibilities to foster

110. Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 129–30.

111. DFW, Preface.

112. DFW, 2.

113. Samuel Davies, "The Tender Anxieties of Ministers for their People," in *Sermons*, 412–13.

114. Samuel Davies, "The Necessity and Excellence of Family Religion," in *Sermons*, 2:74–98.

115. Davies, "Family Religion," in *Sermons*, 2:75–77.

116. Davies, "Family Religion," in *Sermons*, 2:77.

117. Davies, "Family Religion," in *Sermons*, 2:78.

such devotion, and to counter various objections to the discipline. Davies contended that “prayer, praise, and instruction” constituted the elements of family worship, going further that the Westminster Directory in his inclusion of psalmody, which he thought “the most proper method of thanksgiving.”¹¹⁸

Davies first sought to justify family devotions by appealing to nature. Just as God alone was worthy of private worship from individual humans, so too was He worthy of family worship. If a family was *capable* of worshipping God, then they were *obligated* to worship Him.¹¹⁹ This situation existed in part because God had created people as sociable creatures and instituted the family as the first society. Further, God sustained families and thus they owed Him homage. Morning and evening, Davies’s hearers received God’s blessings “flowing down upon your houses.” Would those who had received such unwarranted blessings fail to return thanks and supplications? Worship, then, was the “principal end” of all families.¹²⁰ To those who rejected this design, Davies asked, “Can you expect that godliness shall run on in the line of your posterity, if you habitually neglect it in your houses?”¹²¹ Though such regular devotions could not guarantee a godly lineage, “How can you expect that your children and servants will become worshippers of the God of heaven, if they have been educated in the neglect of family religion? Can prayerless parents expect to have praying children?”¹²² Davies was unrelenting:

Their souls, sirs, their immortal souls, are intrusted to your care, and you must give a solemn account of your trust; and can you think you faithfully discharge it, when you neglect to maintain your religion in your families? Will you not be accessory to their perdition, and in your skirts will there not be found the blood of your poor innocent children? What a dreadful meeting may you expect to have with them at last?¹²³

Regular family devotion was the only reliable help that families could utilize to keep the gospel ever before their precious children

118. Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:80.

119. Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:81–82.

120. Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:83–84.

121. Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:84.

122. Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:85.

123. Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:86.

and dependable servants; thus Davies pleaded, “I beseech, I entreat, I charge you to begin and continue the worship of God in your families from this day to the close of our lives.”¹²⁴

Family religion was not only an authoritative command of God, it was also a prerogative afforded by grace. What better ways could families spend their days than conversing of heaven and heaven’s God? “To mention our domestic wants before him with the encouraging hope of a supply! To vent the oerflowings of gratitude! To spread the savour of his knowledge, and talk of him whom angels celebrate upon their golden harps in anthems of praise!”¹²⁵ Even pagans understood the necessity of family worship. How could Rachel’s theft of a family idol go unnoticed if Laban had not reared his family to worship such things (cf. Gen. 31:34)? If even pagans trained their households for worship, how much more ought God’s people foster true faith under their roofs?¹²⁶ Such worship was well attested in Scripture.

Isaac and Jacob were wont to build altars in their various encampments so they might worship God because they had observed this habit in their father, Abraham (cf. Gen. 18:17–18; 26:25; 28:18; and 33:20). Similarly, Job modeled a serious concern for godliness in his rising early to offer sacrifices on behalf of his children (cf. Job 1:5). Even the great King David led his family in worship (cf. Ps. 101:2) and the godly prophet Daniel “always observed a stated course of devotion in his family” (cf. Dan. 6:10).¹²⁷ Such biblical examples continued into the New Testament, where Paul mentioned several house churches (cf. Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; and Col. 4:15). Peter was found praying at home (cf. Acts 10:2, 30). Even the pagan Cornelius led his family in devotion.¹²⁸

Scripture also added precepts to its examples. Paul exhorted the Colossians to pray in their families (cf. Col. 4:2). Peter warned husbands to give attention to their relationship with their wife lest their prayers be hindered (cf. 1 Peter 3:7). This last example led Davies to encourage the practice of husbands and wives retiring for secret prayer together:

124. Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:86.

125. Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:86.

126. Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:88.

127. Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:88–89.

128. Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:89.

As there is a peculiar intimacy between them, they ought to be peculiarly intimate in the duties of religion; and when retired together, they may pour out their hearts with more freedom than before all the family, and particularize those things that could not be prudently mentioned before others.¹²⁹

Deuteronomy 6:6–7 and 11:19 provided the basis for family worship in Israel as did the special yearly observance of Passover. While Hebrews 3:13 and Colossians 3:16, which instructed daily teaching, applied immediately to the church, they surely also applied to families. Davies added the duty of praise to family worship based on Philippians 4:6, Colossians 4:2, and 1 Thessalonians 5:17–18.¹³⁰ The foundation provided, Davies reiterated the vital need for family worship. The choice was simple and tended to affect the entire community:

If the grateful incense of family worship were ascending to heaven every morning and evening, from every family among us, we might expect a rich return of divine blessings upon ourselves and ours. Our houses would become the temples of the Deity, and our congregation feel his gracious influences.¹³¹

Such influences would affect children and servants, ending household strife and vice, and reviving true religion.¹³² The neglect of family worship would also have striking consequences, turning homes into “nurseries for hell.”¹³³

How frequently ought families to gather for worship? At least daily, answered Davies, preferably morning and evening, for Israel’s sacrifices followed this twice-daily rhythm, and the psalmists often commended this pattern (cf. Ps. 141:2; 145:2; 55:17; and 92:1–2). Even the prophet Amos warned Judah to “Seek him that turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night” (Amos 5:8).¹³⁴

God had given heads of households the particular responsibility to conduct family worship, using gentle means where possible and compulsion when necessary. Though “the consciences of all,

129. Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:90.

130. Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:91.

131. Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:92.

132. Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:92.

133. Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:92.

134. Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:93–95.

bond and free, are subject to God only, and no man ought to compel another to anything, as a duty, that is against his conscience,” family worship proved to be an exception. How else could Joshua speak for his own household when he proclaimed that they would serve the Lord (cf. Josh. 24:15) unless he had authority to compel such service, even if it proved merely external?¹³⁵ Davies also anticipated various objections to family worship and defended his case.

To those who complained that their secular business left them no time for family worship, Davies wondered how such incredibly busy people found time to eat, hold idle conversations, or even sleep, which were of far less importance in light of eternity. How did such people view time, and was their business lawful or unlawful? Surely any legitimate business could be ordered to provide time for family devotions.¹³⁶ Then, Davies imagined some might plead ignorance of how to pray, which he found a pitiful excuse: just as a beggar was perpetually sensible enough to ask for handouts, so one who knew little of prayer was still conscious of the need to seek God. Yet his congregation had no legitimate excuse at this point, for they had long enjoyed the riches of “preaching, Bibles, and good books” that instructed them in prayer. Further, how could one who claimed ignorance of prayer expect to grow in its performance by neglecting it? Here Davies was even willing to suggest that those unskilled in prayers might use forms of prayer as crutches, for a season, until they grew in strength.¹³⁷ As nearly all of Davies’s Virginia congregations had been gathered from the Church of England, presumably these forms include those of the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* as well as the more basic forms from the Presbyterian *Directory for Publick Worship*. To those who were ashamed to worship God in their families, Davies wondered how one could share in the task of angels, who offered unceasing praise, and remain ashamed. All that was needed was practice.

As his sermon closed, Davies offered sympathetic counsel to those whose hearts had been softened by his sermon. Perhaps they were ashamed of long-neglecting family worship and unsure how to begin this practice. Such past failure ought to be confessed and remedied

135. Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:95–96.

136. Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:96.

137. Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:97.

speedily. Some might be afraid that their family would ignore their pleas for worship, or worse, mock their piety. Davies concluded, “Are you more afraid of a laugh or a jeer than the displeasure of God? Would you rather please men than him?”¹³⁸ In another context, Davies encouraged parents, especially fathers, to remind children often of the importance of their baptism:

Take your little creatures up in your arms, and with all the powerful oratory which the fond heart of a father and the warm heart of a Christian can make you master of, put them in mind of their early baptism; explain to them the nature of that ordinance; and labour to make them sensible of the obligations that lie upon them in consequence of it. Warn them of the danger of breaking covenant with God, and living a life of perjury.¹³⁹

Davies cited the example of Philip Henry (1631–1696), a Non-conformist minister of Welsh ancestry and father to the famed biblical commentator Matthew Henry (1662–1714), who composed a baptismal covenant for his children, reviewed it with them each Sunday evening, and when they were of a certain age, made them write it out and sign it.¹⁴⁰ Elsewhere, Davies described the worshipping families of the righteous as “little churches, in which divine worship is solemnly performed.”¹⁴¹ Given Davies’s reflection on the significance and practice of family worship, including baptismal covenants, we can reasonably assume that his own practice would have been similar to the one he encouraged his congregants to pursue.

Sabbath/Lord’s Day

Hambrick-Stowe has well-noted the Puritan innovation of the Sabbath as a “devotional point of reference,” especially among New England’s Puritans.¹⁴² This weekly cycle pictured the gospel and differed significantly from the yearly Anglican cycles of fast and holy

138. Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:97–98.

139. Davies, “Christians Solemnly Reminded,” in *Sermons*, 3:604.

140. Davies, “Christians Solemnly Reminded,” in *Sermons*, 3:604. On Philip Henry, see Matthew Henry, *An Account of the Life and Death of Mr. Philip Henry, Minister of the Gospel, near Whitchurch in Shropshire* (London: Angel in the Poultry, 1712).

141. Samuel Davies, “Saints Saved with Difficulty, and the Certain Perdition of Sinners,” in *Sermons*, 1:588.

142. Hambrick-Stowe, *Practice of Piety*, 96.

days as well as the Roman Catholic calendar of worship from which the Anglican pattern was derived.¹⁴³ Puritans saw the Sabbath as a divine institution given to humans as a means of grace through which they might rest from earthly concerns and draw near to God. Thomas Shepard, Congregationalist minister in Newtown (Cambridge), Massachusetts, defended the Sabbath's unique and continuing relevance in a series of sermons published as *Theses Sabbaticae*.¹⁴⁴ Here he argued for maintaining the Sabbath as a holy day, for the Sabbath was the bellwether of true piety:

It is easy to demonstrate by Scripture and argument, as well as by experience, that religion is just as the Sabbath is, and decays and grows as the Sabbath is esteemed: the immediate honor and worship of God, which is brought forth and swaddled in the first three commandments, is nursed up and suckled in the bosom of the Sabbath.¹⁴⁵

Shepard presented hundreds of theses arranged under four headings: the Sabbath's morality, change, beginning, and sanctification. God had given humans the Sabbath and it was incumbent upon people to observe it, not out of superstition or mere custom, but as an act of obedient worship to the Creator.¹⁴⁶ Lovelace has indicated that for the Puritans, the Sabbath functioned as a "miniature, day-long retreat each week," which served as a powerful instrument of transformation.¹⁴⁷ The Westminster theologians also addressed the Sabbath in their confession. In Scripture, God had established the Sabbath as "a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment binding all men in all ages."¹⁴⁸ Like Shepard, the Westminster divines believed that Jesus, by virtue of His resurrection, had changed the Sabbath of creation (Saturday) to the Lord's Day (Sunday).¹⁴⁹ The Sabbath proved a key issue of division between English Puritans and Anglican authorities, notably Archbishop William Laud, yet the Puritan view prevailed, at least

143. Hambrick-Stowe, *Practice of Piety*, 97.

144. Thomas Shepard, *Theses Sabbaticae: Or, the Doctrine of the Sabbath*, in *The Works of Thomas Shepard*, vol. 3 (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1853; Repr. New York: AMS Press, 1967), 7–271.

145. Shepard, *Theses Sabbaticae*, in *Works*, 3:13.

146. Shepard, *Theses Sabbaticae*, in *Works*, 3:14–15.

147. Lovelace, *American Pietism*, 132.

148. WCF, 21:7.

149. Shepard, *Theses Sabbaticae*, in *Works*, 3:204–05; WCF, 21:7.

initially, in Anglican Virginia, where strict Sabbath observance was a founding principle at Jamestown.¹⁵⁰ After the 1620s, when James I (1566–1625) and Charles I (1600–1649) exerted more direct rule over the colony, Puritan influence waned. By the 1700s, Sunday in Virginia had become more a day of relaxation and amusement than devoted worship.¹⁵¹ Though he never offered a statement on precisely how Christians ought to use the Sabbath as a means to draw near to God, Davies shared the Puritan view that the Sabbath was a divine ordinance, a means of grace not to be ignored.

For Samuel Davies, Sunday was the “Christian Sabbath,” a positive law founded upon God’s revealed will.¹⁵² God had consecrated Sunday “for the commemoration both of the birth of this world, and the resurrection of its great Author.”¹⁵³ It was a day set aside for prayer and the concerns of eternity.¹⁵⁴ Davies included Sabbath breaking among a list of various other sins which testified to one’s guilt before God and warned those who found the Lord’s Day marked by “tedious hours,” who could not bear to set apart worldly concerns for even a few hours each week, that hell would be a place where they would no more be troubled by such concerns, but rather face the horrible prospect of eternal punishment.¹⁵⁵ He insisted that he had long warned his Hanover congregants not to break the Sabbath; rather, they were to consider it an affecting means of grace.¹⁵⁶

Personal Writing

On July 2, 1753, Samuel Davies, dipped quill in hand, made his first entry into a travel diary that he kept updated until February 15, 1755, when he returned to Hanover, Virginia. That Davies would keep

150. Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity*, Vol. 2, *The Reformation to the Present Day* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1985), 219.

151. Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia: 1740–1790* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 68.

152. Samuel Davies, “Law and Gospel,” in *Sermons*, 2:607.

153. Davies, “A Christmas-Day Sermon,” in *Sermons*, 3:564.

154. Samuel Davies, “The One Thing Needful,” in *Sermons*, 1:571.

155. Samuel Davies, “Saints Saved with Difficulty, and the Certain Perdition of Sinners,” in *Sermons*, 1:587 and Samuel Davies, “The Certainty of Death; A Funeral Sermon,” in *Sermons*, 3:439. See also Samuel Davies, “The Vessels of Mercy and the Vessels of Wrath Delineated,” in *Sermons*, 2:372–73.

156. Samuel Davies, “The Guilt and Doom of Impenitent Hearers,” in *Sermons*, 3:628–29.

such a diary is unremarkable; the practice of maintaining a record of one's spiritual progress was well established by his time. What is surprising is that his diary remained unpublished until fifty-eight years after his death, especially when other Evangelicals' journals, those of Davies's peers, enjoyed wide distribution. How did such personal writings fit into the Puritan and early Evangelical means of grace? Why did Davies maintain this diary? What spiritual or other purposes did it serve? Why did this diary remain out of the public view for nearly six decades?

Charles Hambrick-Stowe has well summarized the Puritan tradition of maintaining diaries:

In their personal spiritual writing Puritans practiced self-examination; recorded ordinary events and "remarkable providences," which taken together could provide clues to God's plan for the soul; kept track of public worship and private devotional activity; and meditated and prayed. Diary entries also included terse notes of entirely secular transactions, of who visited whom or preached on what text.¹⁵⁷

While the practice of maintaining personal writings to track one's spiritual growth (or declension) may not have been universal, it was certainly practiced among colonial clergy from the earliest days of settlement. Thomas Shepard maintained such a diary, as did the poet-pastor Michael Wigglesworth (1631–1705) of Malden, Massachusetts.¹⁵⁸ Cotton Mather kept a diary that documented his meticulous and sincere use of various means of grace to pursue holiness.¹⁵⁹ Among Davies's peers, Jonathan Edwards kept various personal writings including a diary and his resolutions, as well as thousands of

157. Hambrick-Stowe, *Practice of Piety*, 186.

158. Thomas Shepherd, "The Journal," in *God's Plot: Puritan Spirituality in Thomas Shepard's Cambridge*, rev. ed., ed. Michael McGiffert (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), 81–134. See also Michael Wigglesworth, *The Diary of Michael Wigglesworth, 1653–1657*, ed. Edmund S. Morgan (New York: Harper and Row, 1946).

159. Cotton Mather, *Diary of Cotton Mather, 1681–1708*, vol. 7 of *Massachusetts Historical Society Collections* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1911). On Mather's use of the genre for tracking his spiritual growth, see Richard Franz Lovelace, "Christian Experience in the Theology of Cotton Mather" (Th.D. diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1968), 87, n. 2.

miscellaneous thoughts on life, Scripture, and theology.¹⁶⁰ The great revivalists George Whitefield and John Wesley maintained diaries and journals, some intended to foster private devotion and others clearly intended for public promotion.¹⁶¹ David Brainerd (1718–1747), Presbyterian missionary to the Indians of Delaware and New Jersey, was closer in age to Davies than these other men, and maintained both a private “diary” and a public “journal” of his mission work.¹⁶² While his Puritan forbearers and Evangelical contemporaries used the medium of personal diaries, Davies’s own diary is at once similar yet distinct from each of these sources mentioned.

While Davies reflected on his own heart and his motives, his diary entries lack the depth of introspection of a Shepard, Wigglesworth, or Brainerd. Davies recorded no list of guiding personal resolutions as did Edwards. He left no record of his fasts, Bible-reading regimen, or numerous days of prayer as did Mather. Davies was not nearly as meticulous as Wesley, sometimes skipping several days’ entries or summarizing large blocks of time with a simple paragraph. Of all those contemporary diary-keepers mentioned, Davies’s diary most closely resembles that of George Whitefield, who maintained a reasonably detailed record of his travels and impressions of his sermons and hearers. Davies’s motivations for keeping his diary and his intentions for its use seem largely idiosyncratic, which indicates that his diary was likely a very personal document. He writes:

And now as Divine Providence, quite contrary to my Expectation seems to call me to a very important Embassy for the

160. For the diary and resolutions, see Jonathan Edwards, *Letters and Personal Writings*, ed. George S. Claghorn, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 16 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

161. George Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals* (London: Banner of Truth, 1960). See also John Wesley, *Journal and Diaries*, ed. W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, vols. 18–24 of *The Works of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992). Shortly after his conversion in 1736, George Whitefield began keeping a private diary to mark his spiritual progress. According to Thomas Kidd, to whom I am indebted for sharing this information, this diary was clearly not intended for public viewing.

162. Jonathan Edwards, *The Life of David Brainerd*, ed. Norman Pettit, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 7 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 19), vii. Donald Whitney has noted that Edwards referred to his own personal account as a “diary,” as well as the private account that Brainerd maintained, using “journal” to refer to an intentionally public document, with some exceptions. See Whitney, “Piety of Jonathan Edwards,” 179–80.

Church and for the Public; and as it will tend much to my future Satisfaction, to have the Record of my procedure by me for a Review in an Hour of Perplexity; I think it expedient to state the Affair in Writing and to keep [a Diary of] all the remarkable Occurrences I may [meet with in] my Voyage.¹⁶³

By his own admission, Davies was unsure that he was the right person to undertake the fundraising trip to Great Britain; he had suggested other ministers he believed to be better suited for the task, yet “Providence” prevailed.¹⁶⁴ Might Davies’s stated reason for maintaining the diary have been simply pious posturing for later readers, a culturally expected demurral in light of such an honor? Almost certainly not. Although Davies had expressed his desire to live on in “public usefulness” after his death, he never published his diary following his return from Great Britain nor did he leave instructions for it to be published after his death as he did with his sermons.¹⁶⁵

Davies also appears to have been consistent in his personal humility. When the trustees of the College of New Jersey elected him as president, Davies declined the nomination more than once before reluctantly agreeing to the post.¹⁶⁶ Then, Davies took few steps to mask his interactions with or opinions of numerous Christian leaders in the colonies and Great Britain, which information might have been deemed inappropriate or at least too delicate to commit to print. Of course, he might simply have edited such information out of a print edition, but that he left his original diary unedited in this way makes it less likely that he wanted the material to be public after his demise. Finally, Davies made numerous personal, ministerial, and familial

163. Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 2.

164. Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 2–8.

165. See Samuel Davies, *Sermons on Important Subjects, By the Late Reverend and Pious Samuel Davies, A. M., Sometime President of the College of New Jersey*, 3 vols. (New York: T. Allen, 1792), i (unnumbered). In the preface to the 1792 edition of Davies’s sermons, Thomas Gibbons, dissenting preacher in London and one of Davies’s key correspondents, excerpted a letter Davies had sent in 1757: “I want to live after I am dead, not in name, but in public usefulness: I was therefore about to order in my will that all my notes, which are tolerably full, might be sent to you to correct and publish such of them as you might judge conducive to the public good” (i).

166. For the minutes of the trustees and their correspondence with Davies, see John Maclean, *History of the College of New Jersey, from its origins in 1746 to the Commencement of 1854*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia, Penn.: J. B. Lippincott and Company, 1877), 198–218.

notes in the diary, none of which would be scandalous if published, but most would have been uninteresting for the broader public. Davies's own explanation for keeping the diary, namely, as a record of God's dealings and his own travels, seems best taken at face value.¹⁶⁷

Davies maintained his diary in a way that best suited his own devotional needs. Davies followed no systematic schema in what he chose to include or how he structured his entries. He narrated his travels and the hospitality of his hosts. He listed sermons that he had preached in various pulpits, noting his own sense of anointing¹⁶⁸ or powerlessness.¹⁶⁹ He recorded the sermons he had heard preached by others and his thoughts or reactions to them.¹⁷⁰ He preserved descriptions of times of prayer with his friends¹⁷¹ and for his family.¹⁷² He mentioned books and sermons he read during his travels.¹⁷³ He documented fundraising visits, noting carefully the amounts collected or promised. Davies also used his diary to capture his occasional poems.¹⁷⁴

Davies's diary found its way into the possession of John Holt Rice (1777–1831), publisher and professor at Hampden-Sydney College and

167. While Davies's desire to maintain a record of his trip and God's dealings seems to have been his primary motivation, it is likely that he may have preserved the detailed records of his visits and funds raised as a log for the trustees for the College of New Jersey, should questions have ever been raised about how he spent his time and efforts abroad.

168. "Preached a Sermon in the Morning from Isai. 66.1,2. and thro' the great Mercy of God, my Heart was passionately affected with the Subject." See Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 19.

169. "Preached at Mr. Finley's on Deut. 10,-13. a Sermon which I preached in Hanover with great Satisfaction and Prospect of Success; but alas! I have lost that Spirit with which it was first delivered." See Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 10.

170. "Heard Mr. Rodgers preach a very good Sermon...and my Mind was deeply impressed." See Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 25.

171. See Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 26, 30, and 32 representatively.

172. See Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 20, 28, 32, 33, among many others.

173. See Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 21, 31, 33, 39–40, 109, 135, among others. Davies recorded at least twenty books, sermons, or treatises that he read during his travels, mostly during his time at sea, but also during his horseback travels on land (109). His reading tastes varied widely from travel journals (33–36) to sermons (31, 34, 60) to novels by Daniel Defoe (1660–1731) (39) and a biography of Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658) (109).

174. See Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 24–25, 26–27, 28, and 143, representatively. See also Hambrick-Stowe, *Practice of Piety*, 186–87, for a discussion of the place of poetic and meditative works in Puritan personal writings.

later Union Theological Seminary in Virginia.¹⁷⁵ Rice was a distant relative of Davies; his mother was a cousin of Samuel Davies's wife, Jane Holt.¹⁷⁶ By 1818, Rice had acquired some of Davies's papers and wrote Archibald Alexander (1772–1851) of Princeton seeking additional manuscripts.¹⁷⁷ Davies's diary was among these papers. Rice published extracts of the diary in 1819 in his *Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine*.¹⁷⁸ These extracts were reprinted occasionally during the nineteenth century.¹⁷⁹ Pilcher's 1967 transcription represented the first full publication of the journal.¹⁸⁰ Whether the diary remained private because Davies wished it to be so or whether it simply disappeared among various family artifacts, or more likely through a combination of these reasons, Davies found the discipline of documenting his spiritual life and God's work through his ministry to be helpful for a season, even if he never required it of other Christians as a mark of true piety.

Christian Friendship

In the fall of 1751, Davies wrote a friend who, though unnamed when the letter was reprinted, must have been close to the pastor indeed:

My very dear friend, I REDEEM a few nocturnal hours to breathe out my benevolent wishes for you, and to assure you of my peculiar regards. Human life is extremely precarious and uncertain; and, perhaps, at your return, I may be above the reach of your correspondence; or, perhaps, your voyage may end on

175. See William Maxwell, *A Memoir of the Rev. John H. Rice, D.D.* (Philadelphia: J. Whetham, 1835).

176. Maxwell, *Memoir*, 2.

177. Maxwell, *Memoir*, 139–40.

178. John Holt Rice, ed., "Memoir of the Reverend Samuel Davies," *The Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine*, 2 (1819): 112–19, 186–88, 201–17, 329–35, 353–63, 474–79, and 560–67. These extracts appeared in volume 2 of the magazine, not volume 1, as Pilcher referenced them. See Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, xv.

179. See Samuel Davies, *Memoir of the Rev. Samuel Davies, Formerly President of the College of New Jersey*, rev. ed. (Boston: Massachusetts Sabbath School Union, 1832). This *Memoir* is simply a reprinting of the material from Rice's magazine. See also William Henry Foote, *Sketches of Virginia: Historical and Biographical*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia, Penn.: William S. Martien, 1850), 227–81.

180. See Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, xii–iii, for a discussion of the transmission of the journal.

the eternal shore. I, therefore, write to you, dear sir, in the last agonies of friendship, If I may use the expression.¹⁸¹

Davies's thoughts on that particular evening seem laden with the near prospect of death. The minister assured his friend that if he were to return to find that Davies had died during his absence, he could forever treasure their friendship, assured that Davies had often prayed for him. If Davies were to outlive this dear brother, he would be comforted by the fact that he had expressed the depth of their friendship.¹⁸² Such thoughts of death stirred Davies to "rest my guilty soul on an all-sufficient redeemer with all the humble confidence of a confirmed faith." Further, these reflections called to Davies's mind God's gracious heart-work of regeneration and earlier seasons of devotion: "when I can recollect the solemn transactions between God and my soul, and renew them in the most voluntary dedication of myself, and all I am and have, to him, through the blessed mediator; then immortality is a glorious prospect."¹⁸³

Davies indicated that he and his friend had previously discussed "experimental religion," and he wrote this letter with a particular theological motivation: to insist upon the necessity of the new birth. Apparently his friend remained unconvinced that regeneration was necessary to one's eternal salvation. Davies sought to persuade him otherwise:

That thorough change of heart, usually denominated regeneration; that distressing conviction of our undone condition by sin, and utter inability to relieve ourselves by virtue of that strength common to mankind in general, that humble acceptance of Christ as our only Saviour and Lord, by a faith of divine operation, that humbling sense of the corruption of human nature, and eager pursuit and practice of universal holiness, which I have, I believe, mentioned in conversation and my letters, appear to me of absolute necessity.¹⁸⁴

Davies directed his friend to the sermons of Philip Doddridge, the Nonconformist polymath of Northampton, England, which

181. Samuel Davies, letter to unspecified recipient, in "Letters of Samuel Davies," *The Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine*, 2 (1819): 539.

182. Davies, "Letters of Samuel Davies," 540.

183. Davies, "Letters of Samuel Davies," 540–41.

184. Davies, "Letters of Samuel Davies," 541.

provided “a rational account of that important change.”¹⁸⁵ Davies was “inexpressibly anxious...lest you should fatally mistake here,” especially in light of his friend’s favorite authors, who treated experimental religion “very superficially” and tended to “mislead us in sundry things of great importance relating to it” by neglecting the doctrines of the new birth.¹⁸⁶ Davies insisted that “our notions of the substance of vital piety ought to be well examined, and impartially formed; as a mistake here may be of pernicious consequences.”¹⁸⁷ This letter’s focus on heart, or in Davies’s words, “experimental,” religion provides a helpful vantage point from which to evaluate the place of friendship in Samuel Davies’s spirituality. While it is impossible to say precisely how many close friendships Davies might have enjoyed during his lifetime, it is easier to identify several common features of Davies’s various friendships. The artifacts here are few, yet they show that Davies often approached friendship from the standpoint of piety.

First, genuine Christian friendship concerned itself with matters of eternal significance. This emphasis is apparent in the letter just considered, where Davies took the opportunity of an upcoming trans-Atlantic voyage, fraught with danger, to address a friend’s understanding of conversion. Then, true friendship consisted of mutual encouragements to persevere in the faith and in the ministry. Before Davies sailed for Great Britain in 1753, he travelled from Virginia to New York, meeting various colleagues along the journey. During October and November, Davis stayed often with his longtime friend and fellow Presbyterian minister John Rodgers (1727–1811).¹⁸⁸ During this period, Davies was able to comfort Rodgers when John’s wife became ill and delivered a daughter about a month early.¹⁸⁹ For his part, Rodgers’s preaching stirred Davies’s heart, prompting the Virginian to meditate on the love of God and the place of the affections

185. Davies, “Letters of Samuel Davies,” 541.

186. Davies, “Letters of Samuel Davies,” 541–42.

187. Davies, “Letters of Samuel Davies,” 542.

188. For an overview of Rodgers’s life and ministry, see Harris Elwood Starr, “Rodgers, John” in *Dictionary of American Biography*, vol. 16, ed. Dumas Malone (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1943), 74–75. Samuel Blair had trained both Davies and Rodgers for ministry and they had been ordained less than a year apart and had both sought licensure from the Anglican authorities in Virginia in 1747, but when Rodgers’s request was denied, he settled in Delaware. So close were these friends that Davies named a son John Rodgers Davies.

189. Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 21–22.

in the believer's life.¹⁹⁰ The two ministers conversed freely on such matters, opening their hearts to one another "with all the freedom of Xn. Friendship."¹⁹¹ When the two friends parted, Davies noted that they "retired, and each of us prayed in the tenderest and most pathetic Manner, giving Thanks to God for that peculiar Friendship which has subsisted between us, and committing each other to the Care of Heaven for the future."¹⁹² Similarly, Davies and Gilbert Tennent shared many days in prayer and edifying conversation during their journey to and stay in England.¹⁹³

Davies found discretion to be an equally key element of Christian friendship. When writing to Joseph Bellamy, the Congregationalist pastor of Bethlehem, Connecticut, Davies noted, "I must suppress sundry Particulars that might be proper to mention in the Freedom of amicable Conversation, but are not to be trusted to the Candour of a censorious World."¹⁹⁴ Further, Davies indicated that sharing private information in a public setting to be "pregnant with mischievous Consequences," insisting that only "intimate Friendship" provided the proper occasion to discuss such matters.¹⁹⁵

Friendship between Christians was a valuable means of grace; thus it is unsurprising to find that Samuel Davies encouraged his hearers to meet with fellow Christians for encouragement. Davies specifically urged the faithful to join one another in societies for prayer. At this time, informal "societies" were an established and growing method of promoting piety outside of the congregational setting. Philip Jacob Spener (1635–1705), the German Lutheran pastor now regarded as the father of German pietism, had proposed the *collegia pietatis*, or "holy gatherings" in his 1675 introduction to Johann Arndt's (1555–1621) classic *True Christianity*.¹⁹⁶ This introduction, later published separately as *Pia Desideria*, was widely influential among

190. Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 25.

191. Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 26.

192. Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 28.

193. See, representatively, Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 30, 32, and 38.

194. Samuel Davies, *The State of Religion among the Protestant Dissenters in Virginia; In a Letter to the Rev. Mr. Joseph Bellamy, of Bethlehem, in New-England: from the Reverend Mr. Samuel Davies, V. D. M. in Hanover County, Virginia* (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1751), 4.

195. Davies, *State of Religion*, 4.

196. For an accessible contemporary edition, see Johann Arndt, *True Christianity*, trans. Peter Erb (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1979).

early Evangelicals.¹⁹⁷ Spener called for Christians to gather in homes and, under the leadership of a minister, to discuss Scripture and perhaps sing, in order to promote spiritual growth.¹⁹⁸ The practice spread among early Evangelicals, notably the Moravians, and especially among Wesleyan Methodists and the Calvinistic Methodists of Wales.¹⁹⁹ While Davies left no discussion on composition or practices of such societies among the Presbyterians of Virginia, he encouraged his hearers to gather in such small groups for the purpose of prayer.²⁰⁰

The Means of Grace and Assurance of Salvation

Earthly life is fleeting and assurance of how one will spend eternity is essential.²⁰¹ Samuel Davies believed that Christians could have such an assurance. Proverbs 14:23 warned the wicked of destruction yet declared that “the righteous hath hope in his death.” What sort of hope could the righteous have? First, the righteous could hope for God’s support in death because God had often promised to support His people in both life and death (cf. 2 Tim. 1:12; Ps. 23:4, and Rom. 8:35–39). The righteous could also hope in the immortality of the

197. See Philip Jacob Spener, *Pia Desideria*, trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1964), 89–91. Spener’s name is spelled variously as “Philipp” or “Philip.” Regarding Spener’s influence upon early Evangelicalism, see Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 17–18, 61–63.

198. Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 89–90.

199. See Noll, *Rise of Evangelicalism*, 160. See also William Williams, *The Experience Meeting: An Introduction to the Welsh Societies of the Evangelical Awakening*, trans. Bethan Lloyd-Jones (London: Evangelical Press, 1973; repr. Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2003).

200. See Samuel Davies, “The Crisis, or the Uncertain Doom of Kingdoms at Particular Times,” in *Sermons*, 3:145.; and *idem.*, “The Signs of the Times,” in *Sermons*, 3:201. In these sermons, Davies urged his hearers to gather in societies specifically for the purpose of praying that God would pour out His Holy Spirit upon Virginia. In 1747, Jonathan Edwards published his *An Humble Attempt*, a treatise that called Christians to unite in concerts of prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. See Jonathan Edwards, *An Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God’s People in Extraordinary Prayer for the Revival of Religion and the Advancement of Christ’s Kingdom on Earth, pursuant to Scripture-Promises and Prophecies concerning the last Time*, in *Apocalyptic Writings*, ed. Stephen J. Stein, vol. 5 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 309–436. Was Davies following Edwards’s advice and call to establish such prayer meetings?

201. Samuel Davies, “The Objects, Grounds, and Evidences of the Hope of the Righteous,” in *Sermons*, 3:474.

soul, because everlasting life was promised in the gospel (cf. 2 Tim. 1:10). Then, Christians had hope because of the promise that their bodies would one day be resurrected from the grave (cf. 1 Cor. 15:53–55). Finally, the righteous had hope in death because of the promise of eternal fellowship with and worship of God (cf. Ps. 17:15 and Phil. 1:23).²⁰² Such were the objects of the righteous person's hopes, but what qualified a person as "righteous"? Though people might disagree over such qualifications as distinguish the righteous and the wicked, surely God was able to establish such criteria, or in Davies's words, the "characters which he has declared essentially necessary to salvation." God had indeed established such a foundation in Scripture, and because God's character is utterly unshakable and His Word completely trustworthy, Christians could have reliable assurance of salvation.²⁰³

God's mercy to sinners displayed in the gospel of Jesus Christ was the sinner's only foundation of assurance. While one could not trust in his own inherent righteousness, he could hold fast to the imputed righteousness of Christ: "It is in the mercy, the mere mercy of God, through Jesus Christ, that he trusts."²⁰⁴ Such who had received Christ's righteousness were empowered to live obedient lives, marked by good works, but these works were no sufficient ground of assurance; one's only hope was in having been born again, possessing an interest in Christ. Yet how was one to know that they had experienced this saving regeneration? Davies believed that by means of a "thorough trial," of their character, a person could know if they had truly experienced the new birth and, consequently, trust God's reliable Word that all who had been born again had the promise of eternal salvation.²⁰⁵ Part of this "thorough trial" involved examining one's life in light of Scripture. Those who cherished attitudes or behaviors that God had approbated and rejected personal holiness could have no assurance; even worse, their groundless hope served to undermine Scripture's authority: if the Bible declared that the impenitent would perish (cf. Luke 13:3–5) and yet held out hope of their ultimate salvation, how could it possibly support the hopes of the saints? People who lived

202. Davies, "Hope of the Righteous," in *Sermons*, 3:478–84.

203. Davies, "Hope of the Righteous," in *Sermons*, 3:484–85.

204. Davies, "Hope of the Righteous," in *Sermons*, 3:485.

205. Davies, "Hope of the Righteous," in *Sermons*, 3:486.

in “willful neglect” of duties God had prescribed had no ground for hope.²⁰⁶ Yet not all who sought assurance were so hypocritical; surely some were genuinely faithful followers of Christ.

Those who saw evidence of the new birth in their lives had reliable grounds for hope, but these grounds did not mean that the believer’s experience of assurance was always consistent with the reality of their security in Christ:

Now different believers, and even the same persons at different times, have very different degrees of this evidence. And the reason of this difference is, that sundry causes are necessary to make the evidence clear and satisfactory; and, when any of these are wanting, or do not concur in a proper degree, then the evidence is dark and doubtful.²⁰⁷

Davies’s pastoral concern was evident. Those who have been born from above ought to have hope, not in themselves but rather in the grace of God working in their lives. Yet such people might at various seasons entertain unfounded doubts. How could one maintain a consistent hope of salvation and a steady assurance? They could grow in their certainty, Davies taught, by growing “to some eminence” in their practice of various graces.²⁰⁸ Christians who were weak in their practice of various disciplines might have hope, but such hope would almost certainly be weak in the face of death. Those saints who had “made great attainments in holiness,” however, maintained a steady assurance, even with joy.²⁰⁹ Consistent with his emphasis on the ministry of the Holy Spirit, Davies also taught that the Spirit’s work was essential to one’s assurance.

Davies looked to Romans 8:16, which promised that those whom God had adopted could expect the Holy Spirit to provide an internal testimony confirming God’s legal declaration: “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.”²¹⁰ Davies explained the Spirit’s ministry further: “He excites our graces to such a lively exercise, as to render them visible by their effects, and

206. Davies, “Hope of the Righteous,” in *Sermons*, 3:486–88.

207. Davies, “Hope of the Righteous,” in *Sermons*, 3:489.

208. Davies, “Hope of the Righteous,” in *Sermons*, 3:489.

209. Davies, “Hope of the Righteous,” in *Sermons*, 3:490.

210. Davies, “Hope of the Righteous,” in *Sermons*, 3:490.

distinguishable from all other principles.”²¹¹ Yet Davies believed that such interior confirmation was within God’s purview to grant or to withhold; it did not necessarily accompany regeneration nor was it promised in the same degree to every saint. Where this testimony was absent, the saint might feel confused, doubtful, and buffeted.²¹² When God was pleased to give such assurance, however, “it will be like a ray of heavenly light, to point out his way through the dark shades of death, and to open to him the transporting prospects of eternal day.”²¹³ While the Spirit’s heart-ministry was God’s prerogative, the saint ought to use those means within his control, namely, the discipline of self-examination. Christians who neglected regular introspection were likely to have only meager assurance whereas those believers who diligently looked after their lives abounded in hope.²¹⁴ Regardless of a person’s experience of assurance, through the gospel the righteous had hope. While a person might wish for greater assurance, she must remain contented with this objective promise of assurance of salvation through Christ’s merit. “The soldiers of Jesus Christ have generally left this mortal state in triumph; though this is not an universal rule.”²¹⁵ In sum, Davies believed that believers could be assured of salvation because of Christ’s objective cross-work, evidences of a changed life, and the Spirit’s interior witness, yet such assurance admitted to degrees.

Samuel Davies’s theology of assurance was consistent with the Westminster divines, who extended cautious optimism to the saints when they declared:

such as truly believe in the Lord Jesus, and love Him in sincerity, endeavouring to walk in all good conscience before Him, may, in this life, be certainly assured that they are in the state of grace, and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, which hope shall never make them ashamed.²¹⁶

Davies followed the Confession’s insistence on the promises of God, testimony of works, and the Spirit’s witness as the grounds for

211. Davies, “Hope of the Righteous,” in *Sermons*, 3:490.

212. Davies, “Hope of the Righteous,” in *Sermons*, 3:490.

213. Davies, “Hope of the Righteous,” in *Sermons*, 3:490.

214. Davies, “Hope of the Righteous,” in *Sermons*, 3:490.

215. Davies, “Hope of the Righteous,” in *Sermons*, 3:492.

216. WCF, 18.1.

an “infallible assurance of faith.”²¹⁷ Similarly, he adhered to the Confession’s admonition that such assurance was not bound up “to the essence of faith,” and that the Christian might wait long to receive the comfort of this hope, and that such believers ought to use “ordinary means” to foster joyful, thankful assurance.²¹⁸ Yet because salvation was based on the objective work of God, even those Christians who lost assurance were “never so utterly destitute of that seed of God, and life of faith, that love of Christ and the brethren, that sincerity of heart, and conscience of duty, out of which, by the operation of the Spirit, this assurance may, in due time, be revived; and by the which, in the mean time, they are supported from utter despair.”²¹⁹

It is right to locate Davies’s treatment of assurance with a discussion of his views on the various means of grace because Davies saw the two concepts as integrally linked. Christians who neglected fellowship with God through God’s ordained means ought not hope of salvation:

Now God has been so condescending, as to represent his ordinances as so many places of interview for his people, where they may meet with him, or, in the Scripture phrase, draw near to him, appear before him, and carry on a spiritual intercourse with him.²²⁰

As God had been so gracious as to establish means through which His people might commune with Him, it followed that true believers delighted in such means as prayer, hearing and meditating on Scripture, and taking the Lord’s Supper. Such means were not only duties but “privileges; exalted and delightful privileges, which sweeten their pilgrimage through this wilderness, and sometimes transform it into a paradise.”²²¹ Davies believed that one’s disposition toward the means of grace was a necessary indicator of their interest in Christ and their assurance of salvation. Those people who neglected the public assembly, maintained “prayerless closets” and “prayerless families,” and avoided the daily practice of devotion had no basis to claim to love God, nor could they have any assurance of saving faith.²²² Rather,

217. WCF, 18.2.

218. WCF, 18.3.

219. WCF, 18.4.

220. Davies, “Evidences of Want,” in *Sermons*, 3:467.

221. Davies, “Evidences of Want,” in *Sermons*, 3:467.

222. Davies, “Evidences of Want,” in *Sermons*, 3:467.

every genuine believer could testify with King David of their soul's insatiable thirst for God (cf. Ps. 42:1–2) and sought to satisfy this thirst in the ever-flowing fountain of God's presence through the habitual practice of various means.²²³

Conclusion

For Samuel Davies, Christians maintained communion with God through the diligent spiritual activities such as reading and meditating upon Scripture, prayer, fasting, and Sabbath keeping. Davies stood in a long Christian tradition which emphasized the use of means in pursuing godliness (cf. 1 Tim. 4:7). Though such exercises did not make one a Christian; they were simultaneously preparatory to and essential for the Christian life. Sinners were to read Scripture and pray that they might be converted. Christians used such disciplines to maintain vital communion with God. Some disciplines, such as the Lord's Supper, were reserved exclusively for believers, while others, like the Sabbath, were intended for all members of society. Davies himself practiced the disciplines he enjoined upon his congregants, believing that through such means he, and they, could draw near to God.

223. Davies, "Evidences of Want," in *Sermons*, 3:467–68.

Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones's Principles of Evangelism with Application for Producing Evangelistic Church Members

SIMON J. GREEN



From his published sermons, Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899–1981) has become known in the Reformed and wider evangelical world as someone who was an expositor par excellence. Many Christians continue to profit from his sermons preached during a thirty-year ministry at Westminster Chapel—sermons designed to instruct and edify believers. What remains less appreciated is his evangelistic ministry, which comfortably comprised over half of his total preaching engagements.¹ As his wife Bethan Lloyd-Jones so memorably expressed, “No one will ever understand my husband until they realise that he is first of all a man of prayer and then, an evangelist.”² Many of these evangelistic sermons were remarkably owned of God and it is believed that he saw people converted under his ministry every week.³

This evangelistic success arose out of deep convictions regarding the work of preaching and evangelism more generally. The definitive views he maintained rendered him unable to support the Billy Graham campaigns in London despite his appreciation of the man leading them.⁴ This was not without a loss in popularity in the evangelical landscape at that time, especially in the United Kingdom. Dr. Lloyd-Jones was concerned that when evangelistic practices were separated from biblical teaching, the moral and spiritual condition

1. Iain H. Murray, *David Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The Fight of Faith, 1939–1981* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1990), 323.

2. Murray, *The Fight of Faith*, 322.

3. Szabados Adam, “Two Evangelical Approaches to Evangelism and Mission: Differences Between D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones and John R. W. Stott,” 8. <http://szabadosadam.hu/divinity/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/ML-J-AND-JS-2.pdf>.

4. Murray, *The Fight of Faith*, 341.

of the country would go from bad to worse. History has clearly vindicated his assessment of the situation. This paper will therefore examine the teaching of Dr. Lloyd-Jones (ML-J) on the right approach to evangelism for the individual believer. In other words, how are ordinary Christians to engage in evangelism, and how can their witness be made more effective? To answer these questions it will be necessary first of all to summarize the principles undergirding ML-J's understanding of what true evangelism is, before showing the implications that he drew from those principles.

The Importance of Evangelism

ML-J was the very antithesis of a pragmatist. Everything he sought to prescribe for Christian living and church practice was derived directly from Scripture, especially the book of Acts and the Epistles. Though many may have differed with him on his conclusions, none could fail to recognize his desire to root evangelism in biblical theology and practice.⁵ For him this was the single biggest reason why the church was failing to deal with the increasing corruption and immorality of society. The key question is, therefore, what did he understand the Scriptures to teach concerning the church's work of evangelism and how it is made effective. There are a number of aspects that are repeatedly evident in his published works, as well as Iain Murray's two-volume biography of him. Some general statements can be made first relating to his view of evangelism within the life of the church, before highlighting some of the fundamental principles ML-J saw as vital to direct all true evangelism.

ML-J believed evangelism to be the primary work of the church and anything that obscured this would inevitably prove a hindrance.⁶ He saw many churches involving themselves in activities other than evangelism and speaking about issues other than man in sin and his need of reconciliation to his Creator. He was quite adamant that when the church involved itself in politics and economics, she was failing to fulfill her divine mandate: "the church is not here to reform the

5. David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Knowing the Times: Addresses Delivered on Various Occasions, 1942-1977* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1989), ix.

6. This summary of his teaching on the primacy of evangelism in the church's life is drawn from David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Life in the Spirit in Marriage, Home & Work: An Exposition of Ephesians 5:18-6:9* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975), 318-19.

world, for the world cannot be reformed.”⁷ Around that time some were protesting against the perceived evil of communism and, from the perspective of ML-J, in doing so were politicizing their message and prejudicing communist hearers against the gospel. So ML-J held the work of evangelism in the highest esteem as the chief business of the church militant.

Secondly and more specifically, he regarded the work of evangelism as devolving upon every believer. He did not see it limited to those in office or even those who were particularly gifted in communication. Expounding John 17:17–19, he stated explicitly that “the plain and clear teaching of Scripture is that every single Christian person is an evangelist.”⁸ He was concerned to be understood in this area due to criticism that Westminster Chapel was a one man show with everybody else doing nothing but listening.⁹ Though this can occur when the life of a church greatly deteriorates, ML-J was decidedly clear that he did not expect that outcome to be the fruit of his ministry.¹⁰

The priority, therefore, that ML-J gave to evangelism in the church, and particularly within the life of every believer, is abundantly plain. This is something that all Christians must be engaged in, but the next issue concerns how this work is to be carried out. Perhaps the best summary of the principles that controlled ML-J’s evangelism was given by him in an address entitled *The Presentation of the Gospel*.¹¹ The five points that he gives here will serve as a framework around which his teaching elsewhere can be gathered.

The Glory of God

The first concern that ML-J had in evangelism was regarding motivation for the work. Nothing less than the glory of God should be the aim of the Christian in all of life, and this area was no exception. Even the desire to save souls, noble as it is, must not be allowed to supplant this controlling axiom.¹² For ML-J this was vital, since the appropri-

7. Lloyd-Jones, *Life in the Spirit*, 318–19.

8. David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Sanctified Through the Truth: The Assurance of our Salvation* (Westchester, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1989), 21.

9. Murray, *The Fight of Faith*, 400.

10. David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1985), 238–39.

11. Lloyd-Jones, *Knowing the Times*, 1–13.

12. Lloyd-Jones, *Knowing the Times*, 5.

tion of it would govern the very message and method of evangelism. He demonstrated that evangelism must begin with God and not man, since that was the approach of the apostles and prophets. Preaching upon Romans 1:18 he said, "He [Paul] is not talking in terms of their happiness or some particular state of mind, or something that might appeal to them, as certain possibilities do—but this staggering, amazing thing, the wrath of God! And he puts it first; it is the thing he says at once. Here is the motive for evangelism; here is the thing that drove this man."¹³ ML-J regarded many approaches in evangelism to fail at this initial stage because they were ultimately anthropocentric and not theocentric. In connection with this, Murray records ML-J's identification of one of the major problems with most modern evangelism: "The gospel was being preached in terms of the offer of a friend and a helper. *The* characteristic of Calvinistic evangelism is that the majesty and glory of God is put first, instead of some benefit provided for man."¹⁴

The Power of the Holy Spirit

The second principle that ML-J put forward was the necessity of the work and power of the Holy Spirit. He reasoned that regardless of an individual's abilities and gifts, without the work of the Holy Spirit the presentation of the gospel will be ineffectual. Preaching on Ephesians 2:1, he highlighted the biblical view of man which called for this position unequivocally: "If you and I but realised that every man who is yet a sinner is absolutely dominated by 'the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience,' if we only understood that he is really a child of wrath and dead in trespasses and sins, we would realise that only one power can deal with such an individual, and that is the power of God, the power of the Holy Ghost." Biblical evangelism must therefore proceed in utter dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

It is probably appropriate at this point to mention the stress ML-J put on the need for revival in connection with the work of evangelism.¹⁵ He understood the shortage of genuine converts to the Christian

13. Lloyd-Jones, *The Gospel of God*, 325.

14. Murray, *The Fight of Faith*, 732.

15. David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Revival* (Westchester, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1987). This collection of 24 sermons preached during 1959 represents his fullest treatment of revival.

faith and the relatively low state of spirituality among Christians as evidence of a lack of the Holy Spirit within the life of the church. Such a lack could only be reversed by a divine visitation. However, this did not mean that the work of evangelism should be halted while the church waited for such a revival to come; rather, while engaged in the work, the church should recognize its impotency that only such an outpouring of the Holy Spirit could adequately address.¹⁶ Contrary to the teaching on revival which had gained popularity under Charles Finney in the nineteenth century, ML-J knew that revival was sovereignly controlled, and yet the church must be active in seeking it. In an interview with Carl F. Henry that appeared in *Christianity Today* in 1980, ML-J said:

I have always believed that nothing but a revival—a visitation of the Holy Spirit, in distinction from an evangelistic campaign—can deal with the situation of the church and of the world.... I am convinced that nothing can avail but churches and ministers on their knees in total dependence on God. As long as you go on organizing, people will not fall on their knees and implore God to come and heal them. It seems to me that the campaign approach trusts ultimately in techniques rather in the power of the Spirit.¹⁷

For ML-J, evangelism was inextricably bound up with revival; any attempts to carry on without simultaneously beseeching God to visit His people would only prove fruitless in the long run. Positively, then, there was a great need of prayer in evangelism but not simply prayer that asked God to bless human effort. The prayer that was demanded by a general low spiritual condition was one of importunity arising out of conscious powerlessness and ineffectiveness. For ML-J, this was the way that evidenced real dependence upon the Holy Spirit for the progress of the gospel.

The Centrality of the Word of God

The third foundational principle that ML-J set down for governing evangelism was the centrality of the Bible. Closely linked to his

16. Lloyd-Jones, *Revival*, vi. ML-J emphasized this often, which was recognized by Dr. J. I. Packer who penned the introduction to this book.

17. "Carl F. H. Henry Interviews Dr. Lloyd-Jones," n.d., <http://www.mister-richardson.com/mlj-int.html> (accessed April 4, 2014).

emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit was the plain scriptural teaching that “the one and only medium through which the Holy Spirit works is the Word of God.”¹⁸ He supported this thesis by demonstrating the invariable method of the apostles was that they “reasoned out of the Scriptures.” Hence ML-J would maintain that, “True evangelism...is highly doctrinal.”¹⁹ The presentation of the gospel was marked by informing the unbeliever about the nature and works of God, the condition of man in sin and his inability to remedy himself, and of the person and work of Jesus Christ on behalf of sinners. Like his Puritan forbears, ML-J understood the gospel addressing the mind, which moved the affections and changed the will. He would repeatedly state that the first thing the gospel does for a man is to make him think.

For ML-J, the centrality of the Word of God in evangelism and the doctrine it teaches implied the importance of preaching in the church’s work of evangelism. He understood the Bible to teach that preaching was the preeminent means God uses to reconcile sinners to Himself, and therefore it must occupy a central place in church life. It was his life’s practice (one that was subsequently copied by many non-conformist churches in the United Kingdom) to preach directly evangelistically every Sunday evening. These sermons, although different in their principal aim from more instructional messages, were nonetheless carefully reasoned expositions of a text of Scripture, much in the same vein as those of the apostles recorded in Acts.

The Right Motivation

The fourth principle that ML-J gives to control evangelism is “that the true urge to evangelization must come from apprehending these principles, and, therefore, from a zeal for the honour and glory of God and a love for the souls of men.”²⁰ The glory of God, the unequivocal necessity of the Holy Spirit, and the centrality of the Word of God must all be maintained in conjunction with love for the souls of men in the great work of evangelism. In the mind of ML-J, any approach to evangelism that did not proceed from a right understanding of these principles was bound to be deficient.

18. Lloyd-Jones, *Knowing the Times*, 5.

19. Lloyd-Jones, *Knowing the Times*, 58.

20. Lloyd-Jones, *Knowing the Times*, 6.

Associated Dangers

The fifth and final principle that ML-J laid down was the reality of “a constant danger of error and of heresy, even among the most sincere, and also the danger of a false zeal and the employment of unscriptural methods.”²¹ Since this is sadly true, he urged the necessity of “constant self-examination and a return to the Scriptures themselves.”²² These pitfalls he then enlarged upon, both in this address and in his preaching ministry, and elucidated several implications of these dangers. The first of these was to examine oneself by means of self-questioning regarding the purpose and motive for any evangelistic activity. He suggested that there was only one true answer to such questions: “I am anxious that souls should be reconciled to God, because, being what they are, they are dishonouring God, and because, being in a state in which they dishonour God, they are in danger of perdition.”²³ Any answer short of this would inevitably fall short of the primacy of the glory of God in evangelism. Other approaches may yield a greater number of decisions, as the Graham campaigns did, but anything that falls short of reconciling the sinner to God had to be classified as failure.

Another great danger that Lloyd-Jones saw in the field of evangelism was the assumption that a man who believes the gospel and is thoroughly orthodox in his doctrine would automatically apply those truths and then present the gospel in the right way. He wisely recognized that the latter did not inexorably flow out of the former. He proved this from two examples. The first concerned those “men who are sound evangelicals in their belief and doctrine; they are perfectly orthodox in their faith, yet their work is utterly barren.... They are as sound as you are, yet their ministry leads to nothing.”²⁴ The issue with such a man, he went on to explain, is that he talks about the gospel rather than actually preaching it. The second example concerns the man who is more pragmatic and interested in obtaining results “that he allows a gap to come in between what he is presenting (and what he believes) and the results themselves.”²⁵ His whole point was

21. Lloyd-Jones, *Knowing the Times*, 6.

22. Lloyd-Jones, *Knowing the Times*, 6.

23. Lloyd-Jones, *Knowing the Times*, 6.

24. Lloyd-Jones, *Knowing the Times*, 3.

25. Lloyd-Jones, *Knowing the Times*, 3.

that evangelism must be controlled and shaped by our orthodoxy but that alone is not enough.²⁶

A further error that ML-J saw many stray into was the supposition that the present conditions were different from any other period of history and therefore required a new approach. He noted that because evangelism was not succeeding as people thought it should, they had concluded the root of the problem was communication. The remedy prescribed varied between an extremism which called for a new or modified message that excised aspects of the biblical message which modern man didn't accept as valid, such as miracles, and those who sought to follow the way businesses attracted customers through advertising. ML-J, being the expert diagnostician he was, correctly identified this as misdiagnosis founded upon a false assumption. In a sermon on 1 Thessalonians 1:5, he showed that the Apostle Paul faced exactly the same problem.²⁷ The problem was not communicational, however, but moral. As Szabados Adam pointed out, ML-J asserted that "it was not that the people did not *know* what they had to do, but that they did not *want* to do it."²⁸ ML-J's theology informed him that man had not changed at all since the Fall, and therefore the methods of the apostles and the early church still held true.

The final implication of this fifth principle concerned the methodology of evangelism. This is perhaps the point at which ML-J differed so greatly from other contemporary evangelical leaders such as Graham and John R. W. Stott. In applying the great emphasis that the Apostle Paul gave to the wrath of God in his evangelism, ML-J posed the questions, "Does this govern our evangelism as well as our thinking? Does it govern us in practice as well as in our theory?" He then went on to state "how easy it is, though we believe the gospel, to begin to think immediately in terms of human wisdom and human strategy."²⁹ Though ML-J was not completely opposed to the use of various methods in evangelism, he saw the danger of worldliness in adopting many of the ideas and, more subtly, he understood the ten-

26. For a fuller explanation of this distinction, see David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Darkness and Light: An Exposition of Ephesians 4:17–5:17* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982), 374–76.

27. David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Setting Our Affections Upon Glory: Nine Sermons On the Gospel and the Church* (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2013), 105–125.

28. Adam, "Two Evangelical Approaches to Evangelism and Mission," 10.

29. Lloyd-Jones, *The Gospel of God*, 330.

dency to trust in methods rather than the power of God. Similarly, his interpretation of New Testament teaching and knowledge of history disinclined him to any form of organization of the local church's evangelistic activities. He observed that the method of spreading the gospel during the early church period and every time of revival was "cellular infiltration."³⁰ What he meant was that ordinary Christians fulfilling their daily callings would automatically interact with the people they came into contact with and, as they had opportunity, speak to them about Jesus Christ. That Scripture and history informed his view is beyond doubt, but they weren't the only factors in his thinking. As Murray points out, his constitution as a Welshman made him averse to organization and committees.³¹ Secondly, his views in this area were shaped by personal experience. At his former pastorate in Aberavon (1927–1938) he abolished all evangelistic activities and prioritized preaching, and then witnessed rapid growth of the church including some notable conversions.³² His opposition to organization of local church evangelism was not formed by this experience, but, in his mind, it did serve to support his contention against organizational evangelism.

Functioning as Evangelists

The principles foundational to ML-J's understanding of biblical evangelism have been set out. What remains is to draw practical lessons from his teaching to help produce more evangelistic effectiveness in the lives of all Christians. There can hardly be a true believer who doesn't wish to be more useful and faithful in this area, so what can be done? According to ML-J, the most important factor in the witness of each Christian was their sanctification and personal holiness.³³ He very much believed, on the strength of the New Testament and church history, that the life of each Christian should be attractive to those they interacted with in the world. There ought to be something noticeably different in their behavior which would provoke enquiry as to the cause. This would then lead to an opportunity to present the gospel message and invite the enquirer to church where they would

30. Lloyd-Jones, *Sanctified Through the Truth*, 21.

31. Murray, *The Fight of Faith*, 757.

32. Adam, "Two Evangelical Approaches to Evangelism and Mission," 12.

33. For his best and most thorough treatment of the vital relationship between evangelism and sanctification see Lloyd-Jones, *Sanctified Through the Truth*, 20–32.

come under the chief method of evangelism, the preaching of that gospel. Visibly changed lives were the primary authentication of the gospel message according to ML-J: "Oh yes, the preaching, the Word, the only gospel, and the power of the Spirit upon it are all essential. But the proof of its truth is in the daily lives of the members of the church, people who claim to be Christians."³⁴

The main concern that ML-J therefore had was the degree to which the gospel was regulating our lives. "Are you a phenomenon in the city where you live? Are you an object of wonder to your neighbors and associates?"³⁵ Only when this happened would the church know great blessing on her evangelism. In this he was following in the footsteps of all God's servants going back to the Old Testament; he was calling the people back to their God and His holiness. The great lesson for more effective evangelism is for believers to focus on their sanctification in the knowledge that lives adorned with the beauty of Christ never go unnoticed, and are the chief means of attracting unbelievers to the gospel.

The second practical lesson that can be drawn from ML-J's teaching on evangelism concerns the lack of motivation many Christians have to reach unbelievers. He was quite clear that this was not something that could be worked up but was intimately connected to our view of the gospel. Preaching upon Ephesians 2:1, he said: "The poor-ness of our missionary and evangelistic zeal is entirely due to this. We have not seen the position of those outside truly—what they are, what they might be, and what Christ has done."³⁶ The failure to evangelize was due to a deficient understanding of what God does in the salvation of each soul. Such deficiency could only be rectified through preaching of God's Word anointed with the Holy Spirit as well as private study and meditation. He regarded the chief function of preaching to be inspirational by bringing the Bible alive to the congregation and thus producing "live, living witnesses, 'epistles of Christ.'"³⁷ A real burden for souls in the lives of each believer was therefore furthered by preaching that exalted the wonder of the gospel and applied it to life.

34. Lloyd-Jones, *Setting Our Affections Upon Glory*, 124.

35. Lloyd-Jones, *Setting Our Affections Upon Glory*, 124.

36. David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *God's Way of Reconciliation (Studies in Ephesians chapter 2)* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 11.

37. Lloyd-Jones, *Knowing the Times*, 362. This formed part of ML-J's inaugural address at London Theological Seminary.

Third, the absolute necessity of the operation of the Holy Spirit in ML-J's view of evangelism directs us to the attention we must give to prayer of a specific kind. ML-J's conviction that nothing short of revival could adequately deal with the low state of the church and make the preaching of the gospel effectual in the hearts of unbelievers meant that all preoccupation with methods must be abandoned. Rather, both privately and corporately, the church needed to plead with God to do what He had been pleased to do in the past and pour out the Holy Spirit upon His people. Nothing but importunate and unceasing prayer would avail. Therefore, the application comes to us that if we would become effective witnesses of Christ, we must get down on our knees in humility, relinquish all confidence in any other means, confess our bankruptcy and impotency, and beg God to fulfill His promise "to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." Until this happened, ML-J was quite sure that society would only get progressively worse, but saw great hope if this was taken up. Speaking at a ministers' conference in 1943, he said:

I am one of those who still believe that the key to the present situation is the local church. It is possible for a revival, if we are waiting and praying for it, to start at any moment. Before we think about planning and organizing in order to reach the outsider, let us concentrate upon our own churches. Are our own churches alive? Are our people real Christians? Are they such that in their contacts with others they are likely to win them for Christ and to awaken in their hearts a desire for spiritual things? That would be my word to you to-day; that instead of spreading outward, we should concentrate inward and deepen and deepen and deepen our own spiritual life, until men here and there get to the place where God can use them as leaders of the great awakening which will spread through the churches and through the land.³⁸

For ML-J then, the only real ultimate hope for successful evangelism was a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The best means for promoting evangelistic activity among church members was a wholehearted return to the Scriptures leading to consecration of the whole life to God, and an emphasis on prayer for God to act. In promoting various methods as the road to success, many have disagreed

38. Murray, *The Fight of Faith*, 78–79.

with ML-J's position. However, while current approaches fail to satisfactorily prevent the further degeneration of Western society, the principles for effective evangelism prescribed by Dr. Lloyd-Jones, as derived from the Scriptures and underlined by church history, continue to gain weight and authority. May God grant us grace to heed such counsel.

“Seeds of truth planted in the field of memory”: How to Utilize the Shorter Catechism

ALLEN STANTON



Several works over the years have ably defended the legitimate use of creeds, confessions, and catechisms in the church.¹ The attempt of this article is more pastoral in intent. I aim not simply to demonstrate the legitimacy of such documents, which is assumed, but to establish some of the practical and devotional benefits offered to those who use them well.²

As a pastor in the Presbyterian Church in America, I will use the catechism of my church, the Westminster Shorter Catechism, as a test case for what could truly be affirmed of all the Reformed creeds. If in another tradition, the reader should consider his own catechism as the arguments below will easily apply to most of these evangelical standards. Before we get to the practical benefits, it will be helpful to briefly consider the history of the Shorter Catechism and the historical practice of catechizing.

1. Samuel Miller, *The Utility and Importance of Creeds and Confessions Addressed Particularly to Candidates for the Ministry* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1824); Archibald Alexander, “The Duty of Catechetical Instruction” and “Lectures on the Shorter Catechism: A Review.” Both reprinted in *Princeton and the Work of the Christian Ministry*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2012), 1:314–25; 327–43; and B. B. Warfield, “Is the Shorter Catechism Worth While?” in *Selected Shorter Writings*, ed. John E. Meeter (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2010), 1:381–84. For a more modern treatment of the issue see Carl Trueman, *The Creedal Imperative* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2012).

2. The quotation from the title is taken from Thomas Manton’s ‘Epistle to the Reader’ in *Westminster Confession of Faith* (repr., Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 2003), 10.

A Brief History of the Shorter Catechism

In 1643, in the midst of civil war, English parliament called an assembly for the purpose of establishing religious uniformity and solidifying theological (and thereby political) unity with Scotland and Ireland. The committee consisted of more than one hundred ministers, thirty parliamentarians, and six staunchly committed Presbyterian Scottish delegates who met from 1643 to 1648.³

Desiring to establish Reformed Protestantism and to cast off Catholicism and Anglicanism, this Westminster Assembly had four main objectives. The divines were to write a confession that would supersede the Anglican *Thirty-Nine Articles*; construct a directory for worship to replace the *Book of Common Worship*; craft a form of government; and compose two catechisms (one for children, or those “of weaker capacity,” and one for the more experienced in religion).⁴ These objectives led to the creation of the Westminster Confession of Faith, Directory of Worship, Form of Government, and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, all of which were completed by 1648.⁵ The catechisms roughly followed the Confession but much more concisely. It is to this Shorter Catechism, specifically, that we now turn our attention.

Why did Parliament create a catechism? John Owen, a contemporary of the Assembly, expressed the need when he wrote in 1645 that “after the ordinance of public preaching of the Word, there is not anything more needful...than catechizing.”⁶ While most readers will be familiar with the concept, a preliminary question should be answered: what is a catechism?

In response to this question, Jerry Bridges has provided a thorough and succinct answer:

3. These Scottish delegates included the well-known George Gillespie and Samuel Rutherford.

4. Assembly at Edinburgh, July 28, 1648, “Act of Approving the Shorter Catechism,” in *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1646; repr., Glasgow: Bell and Bain Lt., 2003), 286.

5. Details of these events can be found in great detail in a number of places. One good treatment is found in Robert Letham, *The Westminster Assembly: Reading its Theology in Historical Context* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 2009), 11–100.

6. John Owen, “Two Shorter Catechisms: Wherein the Principles of the Doctrine of Christ are Unfolded and Explained” in *The Works of John Owen*, 16 vols. (repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2000), 1:465.

I suspect some Christians today might ask, “What’s a catechism?” For many others, catechism might sound like something out of grandma’s attic; old and dusty, and hopelessly out-of-date. And for a large group of Christians today a catechism seems like a man-made add-on to the Bible. Some responses: A catechism is simply a means of instructing by posing a series of questions about God and humankind, and answering those questions from the Bible. A catechism is never out-of-date as it seeks to teach us the eternal truths of Scripture. And a catechism is not a man-made add-on to the Bible; it’s instruction in good theology derived from the Scriptures. None of us are smart enough or spiritual enough to dig out various truths of Scripture by ourselves. We need sound instruction, and a good catechism provides that.⁷

A catechism, then, is a tool for instruction. It doesn’t attempt to say everything, but it does claim to say what is essential to saving faith and to a basic understanding of theology by answering basic questions with the Bible. It doesn’t attempt to “add on” or replace the Bible; rather, it strives to teach it. The catechism is simply an instructional tool which leads the pupil to better understand the basic teaching of the Bible. The catechism, when used rightly, frees one to read the Bible and understand its theology.

The use of this catechetical format reaches far back into the pages of church history and was especially prominent during times of reformation and renewal. In fact, most of the catechisms used today were produced during the Protestant Reformation (1540s–1640s).⁸ So confident were the Reformers in the wisdom of using catechetical instruction that John Calvin, in introducing his catechism, boldly asserted, “What we now bring forward, therefore, is nothing else than the use of a practice formerly observed by Christians and the true worshippers of God, and *never neglected until the Church was wholly corrupted*” (italics mine).⁹ In other words, catechesis is the time-tested

7. Jerry Bridges, foreword to *The Good News We Almost Forgot: Rediscovering the Gospel in a 16th Century Catechism*, by Kevin DeYoung (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2010), 10.

8. Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983). For a brief summary on the Reformed Catechisms in particular, see Joseph H. Hall, “Catechisms of the Reformed Reformation” in *Presbyterian* 5, no. 2 (1979), 87–98.

9. “The Catechism of the Church of Geneva that is a Plan for Instructing Children in the Doctrine of Christ” taken from *Calvin: Theological Treatises, Library*

approach to instructing in the Christian faith. This is a substantial endorsement for the utilization of catechisms in the church today, but there are other significantly practical reasons to employ them.

The Usefulness of the Shorter Catechism

I want to propose several very practical reasons for why we should utilize the Westminster Shorter Catechism. While many more could be added, I will limit this discussion primarily to individual and family benefits. My hope is that it will induce individuals to employ the Catechism in their personal and family devotional practice.

To Learn Basic Reformed Theology

When I began my seminary studies, I was frequently asked, “What is the most challenging thing about seminary?” I often responded: “Learning the language.” Although I grew up in a Reformed church, I was not taught the Catechism. As a result, I didn’t have in place the theological categories necessary for engaging well in theological discourse. Although I had a broad understanding of theology, it lacked clarity and precision. This really didn’t change much until my second year in seminary when I took a class on the Westminster Standards that required learning the Shorter Catechism. Upon doing so, a whole new world was opened up to me. I found that I had learned the “language” and categories which enabled me to engage with theology far more competently.

People might complain about this requirement. “Why should I need to learn a catechism in order to understand the teaching of the church?” Some might say, “Should not the church speak *my* language?” Aside from the narcissistic overtones of that comment, one should note that every field of knowledge requires this. Consider medicine. One doesn’t simply walk into a hospital and have an informed conversation with a surgeon until he has first learned basic concepts for discourse. The same is true of any other field of knowledge; there is a basic language that one must learn. No professional is required to abandon his nomenclature to accommodate every different individual, each having various degrees of understanding, education, etc.

He may condescend to the untrained but something will be lost in translation—it cannot be otherwise.

Theology functions in much the same way. The Catechism avoids jargon where possible, but some concepts must be accepted on their own terms. The Shorter Catechism provides the tools for communicating and understanding basic Reformed theology. With a little effort, much can be gained in understanding the triune God and our relationship to Him.

Many voices compete in the modern church. The theology of the Shorter Catechism doesn't articulate a generic evangelicalism but a particular form of theology: Reformed theology. William Edgar has summarized the emphasis of Reformed theology in this way: "The heart of Reformed theology is to credit all good things, especially the comprehensive plan of redemption, to God and no one else."¹⁰ Reformed catechisms strive to demonstrate that salvation belongs to the Lord. The plan of salvation was authored by the Father, accomplished by the Son, and applied to the elect of God by the Spirit; therefore, all glory goes to the triune God. This is the heart of Reformed theology and, therefore, the heart of this Catechism.

To Understand the Bible

John Calvin, the Reformer of Geneva, recognized that the key to understanding the Bible begins with theology. Everyone has a theology (a working understanding of God), but the question is, how good is that theology? If we approach the Bible with a wrong conception of God, our pre-conceived theology will lead us to read the Bible erroneously and to draw wrong conclusions.

In Calvin's view, understanding the individual parts of the Bible is impossible without understanding the overarching picture. In order to provide a proper theological grid through which to read the Bible, Calvin wrote a number of works targeting varying audiences.

10. William Edgar, *Truth in All Its Glory: Commending the Reformed Faith* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 2004), 19. If you are not familiar with Reformed theology, I recommend B. B. Warfield, "A Brief and Untechnical Statement of the Reformed Faith" in *SSW* 1:407–10. See also Daniel R. Hyde, *Welcome to a Reformed Church* (Lake Mary, Fla.: Reformation Trust, 2011) and Joel Beeke, *Living for God's Glory: An Introduction to Calvinism* (Lake Mary, Fla.: Reformation Trust, 2008). For a helpful reference resource see Kelly Kapic and Wesley Vander Lugt, *Pocket Dictionary of the Reformed Tradition* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2013).

To teach his parishioners the system of theology, he taught them a catechism. The catechism used in Geneva was authored by Calvin and first written in 1537; a second catechism (revision of previous) was published in 1542 and contained what is normally called the Geneva Catechism.¹¹

For pastors, he wrote the classic *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, a work that outlined in detail the theology of the Bible.¹² He also lectured on the books of the Bible in a format specifically designed for aspiring pastors; these were later published in commentary format.¹³

Before his pastoral students attended Calvin’s exegetical lectures, however, they were assumed to have ingested his *Institutes*. In Calvin’s mind, good exegesis was impossible without sound theology. Once his students had learned the overall system of the Bible via his *Institutes*, then they would understand the function of the individual parts.¹⁴ This stems from the Reformed principle of interpretation often referred to as the analogy of faith. The Westminster Confession of Faith describes it this way: “The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one) it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.”¹⁵

In other words, because Scripture is the product of God, who is trustworthy and true, He will not contradict Himself. Therefore, the Word of God, regardless of the literary agents He employed and the manner in which they wrote, are consistent with one another. The

11. Herman Selderhuis, *John Calvin: A Pilgrim’s Life* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009), 184, and John Calvin, “The Catechism of the Church of Geneva that is a Plan for Instructing Children in the Doctrine of Christ,” reprinted in *Calvin’s Theological Treatises*, ed. J. K. S. Reid (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1954), 88–141.

12. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols., ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1950). See also a detailed analysis of those purposes in François Wendell, *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought*, translated by Philip Mairet (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 144–49, or Randall Zachman, *John Calvin as Teacher, Pastor, and Theologian: the Shape of His Writings and Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006).

13. John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries*, 22 vols. (repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003).

14. See the prefatory letter in the *Institutes*.

15. WCF 1.9.

parts will work together with the whole and vice versa. As a prerequisite to interpreting the individual parts, one must understand the overall system of theology revealed in the Scriptures.

Only then can we see the marvelous way in which the parts work together. This is one of the proofs that the Westminster divines gave for the Bible's inspiration. The *Larger Catechism* reads:

The scriptures manifest themselves to be the word of God, by their majesty and purity; by the *consent of all the parts*, and the *scope of the whole*, which is to give glory to God; by their light and power to convince and convert sinners, to comfort and build up believers unto salvation (*italics mine*).¹⁶

In other words, all Scripture works together. Revelation doesn't make sense without Genesis, Christ doesn't make sense without Adam, and the church doesn't make sense without Israel. There is one story; the categories of the latter chapters are built upon the former chapters. A catechism offers a way of holding all these things together. It shows how the parts work together so that you can make sense of them in light of the whole.

Some might protest against this. What is so important about this? Should we not just read the Bible and develop an understanding for ourselves? These protests are misplaced for two primary reasons. First, "All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves."¹⁷ To put it simply, it is not always clear what the Scriptures mean. We could list a number of reasons for these difficulties whether linguistic (the Bible was written in languages foreign to most of us), cultural, historical, or poetical. How can a twenty-first century Christian possibly understand all of Scripture without help?

At other times, numerous passages seem to contradict each other. How can the difficulties be resolved? How can the reader be sure that his understanding of the passage is accurate? Herein lies a second underlying error: the assumption that we are to learn theology independently. This does not appear to be what Christ had in mind when He gave teachers and pastors to the church. Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:11–14:

16. WLC 4.

17. WCF 1.7.

And he [Christ] gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.

To bring the church to maturity and to protect them from “every wind of doctrine” and “deceitful schemes,” Christ appointed apostles, prophets, pastors, and teachers. He gave us helpers! We don’t need to shut ourselves away in a closet and pray that God teach us in isolation from others. The church of Christ is a body that consists of different parts and gifts (see 1 Cor. 12). If we don’t function in unison with one another, we suffer.

The Westminster Assembly, as stated earlier, consisted of more than one hundred ministers, and the Catechism was corporately constructed after much exegesis, deliberation, and debate. This does not make it infallible, but it merits better confidence than the one working in isolation without assistance. Aside from that, the Scripture texts are provided for our help but also for our investigation, to ensure that their teaching is truly biblical. There can be little doubt that the Catechism is the result of Christ’s gift of teachers to the church and we would be wise to utilize their work.

To Distinguish Truth from Error

“Contend for the faith once delivered to the saints“ (Jude 3) is a perpetual dictum of Scripture. Samuel Miller contended, “Does this not imply taking effectual measures to distinguish between truth and error?” He continued, “Before the church, as such, can detect heretics, and cast them out from her bosom... her governors and members must be agreed what is truth.”¹⁸ The call to defend truth is not simply the obligation of the church corporately but also individual members. But how can anyone protect himself and his family from error if he is

18. Samuel Miller, *The Utility and Importance of Creeds and Confessions* (Greenville, S.C.: L A Press, 1987), 15–17.

unable to state truth positively? Herein lies another benefit of learning the Catechism.

The Catechism delineates between essential truths of the Bible and error. Without a written standard in place, no one is able to distinguish truth from error. In an age in which Christ and His apostles warned us that there will be many who attempt to lead us into error (2 Peter 3), such standards are necessary. The possession of such a document is a tremendous mercy to the members of the church and her body at large. The Catechism is especially useful for those who are more vulnerable to false doctrine because they lack training in theology. It helps the untrained learn the most necessary elements of theology and protects them from over-speculation. This is particularly important for those untrained in teaching their children. Beeke and Jones write:

Using the catechisms not only helps the children, but also helps the parent who often lacks theological training. It guards the household teacher from losing sight of central doctrines, becoming entangled in difficult texts of Scripture, and wandering into error.¹⁹

One cannot discern injustice without a law, or error without clearly defined truth. We would be foolish to abandon our standards of truth. We must protect our flock from error by teaching the truth, and one of the best ways to do that is through catechizing.

To Facilitate Scripture Memory

The psalmist wrote, “Thy word have I hid it my heart that I might not sin against thee” (Ps. 119:11). Many of God’s people acknowledge the importance of memorizing Scripture but wonder where to begin. The Shorter Catechism provides a tremendous resource for help in this regard. It was noted of B. B. Warfield that not only did his parents force him to learn the Catechism, but they also required him to learn the more than 250 proof texts that accompanied them! It is hardly a coincidence that he proved to be one of the most prolific theologians of America.

To Aid Evangelism

19. Joel Beeke and Mark Jones, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Heritage Books, 2012), 871.

When my wife and I began memorizing the Catechism, we learned firsthand the value it served in evangelism. She was at work one day when a conversation about religion came up. A co-worker asked her, “What exactly does it mean to pray?” There are perhaps a number of ways to answer that question, but it might be very difficult for the unequipped to answer thoroughly, biblically, and consistently. My wife, however, had recently written out the answer from the Catechism and was able to give a thoroughly biblical response. “Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies.”²⁰

B. B. Warfield recalled a similar instance in the life of D. L. Moody, the well-known evangelist of the nineteenth century. While he and a Scottish friend were discussing theological topics, they began discussing the nature of prayer, at which point someone asked, “What is prayer?” To their surprise, they received the Catechism’s answer from the mouth of a little girl playing in the hallway. Struck by what they heard, they called the girl and repeated the question. The girl stood upright before them with folded hands and answered in cadence. Moody responded, “Ah! That’s the Catechism!... Thank God for the Catechism.” Following this anecdote, Warfield asked, “How many have had occasion to ‘thank God for that Catechism!’ Did anyone ever know a really devout man who regretted having been taught the Shorter Catechism—even with tears—in his youth?”²¹

I have often been struck by the value of learning question 4, “What is God?” For a theist, that seems like an odd question. It would seem better to ask *who* is God. But imagine that a person with no religious experience were to ask about God. Perhaps the best place to start is with a general concept of *what* He is. The Catechism answers, “God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.”²² That is a profoundly succinct and helpful answer. It tells us that God is a Spirit and without a body—in other words, He is immaterial and distinct from creation. It tells us of His incommunicable attributes which are unique to

20. WSC 98.

21. B. B. Warfield, “Is the Shorter Catechism Worth While?” *Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield* (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1970), 1:382–83.

22. WSC 4.

Himself (infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being); and it tells us His moral character (He is wise, all-powerful, all-good, just, and true). One could hardly define God more thoroughly and succinctly than that. This basic description of God would prove helpful in conversations with unbelievers from all sorts of backgrounds.

The Catechism also sums up the essential elements of the saving message of the gospel. It defines sin and its consequences (WSC 14–20). It also tells of Christ’s mediatorial work (WSC 21–28) and how sinners are made partakers of it by the work of the Spirit (WSC 29–31). All of these things must be taught to faithfully expound the saving message of Jesus.

To Facilitate Family Worship

Family worship has largely been abandoned today due to lack of discipline or lack of concern. The lack may also be due to an uncertainty of how to lead family worship. Not everyone feels adequate to jump into such things. The Catechism proves a wonderful resource for this. Between the theology of the Catechism and the proof texts which each question provides, a storehouse of information can function as a catalyst for family worship. Consider an example of how this might work.

Consider again the question, “What is God?” “God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.”²³ After opening family worship time with prayer, someone could read this Catechism. If the family has children who can read, parents could assign to each of them one or two of the proof texts. After they look them up, they can each read theirs in turn as a segue to theological discourse.

One child could read John 4:24 (the proof text for the statement that “God is a Spirit”). The father could introduce theological discourse by asking, “Why is it important that God is a Spirit?” After facilitating a brief discussion, he could read the whole of John 4 to explain that Jesus was emphasizing that God is not bound to one particular place as we are. This affirms the omnipresence of God and that He can be worshipped by His people anywhere. The possibilities of discussion on this one truth alone would be sufficient to occupy a family devotion.

23. WSC 4.

With a little preparation, one could also find a hymn or two to sing for pressing the truth further. Consider *Immortal, Invisible* by Walter Chalmers Smith:

Immortal, Invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, Most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, Victorious—Thy great name we praise.

This hymn presupposes the invisibility yet certainty of God and is built upon the truth that God is a Spirit and does not have a body. Or the family could sing *Come, Thou Almighty King* which builds upon the truth of John 4:24 that God is omnipresent. The first stanza invokes God’s presence in worship and His enabling true spiritual worship:

Come, Thou Almighty King,
Help us Thy name to sing,
Help us to praise: Father! All-glorious,
O’er all victorious,
Come and reign over us,
Ancient of Days.

The family could close with prayer that particularly focused on God’s omnipresence. Each member of the family could take turns praying about what they have learned from God’s Word about God. Prayer time could focus on His omnipresence to stir up adoration, confession and contrition, thanksgiving, and supplication.

You can see how effectively the Catechism can be used for promoting religion in the home in the study of theology that is built upon the Bible, in singing, and in prayer. This is certainly a tool worth utilizing.

To Train Children in the Reformed Faith

R. L. Dabney, the famous nineteenth-century Southern Presbyterian, once said, “God’s way of promoting revival...is not to increase the activity of any outward means only, but “to turn the hearts of the parents to children (Mal. 4:6).”²⁴ In other words, true revival starts with parental fidelity. “Train up your child in the way he should go

24. Robert Lewis Dabney, “Parental Responsibilities: A Sermon Preached before the Synod of Virginia, at Danville, Va., October 1879” in *Discussions: Evangelical and Theological* (repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1967), 1:677.

and he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6). This verse sounds simple enough, but how do we train them? Where do we start? Thankfully, our fathers went before us and have not left us without help. We have inherited resources to assist us, and one of these resources is the Catechism under consideration.

Some have noted that perhaps Calvin’s greatest contribution to the continuation of the Reformation was not his most famous work, the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (a perennial bestseller since 1536), or his commentaries (also still in use to this day), but his Geneva Catechism. Over his three decades in Geneva, Calvin instructed several generations in the Reformed faith through this simple question-and-answer format. Each Sunday morning, after preaching the sermon, he would call the children to the front of the church. He would stand before them and ask one after the other to explain the basic tenets of the Christian faith. He also did this during his frequent house calls. Calvin’s work in this regard is worth emulation. It is lamentable how poorly children have been educated in recent church history. It can hardly be doubted that some of the difficulty has stemmed from the neglect of catechetical instruction.²⁵

There are countless other examples of the effective use of catechisms. Another involves the brilliant theologian of Old Princeton, Charles Hodge. In his autobiographical writings, he recalls how diligently his mother and pastor drilled him in the Shorter Catechism (his father died when he was very young). He wrote appreciatively: “There has never been anything remarkable in my religious experience, unless it be that it began very early.”²⁶ This early and diligent instruction prepared Hodge to teach generations of pastors over his more than fifty-year career at Princeton Seminary.

John Paton, nineteenth-century missionary in the New Hebrides, also gives us a remarkable testimony to the benefit of catechesis in his adolescence. He wrote:

The Shorter Catechism was gone through regularly, each answering the question asked, till the whole had been explained, and its foundation in Scripture shown by the proof-texts adduced.

25. See Herman Selderhuis, *John Calvin: A Pilgrim’s Life* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2009), 183–85.

26. Archibald Alexander Hodge, *The Life of Charles Hodge* (New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1880), 13.

It has been an amazing thing to me, occasionally to meet with men who blamed this “catechizing” for giving them a distaste for religion; everyone in all our circle thinks and feels exactly the opposite. It laid the solid rock-foundations of our religious life. After-years have given to these questions and their answers a deeper or a modified meaning, but none of us have ever once even dreamed of wishing that we had been otherwise trained. Of course, if the parents are not devout, sincere, and affectionate—if the whole affair on both sides is task work, or worse, hypocritical and false,—results must be very different indeed.²⁷

The character that catechetical training has produced serves as a tremendous endorsement of catechizing in general and in using the Shorter Catechism particularly. As Warfield wrote, there is hardly a better resource to give the child godly knowledge—“not the knowledge the child *has*, but the knowledge the child *ought to have*” (italics mine).²⁸

Conclusion

We have addressed some of the potential benefits for using the catechisms of the Reformed tradition and particularly the Shorter Catechism, but it must be noted that the benefits will not be obtained without extensive and tireless labor. Memorizing, acquiring understanding of its theology, and learning its scriptural supports will take a great deal of effort and discipline, yet the benefits are certainly worth the labor. In the Shorter Catechism, we have a considerable resource if we will but utilize it.

27. John G. Paton, *John G. Paton: Missionary to the New Hebrides. An Autobiography*, ed. James Paton (repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2013), 16.

28. B. B. Warfield, *Is the Shorter Catechism Worth While?*, 381.

Fifteen Pointers for Preachers

BRIAN G. NAJAPFOUR



1. Preach *doctrinally*. Don't reserve Bible doctrines such as justification and sanctification for your Sunday school. Preach these doctrines during your worship service.
2. Preach *discriminatorily*. Address both believers and unbelievers in your preaching. Don't assume that everyone in your congregation is saved, but neither assume that no one is saved.
3. Preach *applicatorily*. Apply your text to your listeners. With the use of practical illustrations, help them apply your message to their daily life. A sermon without an application is like a lecture; you are preaching, not lecturing.
4. Preach *clearly*. Organize your thoughts. Avoid difficult words. Consider the children in your congregation. If you have to employ a big word (e.g., justification), explain it using simple words.
5. Preach *evangelistically*. Yes, preach against sin, but don't stop there. Preach about salvation, too. If you preach the law without the gospel, you will make your congregation despair. Further, don't think that the gospel is only for unbelievers. Believers need it for their sanctification as well.
6. Preach *powerfully*. Preach with the unction of the Holy Spirit, as the Apostle Paul did, “[M]y speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (1 Cor. 2:4–5).

7. Preach *prayerfully*. Pray before, during, and after you preach. Humbly acknowledge that without God's help, you can do nothing. Realize that God alone can change the hearts of your listeners.
8. Preach *expectantly*. Remember nothing is impossible with God. Expect greatly that He will do wondrous things—saving sinners and sanctifying saints. Be confident that His Word will not return to Him void. He can even use your worst sermon to accomplish His wonderful plan.
9. Preach *persuasively*. Show that what you proclaim is God's Word. Announce, "Thus says the LORD." Also, don't be afraid to declare God's truths, even if by doing so some of your hearers might be offended. You are not to please people but God.
10. Preach *passionately*. Love not only preaching but also the people to whom you preach. When you love your congregation, you will feed them with spiritually nutritious food.
11. Preach *faithfully*. Be faithful to your announced text(s). Don't just read your text and leave it. Use it. Expound it. Preach from it.
12. Preach *seriously*. The very Word that you preach is sacred. The God who has called you to preach is holy. Your message is a matter of life and death, heaven and hell. Thus jokes have no place in the pulpit. Preachers are not called to be entertainers.
13. Preach *Christ-centeredly*. Learn from Paul who says, "I...came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:1–2). In the words of the Puritan preacher William Perkins (1558–1602), "Preach one Christ, by Christ, to the praise of Christ."
14. Preach *exemplarily*. Live what you preach. Demonstrate holiness, not hypocrisy. Acknowledge with Robert Murray M'Cheyne (1813–1843), "My people's greatest need is my personal holiness."

15. Preach *solī Deo gloria*. Your ultimate goal in preaching is to glorify God. Never attempt to take that glory that belongs to God alone. Sing with Fanny J. Crosby (1820–1915): “To God be the glory, great things He has done.”

Oh, Lord, help us to preach!

Contemporary and Cultural Issues



A Type of the Marriage of Christ: John Gill on Marriage

MATT HASTE



“My reasons for marrying are, first, that I think it a right thing for every clergyman in easy circumstances (like myself) to set the example of matrimony in his parish. Secondly, that I am convinced it will add very greatly to my happiness; and thirdly—which perhaps I ought to have mentioned earlier, that it is the particular advice and recommendation of the very noble lady whom I have the honour of calling patroness. . . . And now nothing remains for me but to assure you in the most animated language of the violence of my affection.”

—Rev. William Collins, proposing to Miss Elizabeth Bennet¹

This memorable scene in Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* provides a window into some of the complicated issues surrounding marriage in early modern England. Mr. Collins, a pompous clergyman perpetually unaware of himself, proposes to the young Elizabeth Bennet, providing her with both a list of reasons why he wishes to marry and an apology for why the arrangement is desirable for her. Elizabeth is unimpressed by his practicality and can barely contain her laughter, even though such a marriage would be financially advantageous. In the end, Mr. Collins moves on swiftly, becoming engaged to Elizabeth’s best friend, Charlotte, within the week. Charlotte is no more attracted to the Reverend than her friend, but, she concedes, “I am not romantic, you know. I never was. I ask only for a comfortable home.”²

Such was the diversity of the times. Some, like the opportunistic Charlotte and the bumbling Mr. Collins, viewed marriage as

1. Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813; repr., London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1915), 91. Austen wrote *Pride and Prejudice* in 1796 and 1797, but it was not published until 1813.

2. Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 108.

mostly a practical arrangement, primarily aimed at settling property from one generation to the next. Others shared the more idealistic notions of Elizabeth, holding out hope for “a union that [would be] to the advantage of both” husband and wife.³ While notions of authority and structure continued to give shape to domestic relationships, affection between the spouses was a point of emphasis, something even Mr. Collins felt obliged to acknowledge. In the midst of it all, legal developments and the growth of society continued to alter the landscape within and around the institution of marriage.⁴

In such a context, one might wonder how the church responded. Surely, there were greater sources of wisdom on the subject than the likes of the Reverend Collins. But what did they say and how did they address the issues of their day? In the end, did the church call for relationships marked by authority or known for their affection? Such questions call for an extensive monograph; however, the present study will focus on only one voice in the conversation. This article will examine how the Particular Baptist pastor John Gill (1697–1771) reflected on marriage in his day. Specific attention will be given to Gill’s own marriage as well as his doctrinal writings on the subject. The portrait that emerges will provide a helpful window into the past as well as an instructive example for Christians today.

Marriage in Eighteenth-Century England

Before examining what John Gill taught concerning marriage, it would be prudent to summarize the general situation in eighteenth-century

3. Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 266.

4. For additional resources on marriage in England in this time period, see the following: Joanne Bailey, *Unquiet Lives: Marriage and Marriage Breakdown in England, 1660–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); *Family Life in Early Modern Times 1500–1789*, ed. David I. Kertzer and Marzio Barbagli, vol. 1 of *The History of the European Family* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001); Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex & Subordination in England 1500–1800* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995); Ralph Houlbrooke, *English Family Life, 1576–1716: An Anthology from Diaries* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1988); Alan Macfarlane, *Marriage and Love in England: Modes of Reproduction 1300–1840* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986); Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500–1800* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977); and Keith Wrightson, *English Society 1560–1680* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 1982). Macfarlane noted four key elements of the vision for marriage at the time: marriage was ultimately the concern of the couple, was viewed as second to celibacy, was to be entered into for the sake of companionship, and was typically rooted in romantic love. Macfarlane, *Modes of Reproduction*, 330–31.

England. In British homes at the time, ultimate authority resided in the husband and father, although wives exercised leadership over the children alongside their husbands. Lord Halifax's *Advice to a Daughter*, which was reprinted throughout the eighteenth century, documented the matter-of-fact approach to gender inequality of the time: "It is one of the disadvantages belonging to your sex, that young women are seldom permitted to make their own choice."⁵

In the midst of this hierarchy, the vision for the family also called for affection between the spouses, an emphasis which was thought to balance the scales. The popular Anglican work, *The New Whole Duty of Man*, illustrated the general attitudes of society in arguing that marriage "cannot be enterprised with any hopes of felicity, without a real affection on the one side, and a good assurance of it on the other."⁶ The author represented the opinion of many in calling for companionship between the spouses: "Men should maintain their wives as become partners; they are friends and companions to their husbands, not slaves, nor mental servants; and are to be partners in their fortunes: for, as they partake of their troubles and affliction, it is just that they should share their fortunes."⁷ Thus, the British family in the eighteenth century was shaped by the key issues of authority and affection. Additional problems such as adultery, prostitution, and bigamy, enabled by loose legal restrictions, threatened the stability of families in general.⁸ This context serves as a helpful backdrop for now examining the views of John Gill.

5. George Savile, *The Lady's New Year Gift, or Advice to a Daughter* (London, 1688), 25. Savile was the Marquess of Halifax at the time of publication and was commonly called "Lord Halifax." According to Stone, this work was republished seventeen times before 1791.

6. [Richard Allestree], *The New Whole Duty of Man* (1658; repr., Trenton: James Oram, 1809), 242. Although published anonymously, most scholars attribute it to Richard Allestree (1619–1681). This popular devotional was reprinted throughout the eighteenth century.

7. [Allestree], *The New Whole Duty of Man*, 270. In quoting this passage, Macfarlane remarked, "It would be difficult to find a more succinct statement of the ideal of companionate marriage, constantly reasserted throughout the century." Macfarlane, *Modes of Reproduction*, 176.

8. For more on the various social issues that plagued marriages, see especially Macfarlane, *Modes of Reproduction*.

“A Type of the Marriage of Christ:”

John Gill’s Vision for Marriage

John Gill was born to be a Dissenter.⁹ His parents, Edward and Elizabeth, were founding members of the Baptist church at Kettering, which Andrew Fuller (1754–1815) would later pastor. Gill’s first biographer described his parents as “religious and pious persons” and noted that his father had “strong impressions” his son would be of “eminent service in the Baptist interest.”¹⁰ Born in Kettering on November 23, 1697, the young Gill demonstrated an early interest in learning. However, his formal education ended at age eleven when his parents pulled him from school to avoid mandatory attendance at the daily prayer services of the local parish.¹¹ Gill was converted at age twelve under the preaching of William Wallis (d. 1711), whom he considered “his spiritual father.”¹² He chose to postpone his baptism until he was nineteen, by which time his spiritual vitality became evident to those around him.¹³ Immediately, the congregation at Kettering began to recognize his ministerial gifts and sought opportunities for him to be trained. His first ministerial assignment as an assistant under John Davis at Higham-Ferrers was brief, but he was there long enough to meet a “young gentlewoman of great piety and good sense” named Elizabeth

9. The biographical sketch that follows is based on the following sources: “A Summary of the Life, Writings, and Character of the Late Reverend and Learned John Gill, D. D.” Anonymous memoirs prefixed to John Gill, *A Collection of Sermons and Tracts in Two Volumes* (London: George Keith, 1773), 1:ix–xxxv; John Rippon, *A Brief Memoir of the Life and Writings of the Late Rev. John Gill, D. D.* (London: John Bennett, 1838); Robert W. Oliver, “John Gill: His Life and Ministry” in *The Life and Thought of John Gill (1697–1771): A Tercentennial Appreciation*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Leiden; New York; Koln: Brill Press, 1997), 7–50; Robert W. Oliver, “John Gill (1697–1771)” in *British Particular Baptists 1638–1910*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Springfield, Mo.: Particular Baptist Press, 1998), 1:146–65.

10. “Late Reverend and Learned John Gill,” x. Michael Haykin and Ian Clary surmise that this anonymous biography may have been written by John Rippon as well; see Michael A. G. Haykin and Ian Hugh Clary, “Baptist Marriage in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Talking, Thinking, and Truth,” *Journal of Discipleship and Family Ministry* 3, no. 1 (2012): 34.

11. Although Gill’s formal education ended at age eleven, he continually applied himself to Greek and Latin and also taught himself Hebrew. Rippon, *A Brief Memoir of the Late John Gill*, 5.

12. “Late Reverend and Learned John Gill,” xii.

13. Gill composed a hymn that the congregation sang on the night of his baptism. This hymn can be found in “Late Reverend and Learned John Gill,” xiii.

Negus (d. 1764).¹⁴ The two married in 1718 and would remain so until Elizabeth's death. They had multiple children, but only three survived infancy. One of those three, a young girl named after her mother, died at the age of 13 in 1738, an occasion which prompted a heartfelt memorial sermon from Gill.¹⁵ Their other two children, Mary and John, eventually lived in adjoining houses on Gracechurch Street in London, where their parents also spent time in their final years.¹⁶

Gill's comments on marriage should be understood through the lens of his own experience, which appeared to be quite pleasant. He always considered meeting Elizabeth "the principal thing for which God in his providence sent him to" Higham.¹⁷ Despite numerous physical ailments throughout her life, Mrs. Gill "proved affectionate, discreet, and careful; and, by her unremitting prudence, took off from his hands all domestic avocations, so that he could, with more leisure, and greater ease of mind, pursue his studies, and devote himself to his ministerial service."¹⁸ Gill possessed a deep appreciation for her, to the point that his congregation once feared that he was spoiling her with extravagant care after a miscarriage.¹⁹

Further evidence of his affection for her can be seen in the memorial sermon he preached two weeks after her death.²⁰ In the sermon, the bereaved husband stayed close to his text, noting that this passage "may serve to wean us from this world" and "point out to us the happiness of those that are gone before us."²¹ He then concluded abruptly, "But I forbear saying any more," perhaps in order to conceal his emotions.²² His notes, however, reveal that he intended to pay tribute to

14. "Late Reverend and Learned John Gill," xiv.

15. This sermon, which also contains some commentary on young Elizabeth's piety, is available in Gill, *Sermons and Tracts*, 1:391–408.

16. "Late Reverend and Learned John Gill," xxviii.

17. "Late Reverend and Learned John Gill," xiv.

18. "Late Reverend and Learned John Gill," xiv.

19. Oliver, "John Gill: His Life and Ministry," 18.

20. John Gill, "The Saints Desire after Heaven and a Future State of Happiness," in Gill, *Sermons and Tracts*, 1:566–78. Hebrews 11:16 reads, "But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city."

21. John Gill, "The Saints Desire after Heaven and a Future State of Happiness," in Gill, *Sermons and Tracts*, 1:578. The subtext of this sermon title reads, "Occasioned by the Death of Mrs. Elizabeth Gill. Preached Oct. 21, 1764."

22. Gill, "The Saints Desire after Heaven," in *Sermons and Tracts*, 1:578. Rippon concurs on this supposition, "It seems he was so very much overpowered at the end

his wife and give evidence of her piety, her love for the Lord, and her perseverance in faith during her final days.²³

In 1720, Gill was elected as pastor of the Particular Baptist church at Horselydown, where the eminent Benjamin Keach (1640–1704) had previously served.²⁴ Gill would pastor this congregation for fifty-one years up until his death in 1771. Although he was devoted to his church, his influence extended far beyond his congregation. As an heir to the Puritans, Gill was committed to the authority of Scripture and its application to daily life. He was the first Baptist to write a comprehensive systematic theology and the first Englishmen to complete a verse-by-verse commentary on the whole Bible.²⁵ His numerous publications and weekly lecture series at Eastcheap earned him “an established character for [scholarship] amongst the learned of all denominations.”²⁶ With such influence and reputation, it is appropriate to consider what John Gill taught concerning marriage.²⁷ He

of the sermon, where the account might have been given, that he was not able to deliver it.” Rippon, *A Brief Memoir of the Late John Gill*, 10.

23. Gill’s notes are appended to the transcript of this sermon in Gill, *Sermons and Tracts*, 1:578–79.

24. The Particular Baptists saw their share of peaks and valleys throughout the eighteenth century. For an excellent overview of the Particular Baptists in this time, see *British Particular Baptists 1638–1910*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin, 3 vols. For more on the decline and growth of the denomination during the eighteenth century, see Raymond Brown, *The English Baptists of the 18th Century*, vol. 2 of *A History of the English Baptists*, ed. B. R. White (London: The Baptist Historical Society, 1986).

25. The first accolade is noted by Stanley K. Fowler in “John Gill’s Doctrine of Believer Baptism” in *A Tercentennial Appreciation*, 69. The second accomplishment is mentioned by Robert W. Oliver in “John Gill,” in *A Tercentennial Appreciation*, 38.

26. “Late Reverend and Learned John Gill,” xxix. His key publications include *The Doctrine of the Trinity Stated and Vindicated* (1731), *The Cause of God and Truth* (1735–1738), *A Body of Doctrinal Divinity* (1767), and *A Body of Practical Divinity* (1770). His reputation outside of the Particular Baptist denomination is illustrated by his longstanding friendship with Anglicans James Hervey (1714–1759) and Augustus Toplady (1740–1778), the latter of whom thought so much of Gill that he requested the privilege of delivering a eulogy at his funeral, an offer Gill’s family and friends declined. Oliver, “John Gill,” 145.

27. Jonathan Boyd’s recent article, “John Gill on Resisting Sexual Temptation,” is a fine example of Gill’s relevance to contemporary conversation. Boyd provides a helpful overview of Gill’s teaching on sexual ethics but only briefly addresses his theology of marriage. It is hoped that the present article would complement Boyd’s work in offering a more comprehensive picture of Gill’s teaching in this area. For more, see Jonathan Boyd, “John Gill on Resisting Sexual Temptation,” *Puritan Reformed Journal* 6, 1 (2014): 254–71.

provides a helpful window into how eighteenth-century theologians navigated their context by guiding their congregants toward a biblical vision for the home.²⁸ The following section, therefore, will examine his teachings on the nature of marriage and the relationship between husbands and wives.

The Nature of Marriage

Because Gill produced both a verse-by-verse commentary and a systematic theology in his lifetime, his theology of marriage is readily accessible. Through studying his formal treatments of the subject as well as his own practices as a husband, one can grasp his basic thinking on key issues related to marriage. As Sharon James has pointed out, one must be careful not to judge an eighteenth-century theologian by twenty-first century standards.²⁹ John Gill was a man of his time, addressing key issues of his day. It would be unfair to expect him to answer every question of the modern theologian. Nonetheless, his theology of marriage provides an instructive window into how Baptists thought about the key issues in eighteenth-century England.

In his *Body of Practical Divinity*, Gill defined marriage as “an union of male and female, of one man and one woman in lawful wedlock, agreeable to the original creation of man.”³⁰ Each phrase of this definition bears further explanation.

Marriage is, first of all, a union in which “male and female become one, even one flesh.”³¹ This one-flesh union was at the heart of God’s original design for the relationship when He instituted it in the Garden of Eden. Commenting on Genesis 2:24, Gill noted, “The union between [man and wife] is so close, as if they were but one person, one soul, one body.”³² The strength of this bond is crucial because of what it signifies. The first marriage between Adam and Eve was “a

28. For a broader overview of Baptist marriage in this time period, see Haykin and Clary, “Baptist Marriage,” 28–40.

29. Sharon James, “‘The Weaker Vessel’: John Gill’s Reflections on Marriage, Women, and Divorce,” in *A Tercentennial Appreciation*, 211. Ironically, James seemed to violate her own advice in this regard, as will be demonstrated below.

30. John Gill, *A Body of Practical Divinity* (1770; repr., Paris, Ark.: Baptist Standard Bearer, 2000), 974.

31. Gill, *Practical Divinity*, 974.

32. John Gill, *An Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, vol. 1 (1809–1810, repr. Paris, Ark.: The Baptist Standard Bearer, 1989), 21, commenting on Genesis 2:24.

type of the marriage of Christ, the second Adam, between him and his church.”³³ On this point, James calls Gill “eloquent,” for “he never loses sight of the fact that [marriage] is a picture of the love of Christ for the church.”³⁴ Indeed, when commenting on Paul’s quotation of Genesis 2:24 in Ephesians 5:32, Gill expounded in great detail how the marriage of Adam and Eve was a “figure and emblem of the mysterious union between Christ and his people”:

For the leaving of father and mother prefigured Christ’s coming in this world in human nature, and his disregard to his earthly parents, in comparison with his people, and his service for them; the man cleaving to the wife very aptly expresses the strong affection of Christ to his church, and the near communion there is between them; and indeed, the marriage of Adam and Eve was a type of Christ and his church; for in this the first Adam was a figure of him that was to come, as well as in being a federal head to his posterity: Adam was before Eve, so Christ was before his church; God thought it not proper that man should be alone, so neither Christ, but that he should have some fellows and companions with him: the formation of Eve from Adam was typical of the church’s production from Christ; she was made of him while he was asleep, which sleep was from the Lord, and it was not an ordinary one; which may resemble the sufferings and death of Christ, which were from the Lord, and were not common; and which are the redemption of his church and people; and which secure their comfort and happiness, and well-being: she was taken out of his side, and built up a woman of one of his ribs; both the justification and sanctification of the church are from Christ, from the water and the blood which issued out of him; and to the same Adam was she brought of whose rib she was made, and that not against her will: so it is God that draws souls to Christ, and espouses them to him, even the same that he has chosen in him, and Christ has redeemed by his blood; and to the same are they brought, who was wounded for their transgressions, and bruised for their sins; and they are made willing in the day of his power upon them, to come and give themselves

33. Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, 1:21, commenting on Genesis 2:24.

34. James, “Reflections on Women, Marriage, and Divorce,” in *A Tercentennial Appreciation*, 216.

to him. Adam's consent and acknowledgement of Eve to be his wife shadow forth Christ's hearty reception and acknowledgement of the saints, as being of him, and his, when they are brought unto him under the influences of his grace and spirit.³⁵

Because the marriage union points to something beyond itself, Gill argued that God has set limits on the relationship to ensure that its picture is accurate. It is a union of male and female, and thus, heterosexual. Although homosexuality was not common in eighteenth-century England, Gill did not hesitate to condemn it as an "unnatural sin" and an even greater evil than fornication.³⁶

This heterosexual union is a monogamous commitment, that of "*one* man and *one* woman." In commenting on Genesis 1:27, Gill noted, "Only one man and one woman were created, to shew that hereafter a man was to have at a time no more wives than one."³⁷ When Lamech took a second wife, Gill protested that his actions were "contrary to the first institution of marriage."³⁸ Bigamy was a complex challenge in England at the time, one compounded by the radical views of some specific Anabaptists from whom Gill was likely eager to distance himself.³⁹

As a heterosexual, monogamous relationship, marriage was designed to conform to a particular standard of commitment. In Gill's definition, the man and the woman were united in "lawful wedlock." This qualifier condemned adultery and fornication outside of the marriage bond. Following the Puritans, Gill argued that procreation itself is "a natural action" and "may be performed without sin" within the context of marriage. However, any sexual activity outside of the marriage bond was imprudent and shameful, something even pagans

35. Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, 9:106, commenting on Ephesians 5:30. For a discussion of this quotation as an illustration of Gill's larger theological system, see Haykin and Clary, "Baptist Marriage," 32–33.

36. Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, 1:133, commenting on Genesis 19:5. These comments are made in regard to the lewd behavior of the Sodomites detailed in Genesis 19. According to Stone, there was a "distinct rise in public consciousness about homosexuality" during this time period, even if there may not have been an increase in practice. Stone, *Family, Sex and Marriage in England*, 542.

37. Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, 1:11, commenting on Genesis 1:28.

38. Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, 1:37, commenting on Genesis 4:19.

39. Haykin and Clary, "Baptist Marriage," 29.

could recognize.⁴⁰ Gill viewed adultery as such a significant breach of the marriage covenant that it was the only action, other than death, capable of dissolving the marriage union. Otherwise, Christ's words on the subject explain that "the bond of marriage being made by God himself, is so sacred and inviolable, as that it ought not to be dissolved by any man."⁴¹

Thus, Gill's definition of the nature of marriage was principally derived from Genesis 2:24, which he called "the law of marriage."⁴² In summary, this design called for an inseparable union between one man and one woman in lawful marriage, which in its very nature prohibited "polygamy, unlawful divorces, and all uncleanness, fornication, and adultery."⁴³

Gill argued that marriage is a "very honourable estate" because it is an institution of God confirmed by Christ.⁴⁴ Furthermore, marriage serves an honorable purpose in the plan of God. Gill followed many of his contemporaries by noting four key ends for marriage: to portray the relationship of Christ and His church, to provide companionship between the spouses, to preserve chastity by avoiding temptation, and to produce godly offspring.⁴⁵ Gill contended that these purposes were ultimately realized when each spouse exercised the specific duties of their role.

On Husbands and Wives

Gill summarized the respective duties of the husband and wife as follows: "love on the one part, and reverence on the other."⁴⁶ The love of husbands for their wives, following the example of Christ, should consist in:

40. Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, 1:143, commenting on Genesis 20:9. Gill points this out in regard to Abimelech's reaction to learning that Sarai was the wife of Abram.

41. Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, 7:212, commenting on Matthew 19:6.

42. Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, 9:106, commenting on Ephesians 5:32.

43. Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, 1:21, commenting on Genesis 2:24.

44. Gill, *A Body of Practical Divinity*, 974.

45. Gill, *A Body of Practical Divinity*, 974. For how Gill fits into his contemporary context on this issue, see Haykin and Clary, "Baptist Marriage," 29–30.

46. Gill, *A Body of Practical Divinity*, 973–74.

A strong and cordial affection for them; in a real delight and pleasure in them; in shewing respect, and doing honour to them; in seeking their contentment, satisfaction, and pleasure; in a quiet, constant, and comfortable dwelling with them; in providing all things necessary for them; in protecting them from all injuries and abuses; in concealing their faults, and covering their infirmities; in entertaining the best opinion of their persons and actions; and in endeavoring to promote their spiritual good and welfare.⁴⁷

Such love ought to be “heartly and sincere, and not feigned and selfish; it should be shewn in private, as well as in public: it should be chaste and single, constant and perpetual.”⁴⁸ What Gill calls the husband to is more than the romanticism of the day: it is a committed and sacrificial love rooted in the person and work of Christ.

In James’s summary of Gill on this subject, she critiqued him for failing to cast a vision of the husband’s responsibility to lead his wife toward spiritual maturity by using her spiritual gifts in ministry. While Gill could have said more, James did not acknowledge his point above regarding the way a husband expresses love for his wife by promoting her spiritual welfare. Going against her own admonition not to judge Gill by contemporary standards, James quoted John Piper and Wayne Grudem to say, “Any kind of leadership that . . . tends to foster in a wife personal immaturity . . . has missed the point of the analogy in Ephesians 5.”⁴⁹ While James employed this quotation to correct Gill, this seems to be a notion with which he would have agreed. In explaining the love of a husband in *A Body of Practical Divinity*, Gill argued that a husband should seek his wife’s “conversion, if [she is] unconverted, and her spiritual peace, comfort, and edification, she being an heir with him of the grace of life.”⁵⁰ Gill would have the husband pursue his wife’s spiritual growth “by joining her in all religious exercises; in

47. Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, 9:104, commenting on Ephesians 5:25.

48. Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, 9:104, commenting on Ephesians 5:25.

49. James, “Reflections on Women, Marriage, and Divorce,” in *A Tercentennial Appreciation*, 218. James is quoting from John Piper and Wayne Grudem, “An Overview of Central Concerns: Questions and Answers,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood. A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. by Piper and Grudem (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1991), 64.

50. Gill, *A Body of Practical Divinity*, 975.

family worship, in reading, in prayer, in praise, in Christian conference and conversation; by instructing her in everything relating to doctrine, duty, and church-discipline.”⁵¹ Thus, Gill’s vision for the husband’s love includes both physical and spiritual care.

Gill also emphasized the reasons behind this duty for husbands, noting “the nearness between them...the help, advantage, and profit he receives by her...the glory and honour she is unto him” and most significantly, the love of Christ to His church, “which is the pattern and exemplar of a man’s love to his wife.”⁵² As was common with Gill, the marriage relationship was once again grounded in the union of Christ and His people.

Gill followed a similar pattern when discussing the duties of the faithful wife. Her disposition toward her husband should include reverence, subjection, submission, and obedience.⁵³ While Gill clearly taught that a woman was to obey her husband, he was quick to underscore the biblical limits of the husband’s leadership. A wife is to submit to her own husband only and “not in any thing that is contrary to the laws of God and Christ.”⁵⁴ Furthermore, her submission “is not a servile one” but rather “as the body, and members of it, are subject to the head, by which they are governed, guided, and directed to what is for their good...in a wise, tender, and gentle manner.”⁵⁵ The union of man and wife shapes their relationship with one another. As the husband is motivated toward loving leadership because of his wife’s nearness to him, so also the wife is encouraged in her submission by the reality of this union.

In addition, she should provide “assistance and help in family affairs,” assume no authority over her husband, and continue with him “in every state and circumstance of life.”⁵⁶ In his commentary on Ephesians 5:22, Gill described the role of godly wives as follows:

They should think well of their husbands, speak becomingly to them, and respectfully of them; the wife should take care of the family, and family affairs, according to the husband’s will;

51. Gill, *A Body of Practical Divinity*, 975.

52. Gill, *A Body of Practical Divinity*, 975–76.

53. Gill, *A Body of Practical Divinity*, 976.

54. Gill, *A Body of Practical Divinity*, 976.

55. Gill, *A Body of Practical Divinity*, 976.

56. Gill, *A Body of Practical Divinity*, 976.

should imitate him in what is good, and bear with that which is not so agreeable; she should not curiously inquire into his business, but leave the management of it to him; she should help and assist in caring and providing for the family; and should abide with him in prosperity and adversity, and do nothing without his will and consent.⁵⁷

In his commentary on Genesis, Gill further illustrated his concept of the ideal wife, in describing the kind of woman that Abraham's servant sought for Isaac. According to Gill, the servant determined to see who would offer him a drink of water because "hereby he would know that she was a careful and industrious person, willing to set her hand to business when necessary; that she was humane and courteous to strangers; humble and condescending, and willing to do the meanest offices for the good of others."⁵⁸

While these descriptions may sound demeaning to the twenty-first century ear, one must remember Gill's context and the general acceptance of inequality in the home at the time. In addition, his various admonitions to husbands regarding loving leadership must be acknowledged. Ideally, a Christian wife could joyfully submit to her husband, trusting his leadership and acknowledging his authority in the family.

Furthermore, Gill asserted that wives should recognize that God has ordained this authority structure in the family. The reasons for such are as follows: "the time, matter, and end of the woman's creation, she was made after him, out of him, and for him; and from her fall, and being first in the transgression; and from her being the weaker and inferior sex; and from the profitableness and comeliness of it."⁵⁹ As with the husband, the wife's ultimate motivation for fulfilling her God-given role comes from the example of Christ and His church. Therefore, a wife's subjection is "consistent with the laws of God and the Gospel of Christ."⁶⁰

57. Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, 9:103–4, commenting on Ephesians 5:22.

58. Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, 1:165, commenting on Genesis 24:14.

59. Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, 9:104, commenting on Ephesians 5:25.

60. Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, 9:104, commenting on Ephesians 5:25.

At the heart of John Gill's teaching on marriage was an emphasis on the union between husband and wife that served as an emblem of Christ's relationship with His church. He sought to ground his teachings on this subject in the Scriptures so that his marriage and others would provide a faithful picture of the Lord's marriage to His people. His legacy is not in his innovation but that he faithfully articulated the duties and definitions of this honorable estate to his own generation. While some may read his descriptions of the role of husbands and wives as an affirmation of harsh patriarchy, it is best to remember Gill's context when assessing his views. Rather than blaming him for living in a time that generally undervalued women, he should be credited with preserving a pure vision of marriage that was ultimately grounded in the gospel of Christ.⁶¹

Conclusion

A few summarizing thoughts will conclude this study. As has been demonstrated, John Gill was a man of his own times, calling for the husband's authority in the home and noting the necessity of affection between the spouses. Yet, he transcended his context by considering the marriage relationship through the lens of Scripture. He grounded his teaching in the relationship of Christ and His church and, in doing so, set an example for Christians today who seek to speak winsomely to the culture around them on the important issue of marriage, while remaining faithful to the standards of the Word of God.

61. This is a deliberate echo of Thomas Nettles's concluding assessment of Gill's soteriological views. In an attempt to correct modern caricatures and misrepresentations of Gill, Nettles wrote, "Perhaps, rather than imputing blame upon Gill for the leanness of the times, he should be credited with preserving gospel purity, which eventuated in the efforts to use means for the conversion of the heathen." Thomas J. Nettles, *By His Grace and for His Glory: A Historical, Theological, and Practical Study of the Doctrines of Grace in Baptist Life* (Lake Charles, La.: Cor Meum Tibi, 2002), 107. It is not the purpose of this article to debate whether or not Gill was a Hyper Calvinist, but for an introduction to this discussion, see Haykin, *A Tercentennial Appreciation*, 2–6.

Critique of the Cult of the Jehovah's Witnesses

IAN C. MACLEOD



One of the marks of the “perilous times” of which Paul warns Timothy regards those who are “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim. 3:1, 7). They “[have] a form of godliness, but [deny] the power thereof” (2 Tim. 3:5), and they “creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts” (2 Tim. 3:6). Both the danger these reprobates pose and the consequent need for the preached Word is captured in the following chapter when Paul writes, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Tim. 4:3–4).

This warning against reprobates and the consequent need to be armed with the Word of God is as relevant today as it has ever been. The Russellite cult, those who wrongly designate themselves “Jehovah’s Witnesses,” are one such group.¹ In 2001, their membership exceeded six million, one sixth of whom resided in the USA.² Wikipedia estimates that this membership has now risen close to eight million.³

1. Due to the fact that most people are unfamiliar with the title “Russellite,” this paper will refer to the cult as JWs (abbreviated from Jehovah’s Witnesses). This is done only with the understanding that the latter title is an untruth and that the former title is an accurate designation.

2. Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, ed. Ravi K. Zacharias (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2003), 63.

3. Wiki, “Jehovah’s Witnesses,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jehovah's_Witnesses (accessed April 1, 2014).

The fact that this cult places such an onus on door-to-door “evangelism” means that most people will end up encountering them at some time or the other. One common question regarding our interaction with this group is, Should I engage with them or just ignore them? Scripture teaches that Christians ought to “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15). The word for “answer” is ἀπολογία (*apologia*), which designates a defense or an apologetic. Peter does not give this as an option but as a command.

Further, the Christian is himself called to “witness” to the truth of God’s existence. The Lord says, “Ye are my witnesses...that I am God” (Isa. 43:12). The Christian realizes that the One of whom he witnesses is also the One who says, “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live” (Ezek. 33:11). This consideration impacts the way in which the Christian views all unbelievers. Hence, he too has “no pleasure” in their death. Rather, he imbibes Herbert Kern’s attitude: “Jehovah’s Witnesses who come to your door are a God-given opportunity.”⁴

There is therefore a requirement for the church to equip her people to “be ready always” (1 Peter 3:15). This article will therefore provide an analysis and critique of the JW cult to help equip and prepare the saints. It will do so by providing 1) a brief historical and doctrinal background of the JWs, 2) a methodology by which to engage them, and 3) a refutation of the authority and Christology of their theology. It should be noted that it would be impossible to give anything more than a sketch of each of the above in this article, but the sources should furnish the reader with resources to further equip and prepare.

A Brief Historical and Doctrinal Background of the JWs

Charles Taze Russell (1870–1916) was the founder of the cult which, in 1931, became known as the Jehovah’s Witnesses. He disputed many mainstream Christian beliefs including the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the personality of the Holy Spirit, the doctrine of eternal punishment, predestination, and the fleshly second advent of Christ. Russell taught that the end times were imminent and that 1914 would

4. Herbert Kern, *How to Respond to the Jehovah’s Witnesses* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing, 1977), 33.

usher in the full establishment of God's kingdom on earth. He recorded his beliefs in the magazine "Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence" (now simply, "The Watchtower"). The main focus of the writing is to propagate the idea of Christ's imminent return. Today, the Watchtower is the world's most widely circulated magazine with an average print run of 46 million copies per month.

After Russell's death, Joseph F. Rutherford (1917–1942), Nathan H. Knorr (1942–1977), Frederick W. Franz (1977–1992), Milton Henschel (1992–2000), and Don A. Adams (2000–present) have assumed leadership of the cult. The first three men were known particularly for their voluminous writing and organizational skills. These writings, it was claimed, corrected the misinformation and error Christendom had espoused since Arius (256–336) and formed the core of the JW's doctrinal beliefs. Hence, while the JWs claim to believe that the Bible is their only source of authority, they exclusively rely on the Watchtower writings to arrive at a proper understanding of Scripture. It should be noted, however, that this system of teaching is in flux. For example, in 1995, the JWs abandoned the idea that Armageddon must occur during the lives of the generation alive in 1914. However, they have constantly and vociferously maintained that there is no salvation outside the Watchtower society.⁵

A Methodology by which to Engage the JWs

The Aim in Evangelizing

It is important to remember two great aims in engaging and evangelizing JWs. One is indeed to see this as an opportunity to share the gospel with a lost sinner with the prayer that the Holy Spirit will so work in their hearts that they would be converted in a day of His power (Ps. 110:3). Bearing this in mind, the evangelist understands that the great aim here is not simply to win an argument but to win a precious soul (Ps. 49:8). R. B. Kuiper summarizes the great task of evangelism: "that all men everywhere become acquainted with the only name given under heaven by which men must be saved (Acts 4:12)."⁶

5. More of the history and doctrine will be given throughout the paper, but for a fuller treatment of their development and doctrine, see Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, 48–106.

6. R. B. Kuiper, *God-Centered Evangelism: A Presentation of the Scriptural Theology of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012), 106.

However, this is not the ultimate aim of evangelizing the JW's. Kuiper continues, "The salvation of souls, the growth of Christ's church, even the coming of Christ's kingdom, of momentous importance though they may be and actually are, are but means to a still higher end, the highest of all ends—God's glorification."⁷ This point is too often missed, especially in the potentially heated discussion with a JW. The Christian is firstly a witness that Jehovah is God, a witness to God's righteousness (Isa. 43:12; Rom. 1:16, 17).

One important lesson that is drawn from this consideration is that the evangelist has not failed when the JW does not repent and believe the gospel the first time, or even at all. J. I. Packer helpfully defines (or redefines) success: "The way to tell whether in fact you are evangelizing is not to ask whether conversions are known to have resulted from your witness. It is to ask whether you are faithfully making known the gospel message."⁸

God's Word never returns to Him void but always accomplishes what He pleases (Isa. 55:11). It should therefore be remembered that to some it will prove "the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life" (2 Cor. 2:16). James Buchanan helpfully includes the effect of those who remain unrepentant in his treatment of the Spirit's convicting work (ἐλέγχω) in John 16:8–11: "It signifies to prove upon or against, to convict by proof; or, in other words, to present such evidence as will be sufficient to condemn, if it fail to convince."⁹

It should also be noted in this context that the Christian's witness to Jehovah ought to be characterized by a reverence and awe of God. The JW believes that he is speaking to one of Satan's agents. The very tenor of the Christian's conduct and witness ought to convey whose they are and who they serve (Acts 27:23). In this regard, Cornelius J. Haak is to the point: "One ought to abstain from misusing the name of God or making it blasé. Instead, one should convey the otherness of God through attitude and communication.... The unbeliever must be convinced of the seriousness of the debate."¹⁰

7. Kuiper, *God-Centered Evangelism*, 106.

8. J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2012), 45.

9. James Buchanan, *The Office and Work of the Holy Spirit* (London: Banner of Truth, 1966), 27.

10. C. J. Haak, "The Missional Approach, Part 2: Reconsidering Elenctics," *Calvin Theological Journal* 44, no. 2 (November 1, 2009): 292–93.

The Arsenal in Evangelizing

The difficulty of both witnessing that Jehovah is God and of evangelizing one caught in the grip of Satan is daunting. Yet, the encouragement for the Christian is that the arsenal at his disposal is powerful and efficacious: "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds" (2 Cor. 10:4). To obey the injunction to be "always ready," however, the Christian must ensure he can employ the God-given arsenal effectively.

The first absolute requisite to successfully evangelizing the JW is a thorough knowledge of the Word of God. Johan H. Bavinck speaks of the necessity for an evangelist to have "a responsible knowledge of false religions."¹¹ This is certainly true, but the Christian must also have a responsible knowledge of the *true* religion in order to effectually evangelize.

This is particularly the case when evangelizing JWs who are apt to turn to any, and often obscure, passages of Scripture to prove their point. Certainly, all Christians feel their dearth of scriptural knowledge, but the only remedy is to study the Scriptures in the manner John Murray prescribes below:

What I am going to stress is the necessity for diligent and persevering searching of the Scriptures; study whereby we shall turn and turn again the pages of Scripture; the study of prolonged thought and meditation by which our hearts and minds may become soaked with the truth of the Bible and by which the deepest springs of thought, feeling and action may be stirred and directed; the study by which the Word of God will grip us, bind us, hold us, pull us, drive us, raise us up from the dunghill, bring us down from our high conceits and make us its bondservants in all of thought, life and conduct.¹²

The second requirement to evangelizing the JW is a total dependence on the efficacious work of the Holy Spirit. This dependence will be manifest in a life of prayer. When the JW unexpectedly arrives at the door, the Christian should automatically, as it were, send arrows of

11. J. H. Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions* (Philadelphia: P&R, 1960), 222.

12. John Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray* (Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth, 1976), 1:3.

prayer to God Almighty for His powerful assistance and aid. Joel R. Beeke correctly notes that “a sense of dependency on the Holy Spirit and a life of prayerfulness are the two qualities most lacking in modern evangelism.”¹³

The disease of evangelical complacency and independence is indeed endemic today. A cursory study of John 16:8–11 manifests that it is the Spirit who convicts of sin, righteousness, and judgment. There is a particular danger in evangelizing a JW that the evangelist thinks he has all the artillery he needs when he masters several cogent arguments. This is not the case. Walter Chantry states it well: “Our evangelism must be based upon a dependence on the Lord. Our hope of results must be in him, not in man’s will, nor in any other faculty of our hearer. But it pleases God to raise dead sinners through the foolishness of gospel preaching.”¹⁴

The Attitude in Evangelizing

The attitude the evangelist has can indeed be considered part of the arsenal God has given, but so important is this consideration in regard to JWs that it deserves special treatment. The attitude required of the evangelist is given by Peter in the famous call to “be always ready” when he ends this injunction with the words, “in meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15). The JW, believing the evangelist to be Satan’s ambassador, will expect and delight in the feeling of being victimized by him.

The antidote to this hazard is twofold. The first is for the evangelist to remember who he is. He is a sinner who has been saved by grace; one who can say as John Bradford, “But for the grace of God, there go I.” As Haak ably states, “Once we feel the depth of our own sin and know God’s grace, we will be well-equipped to approach the unbeliever.”¹⁵ The evangelist, being conscious that God alone has made him to differ, will not therefore stand above the JW but will stand beside him as a fellow sinner on the way to an endless world (1 Cor. 4:7).

The second antidote is to remember who the JW is. Indeed, he is one who, according to Henry Van Til, is “not only godless, in the above sense of the term that he ignores God and glorifies self; but

13. Joel R. Beeke, *Puritan Evangelism: A Biblical Approach* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 1999), 71–72.

14. Walter J. Chantry, *Today’s Gospel: Authentic or Synthetic?* (London: Banner of Truth, 2010), 75–76.

15. Haak, “The Missional Approach. Part 2,” 292.

he is also hateful and unholy, ethically corrupt. He has not only lost the true knowledge of God, but he no longer knows the truth about created reality except in a very attenuated, proximate sense, as Calvin observes.”¹⁶

However, the effective evangelist sees the JW as a fellow sinner of Adam’s race. Bavinck magisterially captures this emphasis when he writes, “In practice I am never concerned with Buddhism, but with a living person and his Buddhism, I am never in contact with Islam but with a Moslem and his Mohammedanism.”¹⁷ He goes on to say, “As long as I laugh at his foolish superstition, I look down upon him; I have not yet found the key to his soul,”¹⁸ and, referencing Kuyper, says, “I, as a man, must encounter the man in the heathen.”¹⁹

Of course, this does not mean that the evangelist will dilute his message to make it more palatable or acceptable to the JW in order to gain him. Indeed, as Chantry writes, “Sometimes the honest (and loving) thing to do is to send inquirers home grieved and counting the cost” (parenthesis mine).²⁰ But it will mean that the evangelist will exercise empathy, patience, and love with the JW.²¹

As noted above, it would be a mistake to think or even expect a JW to be converted on the first visit. While this is possible with God, the JW is entrenched in the bands of Satan and unbelief and it normally requires extraordinary patience, persistence, and perseverance in order to bring him out of darkness. In recognizing the entrenchment of unbelief the JW is bound in, the evangelist will be selective in what he presents to the JW. Reed captures the danger in the bombardment approach when he writes, “The wounded and bleeding Witness runs back to his ‘elders’ for protection and comfort. They patch him up by explaining away the damaging verses and warn him not to listen to ‘argumentative’ householders again in the door-to-door preaching

16. Henry R. Van Til, *The Calvinistic Concept of Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1959), 62.

17. Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions*, 240.

18. Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions*, 242.

19. Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions*, 243.

20. Chantry, *Today’s Gospel*, 62.

21. For more practical techniques on how to lovingly engage with the JW, see David A. Reed, *Jehovah’s Witnesses: Answered Verse by Verse* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1986), 113–17; Ron Rhodes, *Reasoning from the Scriptures with the Jehovah’s Witnesses* (Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House, 1993), 403–8.

work. ‘Don’t worry!’ he replies. ‘I never want to go through something like that again.’”²² Reed also notes in another of his books, that “the more forcibly you attempt to effect a rescue, the more convinced the JW becomes that Satan has sent you.”²³

The JWs themselves recognize the danger of this approach in their own conversion programs and encourage six-month studies, indoctrinating slowly.²⁴ Similarly, a study of the scriptural data and Jesus’ own example will highlight the need for patience and giving only enough material for the person to digest, think about, and come back again. God instructs His people this way: “For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little” (Isa. 28:10). Haak astutely observes that “in Jesus’ dialogue, we observe that he does not discuss all religious things, but only points the man to his pride and rejection of God’s Son who had come to redeem sins.”²⁵

Thus, in summary, the evangelist is a person who has himself experienced saving grace and as such also has a due estimation of the value of the soul he sees in the JW. Again, the real danger in evangelizing with the JW is to so confound the man that he never returns. This is particularly the case when the evangelist has learned the correct arguments and can convincingly “win the argument.” It must ever be borne in mind that the great aim is to win the person, not an argument. And this must also be done in meekness and fear, beseeching men “by the meekness and gentleness of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:1), and in such a way that “by your good works, which they shall behold, [they shall] glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Peter 2:12). In this way, the evangelist answers the unbeliever “with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15).

The Approach in Evangelizing

The approach with which to answer the JW (and any other unbeliever) is twofold.²⁶ First, the evangelist “answers the fool according to his

22. Reed, *Jehovah’s Witnesses*, 113.

23. David A. Reed, *How to Rescue Your Loved One from the Watchtower* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1989), 34.

24. Reed, *Jehovah’s Witnesses*, 114.

25. Haak, “The Missional Approach. Part 2,” 291.

26. This approach is the one championed by Cornelius Van Til and popularized by men like Greg Bahnsen. To see a fuller summary of Van Til’s methodology and

folly” (Prov. 26:5). That is, for the sake of argument, the evangelist assumes the JW’s presuppositions and worldview in order to show its incoherence and inconsistency. Second, the evangelist “answers not a fool according to his folly” (Prov. 26:4). That is, he shows the JW that the only worldview that is internally consistent, coherent, and able to provide the great truths necessary to be known in order to live and die happily—“how great my sins and miseries are, how I may be delivered from all my sins and miseries, and how I shall express my gratitude to God for such deliverance” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q/A 2)—is the Christian worldview as expressed in the Bible.

First, the evangelist undertakes to show the inconsistency and incoherence of the JW’s worldview.²⁷ The process by which this is done is called *elenctics* (ἐλέγχω). John M. L. Young gives the following definition: “Elenctics is the refutation of a heathen religion in order to lead an individual to a conviction of his sin against God and to make a confession of Christ as his Savior.”²⁸ The aim is to “unmask” the cult for what it is and to call the sinner to faith and repentance.²⁹ The next main section in this paper will aim to model elenctics in regard to some of the JW’s teaching.

The danger in this approach is when we forget or fail to get to the second part. Even supposing the JW is fully convinced at the end of his visit that he has been deceived this whole time and determines never to embrace the JW system again, yet if that is all that is achieved the evangelist has failed. The aim is the JW’s conversion, not just from his idol, but to the living God (1 Thess. 1:9). William Metzger highlights this danger when he writes, “We then feel good about how articulate we are but never get to the point of explaining the work of Christ and urging our listeners to repent and believe. God’s chosen instrument in conversion is his Word, not our reasoning ability.”³⁰

the scriptural basis for it, see Greg L. Bahnsen, *Always Ready: Directions for Defending the Faith*, ed. Robert R. Booth (Texarkana, Ark.: Covenant Media Foundation, 1996), 59–62.

27. It should be noted that the order in which the evangelist undertakes this process is not so significant. What is of significant importance is that both aspects of the endeavor are engaged.

28. John M. L. Young, *Missions: The Biblical Motive and Aim* (Pittsburgh: Crown & Covenant, 2007), 51.

29. Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions*, 222.

30. Will Metzger, *Tell the Truth: The Whole Gospel Wholly by Grace Communicated Truthfully and Lovingly* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2012), 198.

This point cannot be emphasized enough. The scriptural connection is inviolable: “faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). Kuiper notes the necessity of bringing God’s Word to bear on the sinner: “It is a matter of supreme importance to maintain that the Word of God is the one and only indispensable means by which the Holy Spirit works faith in the hearts of men.”³¹

It is outside the scope of this article to give adequate attention to the necessary components of the gospel presentation to the JW. Judiciously and over time, the evangelist must bring the great and core doctrines of the faith to the JW, particularly the doctrines of the Trinity, the person and work of Christ—that He is the Son of God, His incarnation, and His substitutionary atonement—the depravity of man’s fallen condition, and our need of God’s bestowal of saving grace.³² This full-orbed gospel must be proclaimed to the JW “promiscuously and without distinction” (Canons of Dort, 2:5).

A Refutation of the Authority and Christology of the JWs

Again, it would be impossible to do anything like a comprehensive study and critique of a system as vast as the JWs. A thorough treatment of the whole scriptural corpus and of systematic theology is necessary to fully prepare someone to give a thorough apologetic. This section will be limited to considering two important areas in refutation, namely, the authority structure of the JWs and their Christology.

The JW’s Authority

As was stated earlier, while the JWs claim allegiance to Scripture, their allegiance lies in the writings of the Watchtower. While they say things such as, “The Holy Scriptures of the Bible are the standard by which to judge all religions” [“What Has Religion Done for Mankind” (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1951), 32],³³ yet they claim that only their adherents can understand the Scriptures as these are interpreted by the leaders of the Watchtower Society.³⁴ Russell went so far as to claim the following for his own work, *Studies in the Scriptures*:

31. Kuiper, *God-Centered Evangelism*, 141.

32. See Kuiper, *God-Centered Evangelism*, 142–43.

33. As cited by Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults* (Exeter, U.K.: Paternoster Press, 1986), 238.

34. Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults*, 244.

That is to say, they are not mere comments on the Bible, but they are practically the Bible itself. Furthermore, not only do we find that people cannot see the divine plan in studying the Bible by itself, but we see, also, that if anyone lays the “Scripture Studies” aside, even after he has used them, after he has become familiar with them, after he has read them for ten years—if he then lays them aside and ignores them and goes to the Bible alone, though he has understood his Bible for years, our experience shows that within two years he goes into darkness. On the other hand, if he had merely read the “Scripture Studies” with their references and had not read a page of the Bible as such, he would be in the light at the end of two years, because he would have the light of the Scriptures.³⁵

The JW is led to believe that the only competent Greek and Hebrew scholars belong to the Watchtower. The reality is that nothing could be further from the truth. The following relates part of the cross examination of Russell’s perjury charge (a copy taken from JW’s headquarters in Brooklyn, New York):

Attorney Staunton: “Do you know the Greek alphabet?”

Russell: “Oh yes.”

Attorney Staunton: “Can you tell me the correct letters if you see them?”

Russell: “Some of them; I might make a mistake on some of them.”

Attorney Staunton: “Would you tell me the names of those on top of the page, page 447, I have got here?”

Russell: “Well, I don’t know that I would be able to.”

Attorney Staunton: “You can’t tell what those letters are? Look at them and see if you know.”

Russell: “My way” [he was interrupted at this point and not allowed to explain].

Attorney Staunton: “Are you familiar with the Greek language?”

Russell: “No.”³⁶

35. As cited by Walter Martin and Norman Klann, *Jehovah of the Watchtower* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1974), 24–25.

36. As cited in Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, 55.

An almost identical account is given of the vice-president of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, Frederick W. Franz, in 1954 regarding his knowledge of Hebrew.³⁷ Nor were the JW's prepared to divulge the names of their Greek and Hebrew "experts" who translated the JW's Bible, The New World Translation. It is not surprising, therefore, that in 1953, Walter Martin could write, "The society to our knowledge does not have any Greek scholars" and "Jehovah's Witnesses' doctrine is a mass of half-truths and pseudo-scholastic material which, to the untutored mind, appears as wonderful revelation."³⁸

However, despite this evidence, the average JW today still believes that "the Watchtower has the greatest theologians and Bible experts."³⁹ This is why, according to Robert A. Morey, you ought not to engage the JW on a verse-by-verse basis. You need to first destroy his blind obedience to his authority structure. "You must recognize that you have no religious authority in the eyes of a Witness. Your religion is of Satan."⁴⁰

In his book, *How to Answer a Jehovah's Witness*, Morey suggests the following method. 1) Establish from Scripture and if necessary from the Watchtower documents that the mark of a true prophet is that what he says comes to pass, and the mark of a false prophet is that what he says does not come to pass. 2) Establish the claims from the Watchtower to be a prophet. 3) Ask the JW to explain the numerous false prophecies listed, most notably regarding the dates 1914 and 1975 (both prophesied as bringing in the end of the age and the end of the world). The book provides numerous necessary quotes, underlined in their context, which should be used in discussion with the JW. Morey claims that, "The simplest and most efficient way of destroying a Witness's blind allegiance to the Watchtower is to show from Scripture and official Watchtower literature that the Watchtower is a false prophet."⁴¹

Here, the evangelist should adopt the interrogative approach. The JW has been programmed to reject teaching but to accept questions. So, as Reed notes, instead of saying, "Don't you see that this is

37. Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, 93–94.

38. Martin and Klann, *Jehovah of the Watchtower*, 155.

39. Robert A. Morey, *How to Answer a Jehovah's Witness* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1980), 14.

40. Morey, *How to Answer a Jehovah's Witness*, 14.

41. Morey, *How to Answer a Jehovah's Witness*, 15.

clearly...," you should ask questions such as, "Who do you think this is talking about?"⁴²

The JW's Christology

After attacking the refuge of lies in the authority structure of the JWs, it is important to concentrate on one or two key doctrines of the faith. Patrick J. Campbell states that "only when we focus upon the foundational doctrines of Christ's person, the Trinity, the resurrection, salvation etc., can we hope to win them to Christ."⁴³ Indeed, Jesus taught that life eternal was to believe "the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom [He] hath sent" (John 17:3). And if any man loves not the Lord Jesus Christ of Scripture, he is "anathema" (1 Cor. 16:22).

Martin teaches that "the answer to Jehovah's Witnesses, or Russellism if you will, is the deity of Jesus Christ, and in teaching that one cardinal doctrine of the Christian faith, all energy ought to be expended to the uttermost."⁴⁴ Indeed, if the doctrine of the deity of the Person of Christ can be established with the JW, then the doctrines of the Trinity and the deity and personality of the Holy Spirit will likewise be affirmed. Thus observes Benjamin B. Warfield,

Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are fundamental proof of the doctrine of the Trinity...and that when we go to the New Testament for evidence of the Trinity we are to seek it, not merely in the scattered allusions to the Trinity as such, numerous and instructive as they are, but primarily in the whole mass of evidence which the New Testament provides of the Deity of Christ and the Divine personality of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁵

The JWs believe that Jesus Christ existed as Michael in His pre-incarnate state and that at the time of His death, He ceased to exist. They believe that He resurrected, but only as a spirit and not in the body. The simple question that can be put to the JW is, "Who is the 'He' that rose again?" In reality, they have conjured three Christs. Another probing question would be to ask whether any should

42. Reed, *Jehovah's Witnesses*, 115.

43. Patrick J. Campbell, *How to Share Christ with a Jehovah's Witness* (Southbridge, Mass.: Crowne Publications, 1990), 10.

44. Martin and Klann, *Jehovah of the Watchtower*, 156.

45. Benjamin B. Warfield, *Biblical Doctrines*, ed. Ethelbert Dudley Warfield (New York: Oxford University Press, 1929), 146.

worship Christ. Why does the Father command the angels to worship Him (as in the NWT of Heb. 1:6)? Are angels to be worshiped (see Rev. 22:9)? Why does the JW charter say that the Kingdom Halls (where JWs worship) are built for the “public Christian worship of Almighty God and Jesus Christ”?⁴⁶

Hoekema provides a devastating critique of the JW’s Christology and concludes by saying, “The individual who laid down his life at Calvary was not the individual who existed previously in heaven and was God’s agent in creation; the individual who is now ruling over his heavenly Kingdom is not the individual who died on the cross for us. Really, Jehovah’s Witnesses have three Christs, none of whom is equal to Jehovah and none of whom is the Christ of the Scriptures.”⁴⁷

The denial of the Person and work of the Christ of the Scriptures is a damnable heresy. Its menace and peril means the sinner comes to trust in his own efforts to attain favor with God. Thus John Frame puts JWs among the religions of whom it is true that it is a “[religion] of works righteousness which is self-righteousness. They offer us only the hollow advice to try harder, or the false and morally destructive claim that God will forgive without demanding anything.”⁴⁸

A thorough study of the deity of Christ is invaluable and vital not just to the evangelistic and elenctic task, but for personal growth in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). A basic structure for study would involve considering where Scripture calls the Son “God” (e.g., John 1:1, 5:20, Acts 20:28, Rom. 9:5); the divine attributes that are ascribed to Him (e.g., Micah 5:2, Matt. 28:20, Rev. 1:8); the works belonging peculiarly to God attributed to Him—such as creation, raising the dead, and forgiving sin; and that divine worship is ascribed to Him.⁴⁹

46. See other potent questions from Kern, *How to Respond to the Jehovah’s Witnesses*, 36–37.

47. Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults*, 276.

48. John M. Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God: An Introduction* (Phillipsburg, Pa.: P&R, 1994), 54.

49. For further treatments of this doctrine see Thomas Boston, *The Complete Works of the Late Rev. Thomas Boston, Ettrick: Including His Memoirs*, ed. Samuel M’Millan (Wheaton, Ill.: R.O. Roberts, 1980), 1:145–46; Wilhelmus à Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, ed. Joel R. Beeke, trans. Bartel Elshout, (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 1992), 1:144–65; John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, Pa.: P&R, 2013), 461–74.

Conclusion

In many ways, simply accurately retelling the story is one of the most powerful ways to refute this cult. The system is riddled with error, inconsistency, and arbitrariness. The touchstone of Scripture (Isa. 8:20) shows this system to be that of a false prophet and of the spirit of Antichrist.

The evangelist must therefore be ready to engage the JW in a spirit of meekness and fear, with love to his or her soul. He must refute the cult by showing that the Word of God alone is the only rule for faith and practice, and that the Watchtower is therefore a false prophet. The perfect Person and work of Christ and the call to faith and repentance in Him must be proclaimed clearly to the sinner with the expectation that the Spirit will convict the sinner of sin, righteousness, and judgment to the glory of His great name.

A Theology of Sleep

DAVID P. MURRAY



In a recent BBC article headlined *The Arrogance of Ignoring Our Need for Sleep*,¹ leading scientists warned of the supreme arrogance of trying to do without sufficient sleep. We are sleeping between one and two hours less per night than people did sixty or so years ago, and it's having a devastating impact upon every part of our lives.

In this article I want to highlight over fifty good reasons to sleep longer, then consider some of the reasons why we have got into such bad sleeping habits, and finally survey the Bible's teaching about sleep.

Multiple Good Reasons to Sleep Longer

Over the last few months, I've been collecting research about the dangers of too little sleep, which I've summarized below.

Physical Consequences

- Just one week of sleeping fewer than six hours a night results in changes to more than seven hundred genes.
- Just one night of sleep deprivation is linked with signs of brain tissue loss.
- Infection-fighting antibodies and cells are reduced during periods when we don't get enough sleep.
- Sleeping fewer than seven hours a night is associated with a tripled risk of coming down with a cold.
- Sleep loss increases hunger, portion size, and preference for high-calorie, high-carb foods, with the resulting risk of obesity.

1. James Gallagher, "The Arrogance of Ignoring Our Need For Sleep," *BBC.com website*, <http://www.bbc.com/news/health-27286872> (accessed May 15, 2014).

- Chronic sleep deprivation (less than six hours a night) is associated with:
 - Skin aging.
 - Four times higher risk of stroke for middle- and older-aged people.
 - 50% higher risk of colorectal cancers, and some links with other cancers, too.
 - High blood pressure.
 - 48% higher chance of developing or dying from heart disease.
 - Lower fertility rates.

Sport Consequences

More and more elite athletes are increasing sleep and even hiring sleep coaches in order to improve performance. The reasons are obvious:

- Chronic sleep loss can lead to a 30–40% reduction in glucose metabolism.
- Sleep loss means an 11% reduction in time to exhaustion.
- Two days of sleep restriction can lead to three times higher chances of lapses of attention and reactivity.
- Maximum bench press drops twenty lbs. after four days of restricted sleep.
- Rested tennis players get a 42% boost in hitting accuracy during depth drills.
- Sleep improves split-second decision-making ability by 4.3%.
- Sleep extension provides swimmers a 17% improvement in reaction time off the starting block.
- Football players drop 0.1 second off their forty-yard dash times by sleeping more.

This isn't just a theory; consider the average sleep time of top athletes: Roger Federer: 11–12 hours per night; Usain Bolt: 8–10 hrs.; LeBron James: 12 hrs.; Michelle Wie: 10–12 hrs.; Rafael Nadal: 8–9 hrs.; Tiger Woods: 4–5 hrs. (might explain a lot!)

Athlete Quotes

- “I think sleep is just as important as diet and exercise” (Grant Hill).
- “Sleep is half my training” (Jarrod Shoemaker).
- “If I don’t sleep 11–12 hours a day, it’s not right” (Roger Federer).
- “A well-rested body is a healthier, more efficient, more capable one. This could be the hardest thing to accomplish on my to-do list, but it always makes a difference” (Kerri Walsh).
- “Sleep is extremely important to me—I need to rest and recover in order for the training I do to be absorbed by my body” (Usain Bolt).

Intellectual Consequences

- Sleep flushes dangerous proteins from your brain, improving mental health. When you’re sleep deprived, you get a “dirty brain.”
- Sleep allows the brain to consolidate and store the day’s memories.
- Being exhausted zaps your focus and can render you more forgetful.
- Chronic sleep deprivation in adolescents diminishes the brain’s ability to learn new information.

Emotional Consequences

- Sleep loss produces apathy, irritability, weepiness, impatience, anger, and flattened responses.
- Sleep loss can cause psychological damage because sleep regulates the brain’s flow of epinephrine, dopamine, and serotonin, chemicals closely associated with mood and behavior.
- People with insomnia are ten times more likely to develop depression and seventeen times more likely to have significant anxiety.
- The lack of sleep affects the teenage brain in similar ways to the adult brain, only more so, and can lead to emotional issues like depression and aggression.

- In one study by researchers at Columbia University, teens who went to bed at 10:00 p.m. or earlier were less likely to suffer from depression or suicidal thoughts than those who regularly stayed awake well after midnight.

Societal Consequences

Getting sleep is an act of loving your neighbor because it involves keeping the sixth commandment.

- Sleep is increasingly recognized as important to public health, with sleep insufficiency linked to motor vehicle crashes, industrial disasters, and medical and other occupational errors.
- Getting six or fewer hours of sleep triples your risk of drowsy driving-related accidents.
- Just one bad night's sleep can affect a driver's eye-steering coordination.
- The Cognitive Impairment that results from being awake for twenty-four hours is higher than the blood alcohol limit in all states.
- According to the NHSA, falling asleep while driving is responsible for at least a hundred thousand crashes, seventy-one thousand injuries, and 1,550 deaths each year in the United States.
- Young people in their teens and twenties are involved in more than half of the fall-asleep crashes on the nation's highways each year.
- The Exxon Valdez, Challenger Space Shuttle, and Metro North Train tragedies in New York were all linked to sleep-deprivation.

Financial Consequences

- Undermines creativity, problem-solving ability, and productivity.
- Estimated to cost American businesses \$63 billion a year.
- The worst costs arise from the fact that sleep deprivation causes safety lapses and contributes to other health issues.

- Other people (customers/clients) are likely to register a sleep-deprived person as lacking energy and unhealthy.
- Thirty-two billion dollars a year spent on meds, mattresses, candles, sleep consultants, etc.

Educational Consequence

- Sixty percent of grade school and high school children report that they are tired during the daytime and 15% of them admitted to falling asleep in class.
- Sleep deprivation is such a serious disruption that lessons have to be pitched at a lower level to accommodate sleep-starved learners.
- The United States has the highest number of sleep-deprived students, with 73% of nine- and ten-year-olds and 80% of thirteen- and fourteen-year-olds identified by their teachers as being adversely affected.
- In literacy tests, 76% of nine- and ten-year-olds were lacking sleep.
- Children who have more sleep achieve higher in math, science, and reading.

Moral Consequences

- A lack of sleep robs the fuel for self-control from the region of the brain responsible for self-control, whereas sleep restores it.
- Studies found that a lack of sleep led to high levels of unethical behavior.
- In tests, there was a difference of only about twenty-two minutes of sleep between those who cheated and those who did not.
- A lack of sleep leads to deviant behavior at work (like falsifying receipts), similarly because of decrements in self-control.

Spiritual Consequences

D. A. Carson wrote:

Doubt may be fostered by sleep deprivation. If you keep burning the candle at both ends, sooner or later you will indulge in more

and more mean cynicism—and the line between cynicism and doubt is a very thin one.... If you are among those who become nasty, cynical, or even full of doubt when you are missing your sleep, you are morally obligated to try to get the sleep you need. We are whole, complicated beings; our physical existence is tied to our spiritual well-being, to our mental outlook, to our relationships with others, including our relationship with God. Sometimes the godliest thing you can do in the universe is get a good night's sleep—not pray all night, but sleep. I'm certainly not denying that there may be a place for praying all night; I'm merely insisting that in the normal course of things, spiritual discipline obligates you get the sleep your body needs.²

Ministry Consequences

An aside from John Piper's 1995 lecture on Charles Spurgeon:

A personal word to you younger men. I am finishing my 15th year at Bethlehem and I just celebrated my 49th birthday. I have watched my body and my soul with some care over these years and noticed some changes. They are partly owing to changing circumstances, but much is owing to a changing constitution. One, I cannot eat as much without gaining unhelpful weight. My body does not metabolize the same way it used to.

Another is that I am emotionally less resilient when I lose sleep. There were early days when I would work without regard to sleep and feel energized and motivated. In the last seven or eight years my threshold for despondency is much lower. For me, adequate sleep is not a matter of staying healthy. It is a matter of staying in the ministry. It is irrational that my future should look bleaker when I get four or five hours sleep several nights in a row. But that is irrelevant. Those are the facts. And I must live within the limits of facts. I commend sufficient sleep to you, for the sake of your proper assessment of God and his promises.³

Ten Reasons We're Sleeping So Badly

If there are so many good reasons to sleep longer, why don't we do it? Here are ten possible reasons.

2. Don Carson, *Scandalous* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2010), 147.

3. John Piper, "Charles Spurgeon: Preaching Through Adversity," *Desiring God.com* website, <http://www.desiringgod.org/biographies/charles-spurgeon-preaching-through-adversity> (accessed May 15, 2014).

1. *Ignorance*: Most of us just don't know or understand the deep and wide impact of sleeplessness upon us and others. If our schools substituted sleepology for algebra, we'd have a lot more healthy and much brighter kids.

2. *Indiscipline*: Some of us do know but still don't do anything with that knowledge. We see and feel the impact of sleeplessness upon us, yet still refuse to change. We lack the willpower to make the necessary adjustments to our schedule and lifestyle.

3. *Irregularity*: Our bodies thrive on rhythm and routine. Like all clocks, our body clocks like to be primed and set regularly. When our bodies know what's coming next, they get into a pattern of injecting the right chemicals into our systems for work, for rest, for exercise, etc. If we are chopping and changing that all the time, our body chemistry goes haywire. That's a huge challenge of course for variable shift workers; they must work at this twice as hard to do half as well. In other words, don't just give up on building rhythm into life, but do all that you can to build as much regularity as you can, especially in pre-bedtime routines.

4. *Teenagers*: When you've got teenagers crashing, banging, coughing, and bumping their way around the house until all hours, it doesn't exactly motivate you to get to bed early, if you simply have to lie there fizzing while listening to the monsters in the basement. Maybe we can add the uncooperative wife or husband here, too. Just as with money management, unless our wife or husband is on board and committed to adjusting bedtimes and routines, there's hardly any point in even trying. It will just lead to more frustration and annoyance.

5. *Screens*: The last thing many of us do at night is check our email/Facebook/Twitter. Yet research has shown that the effect is similar to looking at the sun behind the clouds at midday! What message is our brain receiving when we do that just before trying to sleep? "Up and at 'em, brain. It's time to work (or play)!" Similar to the screens problem, when we stimulate our brains (and body chemistry) with films, TV news, computer games, or Facebook even an hour or two before bed-time we're asking for delayed and disturbed sleep. And we'll get it.

6. *Caffeine and alcohol*: Both are stimulants and not only prevent sleep but reduce its quality. Caffeine's half-life is five to seven hours, meaning it takes that amount of time for half of it to leave our system.

7. *Exercising too late*: I learned this the night before my wedding when I decided that the best way to sleep that anxious night was to go for a run along a Scottish beach at 10:00 p.m. Eight hours later, I was still wide-eyed but far from bushy-tailed. Of course, to this point we must also add "exercising too little." If we just sit at a desk or in the car all day and then expect to be tired enough to sleep, we can expect some protests from our bodies: "Hey, you haven't done anything with me yet!"

8. *Anxiety*: Worry seems to wake up when we are trying to sleep, and it's often more powerful than our sleepiness. Learning how to cast our cares upon God and to trust Him to care for us is far better and healthier in the long-term than sleep medications.

9. *Greed/Ambition/Materialism/Workaholism/Pride*: Perhaps this cluster of related factors is the biggest cause of sleep deprivation in our own culture. People look at the idea of spending about a third of life asleep, losing twenty years of their lives to sleep, and think, "I can make much more money, become much more successful, if I cut back on that." Most people who try this gain time in the short-term but lose it in the long-term as health is gradually impacted and life is shortened. We all have only so much "fuel in the tank" and we either pace it out over a longer period of time or we put the foot to the floor and crash and burn more quickly.

We may have to go with less sleep for a special season of extra work or special ministry, but if that becomes our pattern and habit, we won't be working or ministering well or for long.

10. *Disobedience*: We simply reject the loving God who graciously and wisely gives us the great gift of sleep (Ps. 3:5; 127:2). "No thanks," we say. "Don't need it, don't want it!" But when we reject our Creator's gifts and instructions, we suffer physically, morally, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually.

How about this for a verse to put above your bed: "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety" (Ps. 4:8)?

Ten Lessons God Teaches Us from Sleep

To emphasize how important sleep is to God, consider how many lessons God teaches us from sleep.

1. God reminds us we are merely creatures

God created us with a need for sleep, a need as great as our need for oxygen and food. As such, sleep is part of the God-ordained Creator/creature distinction. It reminds us that God is God and we are not. It also warns us that if we rebel against God's created order by depriving ourselves of sleep, we are effectively uncreating ourselves.

2. God gifts us with sleep

Sleep is not a necessary evil to be barely tolerated but a gracious gift of God. God doesn't need it (Ps. 121:4), but He gives it to us (Ps. 127:2). As John Baillie pointed out in his essay "The Theology of Sleep," this verse "He gives to His beloved sleep" might also be translated, "He gives unto his beloved in sleep." This translation "speaks not only of the blessedness of sleep itself but of the blessed things that are given us through its agency."⁴

3. God reminds us we are unnecessary

By sleeping we are relinquishing control and reminding ourselves that God actually doesn't need us, at least for the next few hours. When we close our eyes each night we are saying, "I don't run the world, not even my own little life." Even President Obama has to get into his pajamas every night, effectively confessing that God doesn't need him, that there is a greater Superpower.

4. God calls us to trust Him

The psalmist connects sleep to trusting God (Ps. 3:5–6; 4:8). Sleep is a test of trust: will we entrust ourselves and everything to God's care, or will we continue to worry and vex ourselves all through the hours of darkness?

The Christian's sleep should be different to the non-Christian's. When and how long we sleep makes a huge statement about who we are and what we believe. As someone said, "unconsciousness is a pretty strong sign of dependence." Sleep is intrinsically a humble thing to do.

4. John Baillie, "Christian Devotion: A Theology of Sleep," luc.edu website, <http://www.luc.edu/faculty/pmoser/idolanon/BaillieChristianDevotion.html#sleep> (accessed May 15, 2014).

5. God will chastise us if we refuse sleep

Science is increasingly discovering the damaging consequences of sleep deprivation. Yet millions are habitually choosing to reject this gift of God and depriving themselves of the sleep God has designed for their good. Research reveals the serious and severe physical, intellectual, emotional, relational, and even moral consequences of this rebellion against God. But we shouldn't need research to convince us of this; if we rebel against God's order and refuse His gifts, we can expect His fatherly chastisement.

6. God reminds us of death

For the believer, death is often described as a "falling asleep." Our nightly sleep is a daily reminder of, and good practice for, death. Each night, we are reminded of the time when we will close our eyes for the last time on this earth and open them in another place.

7. God reminds us of hell

I hate nightmares and have often wondered why God allows Christians to have such awful images, sounds, and horrors pass through their minds. Then, one day, I thought, "This is like a glimpse of hell—its darkness, its disorder, its terrors and torments." Now I use these brief nightmares to remind me of the eternal hell I've been saved from and also to quicken and impassion my preaching to those who are still heading there.

8. God teaches us about the Savior

"Jesus slept" is as profound as "Jesus wept" (Mark 4:38). It reminds us of Christ's full humanity, that the Son of God became so frail, so weak, so human, that He needed to sleep. What humility! What love!

9. God teaches us about salvation

How much are you doing when you sleep? Nothing! That's why Jesus used rest as an illustration of His salvation. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).

10. God teaches us about heaven

There remains a rest for the people of God (Heb. 4:9). That doesn't mean heaven is going to be one long lie-in. It means it will be a place of renewal, refreshment, comfort, and perfect peace.

I hope this helps you sleep more soundly—and have a sounder theology!

Bibliographical Article



Reading the Puritans

JOEL R. BEEKE



A dwarf must realize his place among giants.¹ This is true of all human achievement. When we survey church history, we discover giants of the faith such as Aurelius Augustine (354–430), Martin Luther (1483–1546), John Calvin (1509–1564), John Owen (1616–1683), and Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758). Amid those giants the Puritans also rise as giants of exegetical ability, intellectual achievement, and profound piety.

Upon this mountain our Reformed “city” is built. We are where we are because of our history, though we are dwarves on the shoulders of giants. Who would George Whitefield (1714–1770), Charles Hodge (1797–1878), Charles Spurgeon (1834–1892), Herman Bavinck (1854–1921), J. Gresham Machen (1881–1937), or D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899–1981) have been if not for their predecessors? Despite this, Puritan studies were sorely neglected until the resurgence of Puritan literature in the late 1950s. In many evangelical circles today, Puritan theology is still marginalized. While the Puritans built palaces, we are comfortable building shacks; where they planted fields, we plant but a few flowers; while they turned over every stone in theological reflection, we content ourselves with pebbles; where they aimed for comprehensive depth, we aim for catchy sound bites.

The Latin phrase *tolle lege*, meaning “pick up and read,” offers a remedy for this apathy toward spiritual truth. Our ancestors have left

1. Cited in Hanina Ben-Menahem and Neil S. Hecht, eds., *Authority, Process and Method: Studies in Jewish Law* (Amsterdam: Hardwood Academic Publishers, 1998), 119. For a varied version of this article, see *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 14, 4 (Winter 2010): 20–37. Several parts of this article have been adapted from other writings by the author who wishes to thank Kyle Borg for his assistance on its first sections.

us a rich theological and cultural heritage. We can say of the Puritans what Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) said of his evening routine of reading the ancients: “I enter the ancient courts of rulers who have long since died. There I am warmly welcomed, and I feed on the only food I find nourishing.”²

Returning to Puritan writings will also reward a diligent reader. Whitefield said, “Though dead, by their writings they yet speak: a peculiar unction attends them to this very hour.”³ Whitefield predicted that Puritan writings would be read until the end of time due to their scriptural truth. Spurgeon agreed, saying, “In these [writings] they do live forever. Modern interpreters have not superseded them, nor will they altogether be superseded to the end of time.”⁴ Today we are witnessing a revival of sorts in reading the Puritans. Initiated largely by the Banner of Truth Trust, which has been systematically and carefully publishing Puritan literature since the late 1950s,⁵ Puritan reprints in the last fifty years now include 150 Puritan authors and seven hundred Puritan titles printed by more than seventy-five publishers. Reformation Heritage Books (RHB) alone—of which the Puritan line of *Soli Deo Gloria* is an imprint—carries approximately 150 Puritan titles and also sells at discount prices close to five hundred Puritan titles that are currently in print.

We are grateful for this resurgence of interest in Puritan writings. In this article I will consider some ideas on how to begin reading the Puritans, look at a reading plan for the writings of an individual Puritan, Thomas Goodwin, and consider some of my favorite Puritans.

Where to Begin Reading the Puritans

The sheer amount of Puritan literature being reprinted today and offered online can be intimidating. Furthermore, the number of books written about the Puritans is nearly as vast as the collection

2. Cited in *Modern Political Thought: Readings from Machiavelli to Nietzsche*, ed. David Wootton (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1996), 7.

3. George Whitefield, *The Works of the Reverend George Whitefield, M.A....: containing all his sermons and tracts which have been already published: with a select collection of letters* (London: printed for Edward and Charles Dilly, 1771–72), 4:307.

4. Cited in Steven C. Kettler, *Biblical Counsel: Resources for Renewal* (Newark, Del.: Letterman Associates, 1993), 311.

5. Ligon Duncan, in *Calvin for Today*, ed. Joel R. Beeke (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010), 231.

of Puritan titles. Our Puritan Research Center alone contains three thousand books of primary and secondary sources, plus thousands of articles about the Puritans.⁶

The Puritans were people of their time, and even while much of what they wrote is timeless, we must understand them within their context. They battled the spirit of their age and waged doctrinal debates pertinent to their day and which, at times, seem quite removed from issues of today. Secondary sources help us understand their historical milieu. The goal of this section is to offer bibliographic information that can help you read the Puritans.

The best overall introduction to the worldview of the Puritans is Leland Ryken's *Worldly Saints: The Puritans as They Really Were*.⁷ Other somewhat shorter yet helpful introductions include Peter Lewis's *The Genius of Puritanism* and Erroll Hulse's *Who Are the Puritans? And What Do They Teach?*⁸ For basic biographies of the 150 Puritans that have been reprinted in the last fifty years, together with brief reviews of seven hundred reprinted Puritan titles, see *Meet the Puritans, with a Guide to Modern Reprints*.⁹ The best way to use *Meet the Puritans* is to read one biography and reviews of that Puritan writer per day, thus using the book as a kind of daily biographical devotional. For short biographies of more obscure Puritans who have not been reprinted in the last fifty years, see Benjamin Brook (1776–1848), *The Lives of the Puritans*.¹⁰ For brief biographies of most of the Puritans at the Westminster Assembly, see William S. Barker's *Puritan Profiles*.¹¹ For a general volume on Puritan theology, see Mark Jones and my, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life*; for individual studies of various Puritan divines and aspects of their theology, begin with J. I. Packer's *A Quest*

6. www.puritanseminary.org.

7. Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990).

8. Peter Lewis, *The Genius of Puritanism* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2008); Erroll Hulse, *Who Are the Puritans?* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2000).

9. Joel R. Beeke and Randall J. Pederson, *Meet the Puritans, with a Guide to Modern Reprints* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2006). This book also includes Scottish and Dutch divines whose mindsets are parallel with the English Puritans.

10. Benjamin Brook, *The Lives of the Puritans*, 3 vols. (Pittsburgh: Soli Deo Gloria, 1994).

11. William S. Barker, *Puritan Profiles* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 1999).

for *Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* and my *Puritan Reformed Spirituality*.¹²

The Puritans can be difficult to read. Their wording, grammatical structure, and detail can be hard for the modern mind to grasp. It is best to read short books from some popular Puritan writers before attempting to read Puritans of more theological profundity, such as Owen and Thomas Goodwin (1600–1679). I recommend beginning with Puritan divines like Thomas Watson (c. 1620–1686), John Flavel (1628–1691), and George Swinnock (c. 1627–1673). Watson wrote succinctly, clearly, and simply. His *Art of Divine Contentment*, *Heaven Taken by Storm*, and *The Doctrine of Repentance* are good places to begin.¹³

Flavel, who was pastor at the seaport of Dartmouth, became known as a seaman's preacher. He is one of the simplest Puritans to read. His *Mystery of Providence* is filled with pastoral and comforting counsel.¹⁴ Swinnock showed a special sensitivity to the Scriptures and could explain doctrines with great wisdom and clarity. You might try his *The Fading of the Flesh and The Flourishing of Faith*, recently edited by Stephen Yuille and printed in a contemporary style.¹⁵ Both Flavel and Swinnock have had their entire works published in multivolume sets.¹⁶

The books of Richard Sibbes and Thomas Brooks (1608–1680) are also a good place to start, especially Sibbes's *The Bruised Reed* and Brooks's *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices*.¹⁷ You may also benefit from that master of allegory, John Bunyan, though some of his

12. Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011); J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1990). Joel R. Beeke, *Puritan Reformed Spirituality* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2006).

13. Thomas Watson, *The Art of Divine Contentment* (Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria, 2001); idem, *Heaven Taken By Storm* (Orlando: Northampton Press, 2008); idem, *The Doctrine of Repentance* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1988).

14. John Flavel, *The Mystery of Providence* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1963).

15. George Swinnock, *The Fading of the Flesh and the Flourishing of Faith*, ed. Stephen Yuille (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2009). Other easy-to-read Puritan titles in this new series include William Greenhill, *Stop Loving the World* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010), and John Flavel, *Triumphing Over Fear* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011).

16. *The Works of John Flavel*, 6 vols. (repr., London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1968); *The Works of George Swinnock*, 5 vols. (repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2002).

17. Richard Sibbes, *The Bruised Reed* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1998), Thomas Brooks, *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1968).

treatises reflect an unexpected intellectual depth from the tinker of Bedford.¹⁸ Then, too, you could move your way through the Banner of Truth's line of Puritan Paperbacks (which is how I began reading the Puritans as a teen) or the more recent Pocket Puritans series. Some Puritan titles written by Owen have been abridged by R. J. K. Law and made easier to read. These are good places to start reading the experiential writings of the Puritans.

How to proceed next depends on your particular interest. After becoming acquainted with various styles of Puritan literature, you have a broad spectrum of possibilities to consider. What joys you might have wrestling with Owen's weighty treatments of the glory of Christ, his soul-searching treatise on sin and his exegetical masterpiece on Hebrews. Or how thrilling it would be to ascend the heights of the intellectual and spiritual atmosphere with Jonathan Edwards, or to plumb the depths of divine attributes with Stephen Charnock (1628–1680). You may probe the redemptive glories of the covenant with John Ball (1585–1640) and Samuel Petto (c. 1624–1711), or be allured by the redemptive doctrines of justification and sanctification with Walter Marshall (1628–1680), Peter van Mastricht (1630–1706), or Robert Traill (1642–1716). You could entrust yourself to a competent guide like Edward Fisher (d. 1655) to bring you safely through the law/gospel distinction or be impressed with the profound but simple writings of Hugh Binning (1627–1653). Prepare to be challenged by the soul-penetrating works of Thomas Shepard (1605–1649) and Matthew Mead (1629–1699) or be instructed by the plain reason of Jeremiah Burroughs (c. 1600–1646), Richard Baxter (1615–1691), and George Hammond (c. 1620–1705).

Whatever topic you select, you may be sure that the Puritans have addressed it with scriptural precision, vivid illumination, practical benefit, experiential warmth, and an eye to the glory of God. Many Puritan writings are not for the faint of heart, but the reader who diligently probes the books with the willingness to gaze under every rock and prayerfully consider what they say will be drawn ever more deeply into the revealed mysteries of God. When you follow the writings of these faithful men, you will find that it will be for the betterment of your soul.

18. *The Works of John Bunyan*, 3 vols. (repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2004).

How to Read an Individual Puritan

There are no rules for reading individual Puritans, but here are some suggestions. Generally speaking, Puritans are best read slowly and meditatively. Don't rush through their books. Look up the texts they cite to prove their points. Intersperse your reading with prayer.

Here are some guidelines for reading Thomas Goodwin, who was, for twenty years, my favorite Puritan writer. The first collection of Goodwin's works was published in five folio volumes in London from 1681 to 1704, under the editorship of Thankful Owen, Thomas Baron, and Thomas Goodwin Jr. An abridged version of those works was later printed in four volumes (London, 1847–50). James Nichol printed a more reliable collection of Goodwin's works in twelve volumes (Edinburgh, 1861–66) in the Nichol's Series of Standard Divines. It is far superior to the original five folio volumes and was reprinted in 2006 by Reformation Heritage Books.

Goodwin's exegesis is massive; he leaves no stone unturned. His first editors (1681) said of his work: "He had a genius to dive into the bottom of points, to 'study them down,' as he used to express it, not contenting himself with superficial knowledge, without wading into the depths of things."¹⁹ Calamy said: "It is evident from his writings [that] he studied not words, but things. His style is plain and familiar; but very diffuse, homely and tedious."²⁰ One does need patience to read Goodwin; however, along with depth and prolixity, he offers a wonderful sense of warmth and experience. A reader's patience will be amply rewarded.

Here is a plan for reading Goodwin's works.

1. Begin by reading some of the shorter, more practical writings of Goodwin, such as *Patience and Its Perfect Work*, which includes four sermons on James 1:1–5. This book was written after much of Goodwin's personal library was destroyed by fire (*Works*, 2:429–67). It contains much practical instruction on the spirit of submission.
2. Read *Certain Select Cases Resolved*, which offers three experiential treatises that reveal Goodwin's pastoral heart for

19. For the reprinting of the original preface, see *The Works of Thomas Goodwin* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2006), 1:xxix–xxxii.

20. Edmund Calamy, *The Nonconformist's Memorial*, ed. Samuel Palmer (London: Alex. Hogg, 1778), 1:186.

afflicted Christians. Each deals with specific struggles in the believer's soul: (a) "A Child of Light Walking in Darkness" encourages the spiritually depressed based on Isaiah 50:10–11 (3:241–350). The subtitle summarizes its contents: "A Treatise Shewing The Causes by which, The Cases wherein, and The Ends for which, God Leaves His Children to Distress of Conscience, Together with Directions How to Walk so as to Come Forth of Such a Condition." (b) "The Return of Prayers," based on Psalm 85:8, is a uniquely practical work. It offers help in ascertaining "God's answers to our prayers" (3:353–429). (c) "The Trial of a Christian's Growth" (3:433–506), based on John 15:1–2, centers on sanctification, specifically mortification and vivification. This is a mini-classic on spiritual growth.

You might also read *The Vanity of Thoughts*, based on Jeremiah 4:14 (3:509–528). This work, often republished in paperback, stresses the need to bring every thought captive to Christ. It also describes ways to foster that obedience.

3. Read some of Goodwin's great sermons. They are strong, biblical, Christological, and experiential (2:359–425; 4:151–224; 5:439–548; 7:473–576; 9:499–514; 12:1–127).
4. Delve into Goodwin's works that explain major doctrines, such as:

(a) *An Unregenerate Man's Guiltiness Before God in Respect of Sin and Punishment* (10:1–567). This is a weighty treatise on human guilt, corruption, and the imputation and punishment of sin. In exposing the total depravity of the natural man's heart, this book aims to produce a heartfelt need for saving faith in Christ.

(b) *The Object and Acts of Justifying Faith* (8:1–593). This is a frequently reprinted classic on faith. Part 1, on the *objects of faith*, focuses on God's nature, Christ, and the free grace of God revealed in His absolute promises. Part 2 deals with the *acts of faith*: what it means to believe in Christ, to obtain assurance, to find joy in the Holy Ghost, and to make use of God's electing love. One section beautifully explains the "actings of faith in prayer." Part 3 addresses

the *properties of faith*: their excellence in giving all honor to God and Christ, their difficulty in reaching beyond the natural abilities of man, their necessity in requiring us to believe in the strength of God. The conclusion provides “directions to guide us in our endeavours to believe.”

(c) *Christ the Mediator* (2 Cor. 5:18–19), *Christ Set Forth* (Rom. 8:34), and *The Heart of Christ in Heaven Towards Sinners on Earth* are great works on Christology (5:1–438; 4:1–92; 4:93–150). *Christ the Mediator* presents Jesus in His substitutionary work of humiliation. It is a classic. *Christ Set Forth* proclaims Christ in His exaltation, and *The Heart of Christ* explores the tenderness of Christ’s glorified human nature shown on earth. Goodwin is more mystical in this work than anywhere else in his writings, but as Paul Cook has ably shown, his mysticism is kept within the bounds of Scripture. Cook says Goodwin is unparalleled “in his combination of intellectual and theological power with evangelical and homiletical comfort.”²¹

(d) *Gospel Holiness in Heart and Life* (7:129–336) is based on Philippians 1:9–11. It explains the doctrine of sanctification in every sphere of life.

(e) *The Knowledge of God the Father, and His Son Jesus Christ* (4:347–569), combined with *The Work of the Holy Spirit* (6:1–522), explore the profound work in the believer’s soul of the three divine persons. *The Work of the Spirit* is particularly helpful for understanding the doctrines of regeneration and conversion. It carefully distinguishes the work of “the natural conscience” from the Spirit’s saving work.

(f) *The Glory of the Gospel* (4:227–346) consists of two sermons and a treatise based on Colossians 1:26–27. It should be read along with *The Blessed State of Glory Which the Saints Possess After Death* (7:339–472), based on Revelation 14:13.

(g) *A Discourse of Election* (9:1–498) delves into issues such as the supralapsarian-infralapsarian debate, which wrestles

21. Paul Cook, “Thomas Goodwin—Mystic?” in *Diversities of Gifts* (London: Westminster Conference, 1981), 45–56.

with the moral or rational order of God's decrees. It also deals with the fruits of election (e.g., see Book IV on 1 Peter 5:10 and Book V on how God fulfills His covenant of grace in the generations of believers).

(h) *The Creatures and the Condition of Their State by Creation* (7:1–128) is Goodwin's most philosophical work.

5. Prayerfully and slowly digest Goodwin's nine-hundred-plus page exposition of Ephesians 1:1 to 2:11 (1:1–564; 2:1–355). Alexander Whyte wrote of this work, "Not even Luther on the Galatians is such an expositor of Paul's mind and heart as is Goodwin on the Ephesians."²²
6. Save for last Goodwin's exposition of Revelation (3:1–226) and his only polemical work, *The Constitution, Right Order, and Government of the Churches of Christ* (11:1–546). Independents would highly value this polemic, while Presbyterians probably would not, saying Goodwin is trustworthy on nearly every subject except church government. Goodwin's work does not degrade Presbyterians, however. A contemporary who argued against Goodwin's view on church government confessed that Goodwin conveyed "a truly great and noble spirit" throughout the work.

Whichever Puritan you choose, familiarize yourself with his various writings. With major and voluminous works be sure to note earlier writings from later writings. This is particularly important with Puritans such as Owen. The young Owen did not agree completely with the later Owen in certain areas, such as the necessity of the atonement. Familiarity with these matters will help you grasp the particular nuances of individual Puritans.

Some of My Favorite Puritans

My favorite Puritan-minded theologian from the English tradition is Anthony Burgess; from the Dutch tradition, Wilhelmus á Brakel; and from the Scottish tradition, Samuel Rutherford. Let me explain why.

22. Alexander Whyte, *Thirteen Appreciations* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1913), 162.

Anthony Burgess (d. 1664)

In my opinion, Anthony Burgess, vicar of Sutton Coldfield, Warwickshire from 1635 to 1662, is the most underrated Puritan of all time. I once asked Iain Murray why Burgess was not included in the nineteenth-century sets of the works of the best Puritans. He responded that Burgess was the greatest glaring omission from those reprints.

In fifteen years (1646–1661), Burgess wrote at least a dozen books based largely on his sermons and lectures. His writings reveal a scholarly acquaintance with Aristotle, Seneca, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin. He made judicious use of Greek and Latin quotations while reasoning in the plain style of Puritan preaching. Burgess was a cultured scholar and experimental preacher who produced astute, warm, devotional writings.

Burgess wrote about the mysteries of God and was also an experimental writer. He masterfully separated the precious from the vile in *The Godly Man's Choice*, based on thirteen sermons on Psalm 4:6–8. His detailed exegesis in his 145-sermon work on John 17, his 300-page commentary on 1 Corinthians 3, and his 700-page commentary on 2 Corinthians 1 are heart-warming. They fulfilled Burgess's goal to "endeavour the true and sound Exposition...so as to reduce all Doctrinals and controversials to practicals and experimentals, which is the life and soul of all."²³

Several of Burgess's major works are polemical. His first major treatise, *Vindiciae Legis* (1646), based on twenty-nine lectures given at Lawrence-Jewry, vindicated the Puritan view of the moral law and the covenants of works and grace in opposition to Roman Catholics, Arminians, Socinians, and Antinomians. Two years later, Burgess wrote against the same opponents, plus Baxter, in his first volume on justification. He refuted Baxter's work for its Arminian tendencies in arguing for a process of justification that involves the cooperation of divine grace with human works. His second volume on justification, which appeared six years later (1654), discusses the natural righteousness of God and the imputed righteousness of Christ. Those two volumes contain seventy-five sermons. His 555-page *Doctrine of Original Sin* (1659) drew Anabaptists into the fray.

Burgess's best and largest work, *Spiritual Refining: The Anatomy of True and False Conversion* (1652–54)—two volumes of 1,100 pages—has

23. Anthony Burgess, *Second Corinthians 1*, intro.

been called an “unequaled anatomy of experimental religion.” The first volume, subtitled *A Treatise of Grace and Assurance*, contains 120 sermons; the second, subtitled *A Treatise of Sin, with its Causes, Differences, Mitigations and Aggravations*, contains 42 sermons.²⁴

In the first section of the first volume, Burgess refutes the antinomian error that internal marks of grace in a believer are no evidence of his justification. In my opinion, the first sixty pages of the facsimile edition include the best short treatment on assurance in all Puritan literature. Here is one choice quotation in which Burgess shows the need to give priority to Christ and His promises rather than to the marks of grace in ascertaining one’s assurance:

We must take heed that we do not so gaze upon ourselves to find graces in our own hearts as thereby we forget those Acts of Faith, whereby we close with Christ immediately, and rely upon him only for our Justification.... The fear of this hath made some cry down totally the use of signs, to evidence our Justification. And the truth is, it cannot be denied but many of the children of God, while they are studying and examining, whether grace be in their souls, that upon the discovery thereof, they may have comfortable persuasions of their Justification, are very much neglective of those choice and principal Acts of Faith, whereby we have an acquiescency or recumbency upon Christ for our Acceptation with God. This is as if old Jacob should so rejoice in the Chariot Joseph sent, whereby he knew that he was alive, that he should not desire to see Joseph himself. Thus while thou art so full of joy, to perceive grace in thee, thou forgettest to joy in Christ himself, who is more excellent than all thy graces.²⁵

Sections two and three describe numerous signs of grace. The remaining nine sections of this volume discuss grace in terms of regeneration, the new creature, God’s workmanship, grace in the heart, washing or sanctifying grace, conversion, softening the stony

24. International Outreach has recently done two two-volume editions of Burgess’s *Spiritual Refining* (Ames, Ia.: International Outreach, 1986–96). Only one hundred copies were printed of the first edition, a facsimile, which contains the complete unabridged text of 1658. The second edition of *Spiritual Refining*, an abridged edition, is worth the investment for those who have difficulty reading facsimile print, though many sections are not included.

25. Anthony Burgess, *Spiritual Refining*, 1:41.

heart, God's Spirit within us, and vocation or calling. Throughout, Burgess distinguishes saving grace from its counterfeits.

In the second volume of *Spiritual Refining*, Burgess focuses on sin. He addresses the deceitfulness of the human heart, presumptuous and reigning sins, hypocrisy and formality in religion, a misguided conscience, and secret sins that often go unrecognized. Positively, he explains the tenderness of a gracious heart, showing "that a strict scrutiny into a man's heart and ways, with a holy fear of sinning, doth consist with a Gospel-life of faith and joy in the Holy Ghost." His goal, as stated on the title page, is to "unmask counterfeit Christians, terrify the ungodly, comfort and direct the doubting saint, humble man, [and] exalt the grace of God."

I discovered Burgess's *Spiritual Refining* a few days before completing my doctoral dissertation on assurance of faith in the mid-1980s. When I read the first sixty pages of this masterpiece, I was overwhelmed at Burgess's scriptural clarity, insightful exegesis, balance, thoroughness, and depth. I spent two days incorporating some of Burgess's key thoughts into my dissertation. Later, when called on to speak on Burgess's life and his views on assurance for the Westminster Conference (1997), I acquired a nearly complete collection of his writings and immersed myself in them. That fall, Burgess surpassed Goodwin as my favorite Puritan author, and has remained so ever since. One of my goals is to bring several of Burgess's works back into print—or better yet, do a complete edition of his works.

♦ *Recommended reading:* Burgess's *Spiritual Refining*.

Wilhelmus á Brakel (1635–1711)

Wilhelmus á Brakel was a prominent preacher and writer of the *Nadere Reformatie* (Dutch Further Reformation). This movement of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries paralleled English Puritanism.²⁶ Like English Puritanism, the *Nadere Reformatie* stressed the necessity of vital Christian piety, was true to the teachings of Scripture and

26. For summaries of the *Nadere Reformatie* in English, see Joel R. Beeke, *Assurance of Faith: Calvin, English Puritanism, and the Dutch Second Reformation* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 383–413; Fred A. van Lieburg, "From Pure Church to Pious Culture: The Further Reformation in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic," in *Later Calvinism: International Perspectives*, ed. W. Fred Graham (Kirksville, Mo.: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1994), 409–30.

the Reformed confessions, and consistently highlighted how faith and godliness work in all aspects of daily life. Consequently, I feel justified in including Dutch “puritans” in a selection of favorite authors.

I was once asked what book I would take with me if I were stranded on a desert island. My choice was Wilhelmus à Brakel’s *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*.²⁷ In my opinion, this is the most valuable set of books available in English today because of the rich doctrinal, experiential, practical, pastoral, and ethical content this classic conveys. For centuries this set of books was as popular in the Netherlands as John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* was in English-speaking countries. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, most Dutch farmers of Reformed persuasion would read a few pages of “Father Brakel,” as he was fondly called, every evening during family worship. When they completed the entire work, they would start over!

This massive work is arranged in three parts. The first volume and most of the second consist of a traditional Reformed systematic theology that is packed with clear thinking, thorough presentation, and helpful application. The concluding applications at the end of each chapter applying the particular doctrines are the highlight of this section. I believe à Brakel’s practical casuistry in these applications supersedes any other systematic theologian in his day and ever since. They represent Reformed, Puritan, experiential theology at its best.

The second part expounds Christian ethics and Christian living. This largest section of à Brakel’s work is packed with salient applications on topics pertinent to living as a Christian in this world. In addition to a masterful treatment of the ten commandments (chaps. 45–55) and the Lord’s Prayer (chaps. 68–74), this part addresses topics such as living by faith out of God’s promises (chap. 42); how to exercise love toward God and His Son (chaps. 56–57); how to fear, obey, and hope in God (chaps. 59–61); how to profess Christ and His truth (chap. 63); and how to exercise spiritual graces, such as courage, contentment, self-denial, patience, uprightness, watchfulness, neighborly love, humility, meekness, peace, diligence, compassion, and prudence (chaps. 62, 64–67, 76, 82–88). Other topics include fasting (chap. 75), solitude (chap. 77), spiritual meditation (chap. 78), singing (chap. 79), vows (chap. 80), spiritual experience (chap. 81), spiritual

27. Wilhelmus à Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, 4 vols., trans. Bartel Elshout, ed. Joel R. Beeke (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2001).

growth (chap. 89), backsliding (chap. 90), spiritual desertion (chap. 91), temptations (chaps. 92–95), indwelling corruption (chap. 96), and spiritual darkness and deadness (chaps. 97–98).

The third part (4:373–538) includes a history of God’s redemptive, covenantal work in the world. It is reminiscent of Jonathan Edwards’s *History of Redemption*, though not as detailed as Edwards; à Brakel’s work confines itself more to Scripture and has a greater covenantal emphasis. It concludes with a detailed study of the future conversion of the Jews (4:511–38).

The Christian’s Reasonable Service is the heartbeat of the Dutch Further Reformation. Here systematic theology and vital, experiential Christianity are scripturally and practically woven within a covenantal framework. The entire work bears the mark of a pastor-theologian richly taught by the Spirit. Nearly every subject treasured by Christians is treated in a helpful way, always aiming for the promotion of godliness.

In my opinion, this pastoral set of books is an essential tool for every pastor and is also valuable for lay people. The book has been freshly translated into contemporary English. Buy and read this great classic.

♦ *Recommended reading:* Brakel’s *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*.

Samuel Rutherford (1600–1661)

While divided by history, nationality, and race, and to some extent, language, England’s Puritans and Scotland’s Presbyterians were united by close spiritual bonds of doctrine, worship, and church order. For this reason, I include a Scotsman on my short list of favorite Puritans.

Actually, three Scottish divines have influenced me greatly: Thomas Boston (1676–1732) led me to the depths of my original sin and the beauty and symmetry of covenant theology;²⁸ Thomas Halyburton (1674–1712) taught me the power of bringing every personal experience to the touchstone of Scripture;²⁹ and Samuel Rutherford taught me much about loving Christ and being submissive in affliction. For twenty years, I kept a copy of Rutherford’s *Letters*

28. Thomas Boston, *The Complete Works of the Late Rev. Thomas Boston, Ettrick*, 12 vols., ed. Samuel M’Millan (repr., Wheaton, Ill.: Richard Owen Roberts, 1980).

29. Thomas Halyburton, *The Works of Thomas Halyburton*, 4 vols. (Aberdeen: James Begg Society, 2000–2005).

(unabridged) on my nightstand, and turned to it countless times when I felt discouraged, challenged, or afflicted. On many occasions, I read until I found my bearings once more in Prince Immanuel. No writer in all of history can so make you fall in love with Christ and embrace your afflictions as Samuel Rutherford can. I agree with Charles Spurgeon who said, “When we are dead and gone let the world know that Spurgeon held Rutherford’s *Letters* to be the nearest thing to inspiration which can be found in all the writings of mere man.”³⁰ I thank God for this great man of God.

Though Boston and Halyburton rate a close second, my favorite Scottish divine is Rutherford, who first pastored in Anwoth, then was exiled to Aberdeen, and later became professor at St. Andrews. Rutherford’s heart was a vast treasure chest filled with unspeakable love for God. Rutherford wrote as one whose heart transcended this world and lighted upon eternal shores. In the midst of trial and affliction, he wrote, “Christ hath so handsomely fitted for my shoulders, this rough tree of the cross, as that it hurteth me no ways.”³¹ Even on his deathbed, Rutherford focused on Christ. To those gathered around him, he said, “This night will close the door, and fasten my anchor within the veil. . . . Glory, glory dwelleth in Immanuel’s land!”³² In life and in death, he found his Savior “altogether lovely” (Song 4:16). “No pen, no words, no image can express to you the loveliness of my only, only Lord Jesus,” he wrote.³³ This is what makes him so devotional, so beneficial, so engaging to read.

Most of Rutherford’s letters (220 of 365) were written while he was in exile. The letters beautifully harmonize Reformed doctrine and the spiritual experiences of a believer. They basically cover six topics: (1) Rutherford’s love and desire for Christ, (2) his deep sense of the heinousness of sin, (3) his devotion for the cause of Christ, (4) his profound sympathy for burdened and troubled souls, (5) his profound love for his flock, and (6) his ardent longings for heaven.³⁴

30. Charles Spurgeon, *The Sword and the Trowel*, 189. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Rutherford (accessed August 31, 2010).

31. Samuel Rutherford, *The Letters of Samuel Rutherford* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1984), 144.

32. Rutherford, *The Letters of Samuel Rutherford*, 21–22.

33. Samuel Rutherford, *The Loveliness of Christ* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2007), 88.

34. Adapted from Beeke and Pederson, *Meet the Puritans*, 729–30.

Although he did not write his letters for publication, the compilation of them is Rutherford's most popular work. It has been reprinted more than eighty times in English, fifteen times in Dutch, and several times in German and French and Gaelic.

Several of Rutherford's diversified writings have also been republished. His *Communion Sermons* (1870s), a compilation of fourteen sacramental sermons, was recently published by Westminster Publishing House. *The Covenant of Life Opened* (1655), an exegetical defense of covenant theology, was edited and republished by Puritan Publications. In this, Rutherford reveals himself as an apt apologist and polemicist in defending the bi-covenantal structure of Scripture. His work *Lex Rex* has become a standard in law curriculum; nearly every member of the Westminster Assembly owned a copy. This book helped instigate the Covenanters' resistance to King Charles I and was later used to justify the French and American revolutions. History has generally regarded this work as one of the greatest contributions to political science.

In addition, Soli Deo Gloria has republished *Quaint Sermons of Samuel Rutherford* (1885), composed from compiled shorthand notes taken by a listener. The warmth of Rutherford's preaching is particularly evident in "The Spouse's Longing for Christ." Like many divines in his day, Rutherford drafted his own catechism, *Rutherford's Catechism: or, The Sum of Christian Religion* (1886), recently reprinted by Blue Banner Publications. This was most likely written during the Westminster Assembly and is filled with many quaint sayings. *The Trial and Triumph of Faith* (1645) contains twenty-seven sermons on Christ's saving work in the Canaanite woman (Matt. 15:21–28). In nearly every sermon, Rutherford shows the overflowing grace of Christ to Gentiles. He explores the nature of genuine prayer and addresses practical aspects of the trial of faith. Most recently, Banner of Truth published *The Loveliness of Christ* (2007), a little book that contains Christ-centered quotes from Rutherford.

Rutherford's *Letters*, however, remain the author's masterpiece. They are filled with pastoral advice, comfort, rebuke, and encouragement.

♦ *Recommended reading:* Rutherford's *Letters*.

More Puritan Favorites

It is difficult to conclude this section, for I would love to include so many more Puritan authors. But, to keep this list concise, I will conclude with a list of fifteen favorite Puritans followed by five favorite Scottish divines, then five favorite Dutch divines, adding up to a list of twenty-five favorite Puritan writers:

1. *Anthony Burgess* (see above)

2. *Thomas Goodwin* (see above)

3. *John Owen* (1616–1683): This author's sixteen volumes of works, seven volumes on Hebrews, and a book titled *Biblical Theology*, make up a learned library.³⁵ The sixteen-volume set, which is a reprint of the 1850–55 Gould edition, includes the following:

Doctrinal (vols. 1–5). The most noteworthy works in these volumes are: *On the Person and Glory of Christ* (vol. 1); *Communion with God* (vol. 2); *Discourse on the Holy Spirit* (vol. 3); and *Justification by Faith* (vol. 5). Mastery of these works, Spurgeon wrote, “is to be a profound theologian.”

Practical (vols. 6–9). Especially worthy here are *Mortification of Sin, Temptation, Exposition of Psalm 130* (vol. 6); and *Spiritual-Mindedness* (vol. 7). Volumes 8 and 9 are sermons. These books are suitable for the educated layperson and have immense practical applications.

Controversial (vols. 10–16). Noteworthy are *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* and *Divine Justice* (vol. 10); *The Doctrine of the Saints' Perseverance* (vol. 11); *True Nature of a Gospel Church* and *The Divine Original of the Scriptures* (vol. 16). Several works in this section have historical significance (particularly those written against Arminianism and Socinianism) but tend to be tedious for a non-theologian.

Owen's wide range of subjects, insightful writing, exhaustive doctrinal studies, profound theology, and warm devotional approach

35. John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, 16 vols. (repr. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1996); idem, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 7 vols. (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1985); idem, *Biblical Theology*, trans. Stephen Westcott (Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria, 1994).

explain why so many people regard his work with such high esteem. Owen may be wordy on occasion, but he is never dry. His works are invaluable for all who wish to explore the rich legacy left by one who is often called “Prince of the Puritans.”

Dozens of Owen’s works have been published individually in the past half century, but I advise serious readers of Puritan literature to purchase the sixteen-volume set of Owen’s works. For those who have difficulty reading Owen, I recommend R. J. K. Law’s abridged and simplified editions of *Communion with God* (1991), *Apostasy from the Gospel* (1992), *The Glory of Christ* (1994), and *The Holy Spirit* (1998), all published by the Banner of Truth Trust.

I was most influenced by Owen when I spent the summer of 1985 studying his views on assurance. The most significant two books were Owen’s treatment of Psalm 130, particularly verse 4, and his amazing *Communion with God*, which focuses on experiential communion between a believer and individual persons of the Trinity.

4. *Jonathan Edwards* (1703–1758): A class at Westminster Theological Seminary, taught by Sam Logan, motivated me to read most of Edwards’s two-volume works in 1983.³⁶ His sermons convicted and comforted me beyond words. What a master wordsmith Edwards was!

More than sixty volumes of Edwards’s writings have been published in the last fifty years.³⁷ The two books that influenced me most were *Religious Affections*, which is often regarded as the leading classic in American history on spiritual life, and Edwards’s sermons on justification by faith.³⁸ Earlier, I was greatly influenced by *The Life and Diary of David Brainerd*.³⁹

36. Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974). Cf. *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 26 vols. (New Haven: Yale, 1957–2008). Each volume in the Yale series has been thoroughly edited by scholars and includes, on average, 35 to 150 pages of introduction. This series is essential for aspiring scholars of Edwards. Those interested in reading him for devotional benefit could better purchase the two volume edition of his *Works*, since the Yale volumes are expensive. The Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary library collection contains the complete unpublished works of Jonathan Edwards in 48 volumes in addition to the 26-volume Yale set.

37. Beeke and Pederson, *Meet the Puritans*, 193–233.

38. Jonathan Edwards, *The Religious Affections* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2001); idem, *Justification by Faith Alone* (Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria, 2000).

39. Jonathan Edwards, *The Life and Diary of David Brainerd* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989).

I was touched by Edwards's concept of "fittedness" throughout his writings, and have often found that concept a great tool for leadership and decision-making. Edwards grounded this concept in God; a God who is always fitting will guide His people to want to do what is fitting in each life situation to bring Him the most glory. Hence, we must ask of every decision we face: What is most fitting in God's sight according to His Word? What will bring God the most honor?

5. *William Perkins* (1558–1602): Perkins's vision of reform for the church combined with his intellect, piety, writing, spiritual counseling, and communication skills helped set the tone for the seventeenth-century Puritan accent on Reformed, experiential truth and self-examination, and Puritan arguments against Roman Catholicism and Arminianism. Perkins as rhetorician, expositor, theologian, and pastor became the principle architect of the Puritan movement. By the time of his death, Perkins's writings in England were outselling those of John Calvin, Theodore Beza, and Henry Bullinger combined. He "moulded the piety of a whole nation," H. C. Porter said.⁴⁰ Little wonder, then, that Perkins is often called the father of Puritanism.

Perkins first influenced me while I was studying assurance of faith for my doctoral dissertation. Ten years later, his *Art of Prophesying*, a short homiletic textbook for Puritan seminarians, helped me understand how to address listeners according to their various cases of conscience.⁴¹ My appreciation for Perkins has increased over the years. I look forward to spending more time reading his works as general editor with Derek Thomas on a ten-volume reprint of Perkins's works, the first volume of which will appear yet this year.⁴²

6. *Thomas Watson* (c. 1620–1686): Watson was my favorite Puritan after I was converted in my mid-teens. I read his *Body of Divinity* as a daily devotional. His *All Things for Good* was a wonderful balm for my troubled soul in a period of intense affliction in the early 1980s. His winsome writing includes deep doctrine, clear expression, warm

40. H. C. Porter, *Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 260.

41. William Perkins, *The Art of Prophesying*, ed. Sinclair B. Ferguson (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1996).

42. William Perkins, *The Workes of that Famous and VVorthy Minister of Christ in the Vniuersitie of Cambridge, Mr. William Perkins*, 3 vols. (London: John Legatt, 1612–13).

spirituality, appropriate applications, and colorful illustrations. I love his pithy, quotable style of writing.⁴³

7. *Thomas Brooks* (1608–1680): Brooks became my favorite Puritan writer in my late teens. His *Precious Remedies Against Satan’s Devices*, *The Mute Christian Under the Smarting Rod*, *Heaven on Earth: A Treatise on Assurance*, “The Unsearchable Riches of Christ” (vol. 3), “The Crown and Glory of Christianity” (vol. 4)—a classic on holiness consisting of 58 sermons on Hebrews 12:14—all ministered to me. Brooks’s books are real page-turners. He often brought me to tears of joy over Christ and tears of sorrow over sin. His writings exude spiritual life and power.⁴⁴

8. *John Flavel* (1628–1691): With the exception of Jonathan Edwards, no Puritan divine was more helpful for me in sermon preparation as a young minister than Flavel. His sermons on Christ’s suffering also greatly blessed my soul. What lover of Puritan literature has not been blessed by Flavel’s classics: *The Mystery of Providence*, *Keeping the Heart*, *The Fountain of Life*, *Christ Knocking at the Door of the Heart*, and *The Method of Grace*?⁴⁵

9. *John Bunyan* (1628–1688): When I was nine years old and first experienced a period of conviction of sin, I read Bunyan’s *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*. When I saw the book in my father’s bookcase, I figured that since I had such a bad heart, that book must be for me!

More importantly, my father read Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* to us every Sunday evening after church. When he finished, he started over. I must have listened to that book fifteen times. From the age of fourteen on, I would ask questions about how the Holy Spirit works in the soul, about Mr. Talkative, the Man in the Iron Cage, the House of the Interpreter, and scores of other characters and matters. My father often wept as he answered my questions. When I became a minister, I realized what a rare gift those sessions were. Forty years

43. Seventeen of Watson’s titles have been reprinted in recent decades, though to date no complete works set has ever been printed (Beeke and Pederson, *Meet the Puritans*, 606–613).

44. Thomas Brooks, *The Works of Thomas Brooks*, 6 vols. (repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2001).

45. John Flavel, *The Works of John Flavel*, 6 vols. (repr., London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1968).

later, illustrations from Bunyan's great classic still come to mind while I'm preaching.⁴⁶

10. *Thomas Vincent* (1634–1678): When we find ourselves cold and listless, Vincent can help kindle the fire of Christian love. Just try reading *The True Christian's Love to the Unseen Christ* (1677) without having your affections raised to heavenly places and yearning to love Christ more. Let *The True Christian's Love to the Unseen Christ* be your frequent companion.

Only a handful of Vincent's writings were ever published, and of those, only six have been reprinted in the past fifty years. In addition to *The True Christian's Love to the Unseen Christ*, Vincent wrote *The Shorter Catechism Explained from Scripture* (1673), a very helpful book for young people and children; and *The Good Work Begun* (1673), an evangelistic book for young people, explaining how God saves sinners and preserves them for Himself. Three additional books by Vincent are more solemn treatises. They include *God's Terrible Voice in the City* (1667), an eyewitness account of London's Great Fire and Great Plague and an analysis of how God judges wickedness in a city; *Christ's Certain and Sudden Appearance to Judgment* (1667), which was also written after the Great Fire of London and was designed to prepare sinners for the great and terrible Day of the Lord; and *Fire and Brimstone* (1670) was written to warn sinners to flee the wrath to come. All of these titles, minus *The Shorter Catechism*, were reprinted by Soli Deo Gloria Publications from 1991 to 2001.⁴⁷

Vincent's works are uniquely refreshing. He used the English language in a captivating way to glorify God and strike at the heart of Christians. It is no wonder that Vincent's works were bestsellers in the eighteenth century.⁴⁸

46. John Bunyan, *The Works of John Bunyan*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1999).

47. Thomas Vincent, *The True Christian's Love to the Unseen Christ* (Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria, 1994); idem, *The Shorter Catechism Explained from Scripture* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1991); idem, *The Good Work Begun: A Puritan Pastor Speaks to Teenagers* (Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria, 1999); idem, *God's Terrible Voice in the City* (Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria, 1997); idem, *Christ's Certain and Sudden Appearance to Judgment* (Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria, 2001); idem, *Fire and Brimstone* (Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria, 1999).

48. Andrew R. Holmes, *The Shaping of Ulster Presbyterian Belief and Practice, 1770–1840* (England: Oxford University Press, 2006), 277.

11. *Matthew Henry* (1662–1714), the great British commentator, has added spice to many preachers’ sermons, including my own. I am also indebted to Henry for his practical books on spiritual disciplines, particularly family worship, private prayer, and preparation for communion. For many years, I read portions of Henry’s *How to Prepare for Communion* during preparatory weeks.⁴⁹

12. *Richard Sibbes* (1577–1635) was a life-long bachelor with a huge network of friends. He wrote tenderly about the heavenly Bridegroom and the Spirit’s sealing work in the soul. I became enamored with Sibbes after reading his comment that the believer ought to “entertain” the Holy Spirit in the courtroom of his soul, much as we entertain guests in our living rooms. Later, I gave a conference address titled, “Sibbes on the Entertainment of the Spirit.”⁵⁰

13. *Matthew Poole* (1624–1679) left his mark on me with his careful exegesis of Scripture. Many times I wanted to interpret a text a certain way, but Poole reigned me in. In nearly every case, those who say the Puritans were not good exegetes have not read Poole.⁵¹

14. *Walter Marshall* (1628–1680) helped me understand justification and sanctification from a Christ-centered perspective through his *Gospel Mystery of Sanctification* classic.⁵²

15. *William Spurstowe* (c. 1605–1666) wrote an amazing book on gospel promises, *The Wells of Salvation Opened*, which served as a tonic for my ailing soul.⁵³ James La Belle and I have summarized

49. Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 6 vols. (repr., Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991); idem, *Family Religion: Principles for Raising a Godly Family* (Ross-shire, U.K.: Christian Focus, 1998); idem, *A Method for Prayer* (Greenville, S.C.: Reformed Academic Press, 1994); idem, *How to Prepare for Communion* (Lafayette, Ind.: Sovereign Grace Trust Fund, 2001).

50. Richard Sibbes, *The Complete Works of Richard Sibbes*, ed. A. B. Grosart, 7 vols. (repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1973–82).

51. Matthew Poole, *A Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 3 vols. (repr., London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1983).

52. Walter Marshall, *The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 1999).

53. William Spurstowe, *The Wells of Salvation Opened: Or, A Treatise Discovering the nature, preciousness, usefulness of Gospel-Promises, and Rules for the right application of them* (London: T. R. & E. M. for Ralph Smith, 1655).

its contents in contemporary language in our recent book, *Living by God's Promises*.⁵⁴

Favorite Scottish Divines

1. *Samuel Rutherford* (see above)
2. *Thomas Boston* (see above)
3. *Thomas Halyburton* (see above)
4. *Andrew Gray* (1633–1656): Several of the short treatises in *The Works of Andrew Gray*, particularly *The Mystery of Faith Opened*, *Great and Precious Promises*, *Directions and Instigations to the Duty of Prayer*, and *The Spiritual Warfare* have influenced me for good, as has his rare volume of fifty sermons (*Loving Christ and Fleeing Temptation*), which was edited and published in 2007.⁵⁵
5. *Ebenezer* (1680–1754) and *Ralph Erskine* (1685–1752): The Erskine brothers have impressed me with their lives, their emphasis and insights into God's promises, and their passionate offering of the gospel.⁵⁶

*Favorite Dutch Further Reformation Divines*⁵⁷

1. *Wilhelmus á Brakel* (see above)
2. *Willem Teellinck* (1579–1629): *The Path of True Godliness* is the best Puritan-style manual on sanctification that I have ever read.⁵⁸
3. *Herman Witsius* (1636–1708): The masterful trilogy of *The Economy of the Covenants* (2 vols.), *The Apostles' Creed* (2 vols.), and *The Lord's*

54. Joel R. Beeke and James A. La Belle, *Living by Gospel Promises* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010).

55. Andrew Gray, *The Works of Andrew Gray* (Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria, 1992); idem, *Loving Christ and Fleeing Temptation*, ed. Joel R. Beeke and Kelly Van Wyck (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2007).

56. Ebenezer Erskine, *The Works of Ebenezer Erskine*, 3 vols. (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 2001); Ralph Erskine, *The Works of Ralph Erskine*, 6 vols. (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1991).

57. I limit myself here to selecting those who have at least one volume in English.

58. Willem Teellinck, *The Path of True Godliness*, trans. Annemie Godbehere, ed. Joel R. Beeke (repr., Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2008).

Prayer is generations ahead of its time. Reformation Heritage Books has just brought these volumes back into print.⁵⁹

4. *Johannes VanderKemp* (1664–1718): His Heidelberg Catechism sermons, reprinted by Reformation Heritage Books, are rich in pointed, heartfelt, and diverse applications and are remarkably readable today.⁶⁰

5. *Alexander Comrie* (1706–1774): His *The ABC of Faith*, a popular treatment of various biblical terms that describe faith, was a great help to me in my twenties for understanding that terms such as *coming to Christ, resting in Christ*, and *clinging to Christ* focus on various aspects of faith and ultimately are nearly synonymous with faith.⁶¹

Concluding Advice

Where our culture is lacking, the Puritans abounded. J. I. Packer says, “Today, Christians in the West are found to be on the whole passionless, passive, and one fears, prayerless.”⁶² The Puritans were passionate, zealous, and prayerful. Let us be as the author of Hebrews says, “followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (6:12). The Puritans demanded a hearing in their own day, and they deserve one today as well. They are spiritual giants upon whose shoulders we should stand.

Their books still praise the Puritans in the gates. Reading the Puritans will keep you on the right path theologically, experientially, and practically. As Packer writes, “The Puritans were strongest just where Protestants today are weakest, and their writings can give us more real help than those of any other body of Christian teachers, past or present, since the days of the apostles.”⁶³ I have been reading

59. Herman Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants between God and Man, Comprehending a Complete Body of Divinity*, trans. William Crookshank, 2 vols. (repr., Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010); idem, *Sacred Dissertations on the Apostles’ Creed*, trans. Donald Fraser, 2 vols. (repr., Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010); idem, *Sacred Dissertations on the Lord’s Prayer*, trans. William Pringle (repr., Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010).

60. Johannes VanderKemp, *The Christian Entirely the Property of Christ, in Life and Death, Exhibited in Fifty-three Sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism*, trans. John M. Van Harlingen, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 1997).

61. Alexander Comrie, *The ABC of Faith*, trans. J. Marcus Banfield (Ossett, U.K.: Zoar Publications, 1978).

62. Ryken, *Worldly Saints*, xiii.

63. Cited in Hulse, *Reformation & Revival*, 44.

Christian literature for nearly forty-four years and can freely say that I know of no group of writers in church history that can benefit the mind and soul more than the Puritans. God used their books for my spiritual formation and to help me grow in understanding. They are still teaching me what John the Baptist meant when he said, “Christ must increase and I must decrease” (John 3:30)—which is, I believe, a core definition of sanctification.

In his endorsement of *Meet the Puritans*, R. C. Sproul wrote, “The recent revival of interest in and commitment to the truths of Reformed theology is due in large measure to the rediscovery of Puritan literature. The Puritans of old have become the prophets for our time.” So, our prayer is that God will inspire you to read Puritan writings. With the Spirit’s blessing, they will enrich your life as they open the Scriptures to you, probe your conscience, bare yours sins, lead you to repentance, and conform your life to Christ. By the Spirit’s grace, let the Puritans bring you to full assurance of salvation and a lifestyle of gratitude to the triune God for His great salvation.

Finally, consider giving Puritan books to your friends. There is no better gift than a good book. I sometimes wonder what would happen if Christians spent fifteen minutes a day reading Puritan writings. Over a year that would add up to about twenty books, and fifteen hundred books over a lifetime. Who knows how the Holy Spirit might use such a spiritual diet of reading! Would it usher in a worldwide revival? Would it fill the earth with the knowledge of the Lord from sea to sea? That is my prayer. *Tolle Lege*—take up and read!

Book Reviews



Book Reviews



Jordan J. Ballor, David S. Sytsma, and Jason Zuidema, eds. *Church and School in Early Modern Protestantism: Studies in Honor of Richard A. Muller on the Maturation of a Theological Tradition*. Leiden: Brill, 2013. 800 pp.

Historical theology does not tell churches what they ought to believe. Nevertheless, historical theology is useful in providing models of theology that make us re-evaluate ourselves and ask questions we may be unaccustomed to considering.

Richard Muller is an important and well-known name in Reformed historical theology. He is one of a handful of scholars who has created seismic shifts in how researchers understand the rise and development of what is known as Reformed orthodoxy. Though his numerous writings are often complex, their premise is profoundly simple. Muller points people back to the primary sources of Reformed theology, and sets these sources in the context of medieval and early Reformed developments in theology. He challenges us to ask what Reformed thinkers said and why they said it. While his contributions have been primarily scholarly, the benefits of his research have trickled down to the church by helping pastors better understand the nature and development of Reformed theology. This festschrift written in his honor furthers his goals by promoting the study of the primary sources of Reformed theology, particularly as they relate to the question of the relationship between the church and academy. It will be useful primarily to scholars and to pastors.

Church and School in Early Modern Protestantism includes essays by fifty-two scholars, most of whom are Muller's former students. They honor Muller's groundbreaking research by treating aspects of the relationship between the church and university in early modern

Protestantism. This reflects the relationship between scholastic and popular theology as much as it illustrates how Reformed theology matured and developed. The work treats first-generation Reformers (mostly Lutheran or Lutheran influences), second-generation Reformers, and theologians from early, high, and late orthodoxy. It concludes with a comprehensive up-to-date bibliography of Muller's extensive publications.

A work of this nature has its advantages and disadvantages. The primary advantage is that it summarizes a large body of research from a wide array of people. Even the most diligent reader will not likely read all of the books written by its fifty-two authors. A single multi-author volume can thus make extensive research more accessible. The theme of the book is intriguing as well. The relationship between the church and academy has always been and continues to be a pressing question. Readers find here historical models for this relationship and the theological reflection that helped shape these models. As someone who labors both in the church and in the academy, this question continually occupies the attention of this reviewer. It will be of similar interest to all who share a concern for the theological education of ministers.

Many of the chapters include original research based upon other works without merely summarizing them. Three examples must suffice. Emidio Campi writes on the influential conversion story of Galeazzo Caracciolo. References to this work abound in popular Puritan literature; in fact, this story may have even provided the basis for the conversion of Bunyan's pilgrim in *Pilgrim's Progress*. Sebastian Rehnman develops the largely unexplored relationship between moral philosophy and moral theology in Peter Martyr Vermigli. Dariuz Bryko shows the development of Reformed theological education in seventeenth-century Poland.

Out of this small sampling of original research, three others stood out to this reviewer. Donald Sinnema and Aza Goudriaan examine (respectively) the attempt in the Netherlands to establish a chair of practical theology and to define it as a discipline. This research is useful in that it shows how the major theologians of this era self-consciously enveloped the idea of practical theology into their definitions of theology and theological method. At a time when departments of practical theology are taken for granted at theological seminaries, this material is thought-provoking and fruitful. The other outstanding contribution

is Henry Knapp's essay on seventeenth-century exegetical method. Knapp's doctoral work treated this subject in relation to John Owen, but it has never been published. His is one of the few substantial pieces of research that demonstrates the rules governing Reformed orthodox exegesis and how their exegetical labors fed into their systematic formulations of doctrine. While Muller has revived a more accurate understanding of the nature and content of Reformed orthodox theology, he has noted occasionally that the primary areas requiring further development relate to exegesis and piety. These three chapters make substantial progress in this direction.

Despite its many strengths, this book has some disadvantages as well. While the included essays usefully summarize larger works and include some substantial original research, most of them are merely condensed versions of other books. In the case of Brian Lee's essay on Johannes Cocceius, the author does not even acknowledge the existence of his previously published material from which his essay in this work is clearly derived. This is unfortunate since Lee's work on Cocceius is outstanding and readers should be made aware of it.

Other essays not only summarize previous research, but they do so less effectively than they have elsewhere. For example, Martin Klauber has written profoundly on the shift from the detailed scholastic theology of Francis Turretin at Geneva to the attempt by his son, Jean-Alphonse Turretin, to reduce theology to its fundamental articles. In his previous writings on this subject, Klauber illustrates that father and son had similar definitions of fundamental articles, but that they differed in that the son wanted to reduce theology to the fundamentals of the faith. In the essay in this volume, however, Klauber implies that Jean-Alphonse differed from his father by removing Reformed distinctives from fundamental articles, such as the order of the divine decrees and the doctrine of the sacraments (707). This inaccurately reflects Francis Turretin's treatment of fundamental articles, since importing such things into this concept would distort the very distinction that he sought to maintain. The primary difference between father and son was that the father cautioned against reducing Christianity to its fundamental articles while the son advocated this practice. Klauber's earlier treatments of this subject are much more clear and accurate than his contribution here.

Another disadvantage is inherent to this field of study. Reformed orthodox theology can be complex and difficult to evaluate at times.

The chapter on Cornelis Elleboogius illustrates this in that some readers will be unfamiliar with terms such as synchronic and diachronic contingency (and will be even more perplexed over how this distinction could have caused Elleboogius distress in his love life [662]). While the author explains the Scotist and Thomistic background of the debate surrounding these terms, he does not provide basic definitions of them. Even among scholars, some explanation of terms is always helpful, though it is seldom forthcoming.

Jordan Ballor's chapter on the debate between Richard Baxter and George Kendall over justification reveals the complexity of Reformed orthodoxy in a different way. Though noting at the close of the chapter (677) that Baxter's view of justification was neither Reformed nor Arminian, Ballor does not reflect the extent to which Baxter diverted from the Reformed position, or that Kendall's view has some nuances that did not line up with many Reformed authors either. For example, Kendall denied that the covenant of grace was conditional. Other scholars (such as Mark Jones) have shown that most Reformed thinkers believed that the covenant was conditional, though Christ supplied the conditions of faith and repentance through the Spirit. Ballor also does not reflect the fact that Baxter taught the conditionality of the covenant in a unique way (as Tim Cooper demonstrates elsewhere). Baxter deviated from the Reformed consensus by teaching that God accepts the relative obedience of believers through faith for justification and that justification is never a completed state prior to death. This shows the complexity of the seventeenth-century theological context. It is easy for historians to present a misleading view of the theological landscape of the time by neglecting complex theological distinctions.

This field of study requires clear and fine distinctions that even experts in the field struggle with at times. Studying Reformed orthodoxy is rewarding, but this volume illustrates that it can be complicated as well.

Church and School in Early Modern Protestantism will leave many readers with a long "to read" list, especially considering the many-referenced primary source materials. It is hard to envision a more fitting tribute to Richard Muller for his vital research in historic Reformed theology. The contributors are like miners digging up precious metals from the earth and refining it for others to use. However, do not be surprised if, when we look at historical models in order to

use them, we discover that we do not see our own reflection. This is the true value of historical theology. If you are interested in the relationship between church and school in early modern Protestantism, borrow this (expensive) book from a local library, prayerfully digest it, and use it well.

—Ryan M. McGraw

Erik A. de Boer. *The Genevan School of the Prophets: The Congrégations of the Company of Pastors and their Influence in 16th Century Europe*. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2012. 330 pp.

With this elaborate study, de Boer—professor at VU University Amsterdam and an expert in Calvin studies—republishes five older but expanded articles concerning the Company of Pastors in Geneva, the important circle of trustees in which John Calvin lived and worked. In his introduction, de Boer already announces an exciting follow-up work, the publication of the underlying primary sources in the prominent series *Opera exegetica* (with the same publisher). *The Genevan School of the Prophets* is like a play in three acts: the historical context (19–142), a study of the biblical expository projects (143–214), and the influence of the Company of Pastors on the wider Reformation, both on the continent and Britain (215–64). From a wide variety of sources—pieces directly attributed to the Company, city archives, personal letters, Beza’s important biography of Calvin’s life (*Vita Calvinii*), etc.—a picture emerges as to how this Company of Pastors operated and influenced the work of Calvin himself.

The rise of this kind of gathering of Protestant preachers is first of all a consequence of the theological connection between prophecy and preaching (cf. 1 Cor. 14), between the Old Testament prophet (teacher of the law) and the New Testament minister (teacher of the gospel [208]). Historically, however, it is more rooted in the medieval practice of disputations (77–78). For Genevan pastors, these *congrégations* were obligatory gatherings for the study of Scripture and further ministerial formation in the context of mutual discipline and supervision. De Boer emphasizes that these meetings were especially a means for keeping confessional unity amongst the pastors of

Geneva (41–43). Every meeting consisted of an opening exposition by one of the pastors, the subsequent correction and/or supplements by others, and a concluding summary and prayer. The whole meeting gave witness to a mutual form of edification and an exchange of exegetical insights. The subject of study was always a biblical book, studied in the *lectio continua* method (42–49). The coherence of the Company of Pastors with 1 Corinthians 14 is emphasized by the presence of lay people, as the Spirit could speak through everyone. Sometimes even more than half of the participants consisted of laymen, and since the morning gatherings were in the vernacular, they could easily join in. The afternoon, however, was reserved for pastors only and held in Latin. But it should be noted that overall the pastors led the *congrégation*.

De Boer's reconstruction raises the question whether or not people were allowed to openly debate exegetical options. Clearly everyone was required to hold to the Genevan Confession (68, 75), but reading between the lines gives the impression of a fairly oppressive manner of keeping control (87–88). In addition, every new pastor had to first prove himself by ministering in one of the surrounding villages before receiving a more prominent post in the city of Geneva (92).

In his fascinating account of the meetings (ch. 5), De Boer gives a vivid example about the doctrine of divine election. The immediate occasion was the thoughts of Jerome Bolsec, which were critical to Calvin's theory. The story ends with the arrest of Bolsec and his banishment from the city. The Bolsec controversy reopened Calvin's earlier debate with his Dutch critic, Albert Pighius (122). The joint consensus of these gatherings appeared as the *Congregation sur l'élection éternelle de Dieu* (1551; publ. 1562). However, there are some minor differences with *De aeterna Dei praedestianatione* (1552), Calvin's late response to Pighius. De Boer makes this conclusion on the basis of some criticism Calvin received from Beza and others (125–28). On the basis of his reconstruction of events surrounding the Bolsec controversy, de Boer first defends the thesis that, although the concept of double predestination is usually attributed to Calvin, it was mainly the outcome of the joint consensus of the Company of Pastors (129–133). And second, de Boer claims that the publication of Calvin's *De aeterna* was not motivated by the debate with Pighius (who died already in 1542), but by the more recent discussion with Bolsec (135).

Important for de Boer is his conclusion that these *congrégations* did not function primarily as academic disputes, or purely exegetical debates, but as spiritual conversations to serve as input for sermons (209–210). At the same time, however, he does acknowledge the importance of exegesis for the *congrégations*. De Boer's claim remains unclear however, for his reconstruction does give the impression that many meetings were characterized by severe debates over the right interpretation of particular verses.

De Boer also deals with the fact that only Calvin's contributions are preserved. He attributes this to the high esteem in which Calvin stood among his colleagues. This positive explanation serves his attempt to keep up the egalitarian appearance of the Company. Reading the book, however, I became more and more convinced of the predominant role of Calvin. Not only did Calvin function as moderator during the conversations (36, 37, 163), he also determined the subject of the study. Even while lying on his deathbed, he suggested the Company continue beyond his death with the study of Isaiah (212). Although Calvin recognized the contributions of others, he was generally the dominant influence.

In the last part, de Boer discusses the influence of the Genevan *congrégations* on the refugee churches in London and in the Lower Countries (by Guido de Brès). I disagree with de Boer's conclusion that the Genevan meetings "can be described as ministerial" compared to "the more democratic form as advanced by John à Lasco in London, Jean Morély in France, and in the later prophesying of the Puritan movement" (68). "Democratic" in my view gives a wrong impression of this pivotal Puritan practice. Like in Geneva, the *prophesyings* were predominantly a regional gathering of pastors. For example, the famous Robert Browne defines the *prophesyings* in his catechesis as a "ioyning or partaking of the office of manie Teachers in peaceable manner" (*The Booke that sheweth*, Art. 51). And like Geneva, these gatherings aimed at the further edification of "ignorant clergy" (cf. Collinson, *The Religion of the Protestants*, 129). While a practice prohibited by Queen Elizabeth, Archbishop Grindal, who refused to execute her command, was not "imprisoned" (256) but put under house arrest.

In summary, Erik de Boer deserves to be complimented for an outstanding book. Although a part consists of existing material, the whole does not appear to be disjointed in any way. It truly gives a

tremendous insight in the role of the Company of Pastors, especially in relation to Calvin and his work.

—Jan Martijn Abrahamse



John Harris. *Mammon: Or, Covetousness, the Sin of the Christian Church*. Stoke-on-Trent, U.K.: Tentmaker Publications, 2014. 195 pp.

Though written almost one hundred and seventy years ago, John Harris's short work feels like a modern survey of one of the church's present plaguing evils: covetousness. Harris strikes at this very heart of sins, claiming that the evil that so destroys the world has become the cherished indulgence of the Christian church. He defends his position with frequent examples from both Scripture and practical life. His work is divided into three parts.

First, Harris explains how this pervasive sin of covetousness is the chief of all forms of selfishness in general. Selfishness has many manifestations, but, above all, it takes shape in the hearts of believers as the selfishness of the purse. Whether scrooge or spend-thrift, Harris notes that not one is immune from this vicious sin. Even ministers battle with it, as the "selfishness of the pew" extends to the "selfishness of the pulpit" (30–31). All areas of life are infected—even the prayer closet has often become a den of covetousness.

Second, Harris identifies the basic structure of covetousness as various expressions of a love for money. He defines these various forms and then notes how all men are susceptible to one or another. Providing biblical examples, Harris relates that love for money was the first sin of the New Testament church (Acts 5) and that the greatest example was the sin of Judas (Luke 22:4–6). Further, Harris illustrates the indigenous nature of this sin by providing some examples common to the culture of his day. Though many of his examples are outdated, the reader will note that these examples translate readily to his own time and thereof speak directly to his own life.

Third, Harris concludes with a plea for Christian liberality, the opposite of covetousness. The believer must replace his self-love with a proper love for God and his neighbor. To the question "How much owest thou unto thy Lord?" Harris responds, "Freely ye have

received, freely give” (157). Benevolence is the proper Christian duty, as the early days of the church where believers freely “sold their possessions...as every man had need” (Acts 2:45). Harris concludes with practical motivations for liberality, perhaps the foremost being the benevolent spirit of self-sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ.

—Ryan Hurd



Erroll Hulse. *One in a Thousand: The Calling and Work of a Pastor*. Darlington, UK: EP Books, 2014. 224 pp.

Do we really need another book on the calling and work of a pastor? Most of the time, I would answer “No.” However, knowing the wide and long pastoral experience of Erroll Hulse induced me to give his book a second look—and then a third. This book makes a valuable contribution and will help a lot of pastors and those who train them.

One in a Thousand uses a unique method in that it approaches the subject via the biographies of pastors from many different eras and denominations. And in each case, after a brief biography, the author focuses on one particular quality in that pastor’s life and ministry. Hulse looks in turn at Martin Luther’s example as a reformer, William Perkins’s example in stressing application in preaching, Richard Baxter’s example in evangelism, Jonathan Edwards’s example as a student of theology, Martyn Lloyd-Jones’s example in preaching, and Martin Holdt’s example in maintaining a strong prayer life.

All of this is preceded by a few introductory chapters that start with our Lord Jesus Christ as an example of compassion and care (especially as seen in Isaiah’s four servant songs), and then proceeds to lessons from the Apostle Paul’s ministry. In particular, Hulse considers five lessons from Paul’s ministry: 1) his insistence on the centrality of the cross, 2) his insistence on justification by faith alone, 3) his amazing prayer life, 4) his practical example as a team worker, and 5) his ability to endure suffering.

There were a number of features I especially liked about this book. First, I enjoyed its conversational tone. At times I felt like I was sitting at the feet of a wise older man, being patiently and lovingly mentored. There were lots of fascinating asides, illustrations, and anecdotes

garnered from many years in various ministries and missions. Second, I appreciated the call to serious study both in preparation for the ministry and in the ongoing life of the pastor. Whatever training method chosen (seminary or the local church), Erroll emphasizes the need for prolonged time and intense study to acquire the necessary knowledge and skill to teach and preach weekly. He leans towards a seminary model as long as the teachers have pastoral experience and the students are embedded in local churches as they are taught. Third, it majors on the majors: study, preaching, prayer, evangelism, compassion, and suffering. You may think you have heard it all before on these subjects, but I believe you will find many fresh theological and practical gems in this book that will develop your skill and grace in these vital areas. Fourth, in *One in a Thousand* you will encounter a lot of stirring and inspirational church history. Erroll's brief biographies prove to be a delightful model of how historical figures can be introduced to a modern audience. Apart from the basics of each man's life, there are many great quotations, stories, and illustrations. I have read biographies about most of these men, but I found myself learning lots of new and fascinating facts about them. Fifth, I enjoyed the way Erroll moved from historical narratives to personal application. He marshals all the facts together in a powerfully persuasive argument to move us to think, feel, will, speak, and do differently. It really is that rare bird—a practical book on practical theology. Last, I welcomed the unspoken challenge throughout to aspire to excellence in the basics of pastoral ministry. I did not find Erroll's use of these mighty men of God as our models in any way discouraging; rather, I was uplifted and motivated. The pastoral ministry is a high calling, and any who follow it must aspire to the highest of standards. This is not for the half-hearted, the faint-hearted, or the cold-hearted; it is for full hearts, strong hearts, and burning hearts.

The title of this work, *One in a Thousand*, is taken from Job 33:22–24 where God's messenger of salvation is so valuable and so uncommon that he is described as "one in a thousand." Yes, that's how rare such pastors were then and remain so today. Rare in number, and rare in that kind of quality. But this book has the potential to swell their ranks so that, by God's grace, perhaps the book can soon be re-titled, *Two in a Thousand* or even *Ten in a Thousand!*

—David Murray



Michael J. Kruger. *The Question of Canon: Challenging the Status Quo in the New Testament Debate*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2013. 256 pp.

Kruger can be seen as a real expert on the history of the New Testament canon's formation. He combines his great academic insight with a deep love for the Bible as the Word of God, and this combination of academic quality and piety is a model for every biblical scholar. *The Question of Canon* is his second book written on the subject of canonicity. Whereas many New Testament scholars see the canon of the New Testament as an ecclesiastical product of the fourth century, this view is not in accordance with the classical view on the canon. In his last book Kruger tackles the five most prevalent objections to the classic, Christian understanding of the emerging, self-authenticating collection of authoritative counterparts to the Old Testament. These commonly held five objections are: 1) we must make a sharp distinction between Scripture and canon; 2) there was nothing in earliest Christianity that might have led to a canon; 3) early Christianity was averse to written documents; 4) the New Testament authors were unaware of their authority; and 5) the New Testament books were first regarded as Scripture at the end of the second century.

Kruger distinguishes three models for the canon of the New Testament: the exclusive, functional, and ontological models. Each model has its merits, but the one model does not exclude the other. The exclusive model suggests that only from the fourth century we can speak of the canon of the New Testament. While it is true that in the fourth century there came to be a universal consensus about the exact boundary of the canon, we must stress that this consensus was one that was recognized. In other words, the canon itself was not the result of a somewhat arbitrary ecclesiastical decision. As argued in the functional model of canon, already from the second century a lot of data confirms that books of the New Testament were regarded as Scripture, having the same authority as Old Testament books. This model is based on the use of books as Scripture. Important here is the witness of Irenaeus and the Muratorian fragment.

Kruger says that the functional model has many positive elements and provides a welcome balance to the exclusive definition of the New Testament canon. But he also unveils the weaknesses of the functional model. Some books that were not included in the final canon of the

New Testament had almost the status of Scripture. The *Pastor of Hermas* can be mentioned in this context. A much more important weakness of the functional model—a weakness that it shares with the exclusive model—is that it fails to address the ontological status of the New Testament books. The books that finally found their way in the canon of the New Testament have an intrinsic quality not found in others. They are written by the apostles or their direct companions. That was the reason why already in the Muratorian fragment the *Pastor of Hermas* was not regarded as Scripture (it was written after the death of all of the apostles).

Although 1 Clements was written roughly in the same period as the last books of the New Testament, it was never regarded as Scripture because its author clearly made a distinction between his own authority and the authority of the apostles. Kruger points to the importance of recognizing the intrinsic quality of the New Testament books. In regard to the question of the canon, he thus advocates a third model, namely, the ontological model.

For early Christianity, the decisive criterion was the apostolic nature of a document. Pseudonymity was therefore a definite reason to exclude a document from Scripture. Kruger ably challenges the view that early Christians were averse to written documents. Already from its very beginnings, Christianity had the canon of the Old Testament. The declaration of Papias—that an eyewitness account is to be preferred above a written testimony—simply means that a direct testimony is to be preferred above an indirect testimony. The gospels are to be considered then as eyewitness accounts in written form.

Kruger further denies the claim that the apostles did not realize their own authority. In fact, data points in the opposite direction: the apostles realized that their authority stood on the same level as the authority of the Old Testament prophets. They knew that their authority was in a certain sense an extension of the authority of Jesus Christ. It is no coincidence that the beginnings of the written New Testament documents correspond with the rise of Christianity as a missionary movement in the fifties and sixties of the New Testament. The need for written eyewitness accounts of what Jesus said and did was more and more important; Paul wrote letters to congregations founded by his missionary work. The letters that addressed problems in the congregations were an extended form of apostolic presence.

I would add that letters in antiquity used to have a semi-public status. The writers knew that their letters were to be preserved, shared

with others, and used in other contexts. This means that the apostles knew already from the beginning that what they put down in writing had an apostolic authority. Kruger rightly states the formation of the canon represented the working of forces that were already present in early Christianity and made some form of canon virtually inevitable. Following David Meade, Kruger says that the apocalyptic nature of Christianity provided a strong inner reason for the extension of Scripture. Thus, for example, in all the forms of apocalypticism surrounding the period of the Second Temple, written documents were produced.

The fact that written documents in the form of the book of the Old Testament were essential for Christianity from its very beginning means that early Christians were literate. This must have been especially true for spiritual leaders. We must also realize that orality and textuality cannot be seen as opposites. In the ancient world, an illiterate person could be intimately familiar with a written text. Texts were written to be presented orally. This is certainly true not only of the New Testament letters but of all New Testament documents. Kruger has done us a great service by giving us many arguments supporting the ontological model of understanding the canon. This model accounts for the apostolic authority and divine inspiration of Scripture—matters that belong to the very essence of the Christian religion.

—Pieter de Vries



Glenda Mathes. *Little One Lost: Living with Early Infant Loss*. Grandville, Mich.: Reformed Fellowship, 2012. 144 pp.

Little One Lost is greatly needed today, contrary to the prevailing opinion that discussing this topic is of little use. I certainly would not have felt its full importance if not for witnessing good friends trek through the valley of the shadow of infant death.

When our son was born, my wife and I were in the same birthing hospital as my childhood best friend and his wife, who were also expecting. Their baby was born the day before ours. She was beautiful and perfectly formed. When born, she wiggled her arms, feet, and fingers just like other children. The parents knew, however, that she

would only have a few minutes to live. Their little girl's lungs had simply not developed enough to sustain her life. She was born and died just twenty-three weeks after conception. After Grace passed away, our friends invited me down from our birthing room to see their child and to pray with them. As the three of us talked and wept and as I saw and held that lifeless child, I remember thanking God for being invited into such an intimate moment. A few days later, my wife and my friend's wife were wheeled out of the hospital together; we were holding a healthy baby, but their arms were empty.

Little One Lost recounts similar stories of loss, often in the words of those who felt the pain so acutely. As an experienced writer and reporter, Glenda Mathes skillfully weaves these narratives into the book, breathing life into a too-often sterilized subject. The book is theologically rich, scientifically reliable, and personally emotive. I've never been slow to cry, but as I read this book in the total silence of a hotel room, I felt the privileged freedom to weep with those who wept. Without books like this, those who have not personally experienced early infant loss will fail to empathize with those who have. Through *Little One Lost*, readers can vicariously experience the pain of losing a child, and such intellectual and emotional identification should prevent them from being like Job's "miserable comforters" (Job 16:2). Instead, they will be better prepared to winsomely offer the Christian comfort carefully set forth in this book.

Those looking for a book with easy answers will (thankfully) be disappointed with *Little One Lost*. Those hoping for biblical help to live with the pain of infant death will find it in these twenty-six short chapters. From beginning to end, readers hear a gently repeated and carefully developed theme: even deep loss like the death of an infant can be entrusted to an all-sufficient Savior. Without a doubt, *Little One Lost* is the book I will recommend to those struggling with early infant loss.

—William Boekestein



Brian S. Rosner. *Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of God*. New Studies in Biblical Theology. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2013. 249 pp.

Luther said that we only deserve to be called a theologian when we can rightly distinguish between law and gospel. The real task of the

law is to reveal sin, and the gospel is preached as the message of consolation for sinners who want to taste the peace of God. According to Luther, the Christian still needs the law because he is still flesh; the law is necessary to crucify the old man. Calvin spoke more positively about the so-called third use of the law, as a rule of thankfulness. This use has not only to do with the crucifixion of man but is also a part of a Christian's new life in Christ.

What does the New Testament say about the meaning of the law? What is the law's place in the purpose of God? Does it have an abiding place in the life of man after he has been reconciled to God? The interpretation of the place of the law in the message of Paul is one of the knottiest problems of New Testament scholarship.

Brian S. Rosner, principal of Ridley Melbourne Mission and Ministry College, has written a very convincing study on the several meanings of the law in the message and letters of Paul. One can disagree with some of the details presented in *Paul and the Law*, but it isn't possible to reject Rosner's overall framework.

Rosner bases his research on all thirteen letters that name Paul as their author. He detects three trajectories in how Paul speaks about the law: the law is repudiated, replaced, and re-appropriated. The law is repudiated as a law-covenant, or as a way to receive eternal life. Here the gospel replaces the law; Christ delivers us from the curse of the law. Salvation is not by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ. Rosner denies that we can restrict the works of the law to the so-called identity markers of circumcision, Sabbath-keeping, and dietary laws. When Paul says that Christ is the end of the law, we are not allowed to make reservations as to the scope of the law. The whole Mosaic dispensation—the moral aspect included—is intended.

The fact that the law cannot give life is not owing to progressive revelation and the coming of the New Testament dispensation. Certainly there is a difference in the confidence with which God can be approached under the New Testament dispensation, but the fact the law has no power to save us is first of all because of our sinfulness. The law does not give life, but Christ and eternal life are imparted to us by the Holy Spirit. There is no access to God by the works of the law; it is through Christ that we have access to God as Father (Eph. 2:18).

A hotly discussed question today is whether the law still has a place in the life of God's children under the New Testament dispensation.

Rosner confronts the common claim that Paul has no positive place for the law. This part of the book is particularly worthwhile to read. We must realize the spectrum of meanings the word ‘law’ (*nomos*) has in the message and letters of Paul; it is not only what we call the moral law, or the law as the Mosaic dispensation and covenant, but it can denote the five books of Moses. Paul shows us that the five books must first of all be read as a prophecy of the coming Christ and a statement of justification by faith. In this way the law of Moses is the gospel of justification by faith.

The law is not only re-appropriated as prophecy but also as what Rosner calls wisdom. Rosner underlines that Paul not only alludes to the law in a positive way with regard to Christian ethics, but also quotes from it. When writing about the financial support of gospel ministers (1 Cor. 9:10), Paul quotes Deuteronomy 25:4. He takes for granted that idolatry, murder, theft, and covetousness are wrong. When Rosner calls this aspect of Paul’s teaching on the law “wisdom,” he does not mean that the genre of the Pentateuch is wisdom, but that living in accord with the commandments of God evidences real wisdom. Rosner underlines that this aspect of Paul’s teaching on the law is in full agreement with the psalmists’ declarations about the law. Rosner’s definition of the law as wisdom parallels what the Reformed mean when they call the law the rule of life.

Rosner tends to read 1 Corinthians 9:21 as an example of replacement. However, it is important to note his remark that the word *ennomos* must not be translated as “under the law” but as “in the law.” A Christian is delivered from the law as covenant; he is delivered from the curse of the law. A Christian is under grace and not under the law. Although Rosner does not say it, we see here an allusion to Jeremiah 31.

Despite some differences with regard to certain exegetical details, the overall framework that Rosner presents is intact. In the end, Rosner’s *Paul and the Law* undergirds the scriptural character of the classical Reformed view of the relationship between law and gospel.

—Pieter de Vries



Catherine J. Stewart, ed. *Letters to Pastors' Wives: When Seminary Ends and Ministry Begins*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Publishing, 2013. 286 pp.

Contrary to the attitude of some, being a pastor's wife is not an official position in the church. The calling of all women who happen to be married to pastors is to trust in the Spirit's help, and to serve the Lord where He has placed them in His church. They are to be no more, and no less, than faithful Christian women. Yet women who are married to pastors face trials that result from their husbands' callings. The authors of *Letters to Pastor's Wives* address eighteen areas that affect such women.

This book presents excellent counsel in relation to all areas of ministry. It is a must-read not only for pastors' wives but for pastors, other members of the family, and, especially, church members who need to realize the unbiblical expectations they often place on these women.

The book is divided into issues related to personal piety, practical counsel, and various circumstances in ministry. The authors insightfully press readers to make the right priorities in life with humility and guarded speech. They address improper, self-imposed expectations, hospitality, friendship, respect, conflict, mothering, the Lord's Day, and many other areas of practical responsibility. The last three chapters address special circumstances such as addressing a husband who is living in sin, ministering in a foreign culture, and life in campus ministry.

As with all uninspired books, there are some flaws; Betty Jane Adams, for example, suggests that women should cut off all former friendships when their husbands take a new call, which hardly matches the Apostle Paul's example of relationships with church members. However, such flaws are few. Some of the chapters that my wife and I found most helpful were those on setting priorities straight, humility, hospitality, handling criticism, dealing with conflict in the church, and ministering to a different culture. It will be tempting for some readers to skip those chapters that do not seem to be immediately applicable to them, but this is a mistake. For example, while we have never labored in ministry in another country, the chapter treating ministry on the mission field gave us some of the best advice that we received in order to help us settle into a new pastoral charge in this country.

We have been surprised by the response of several readers to this book. Some have called the practical chapters, such as those on making priorities, hospitality, and the Lord's Day, "legalistic." Many of these chapters are indeed specific in their suggestions, but they are specific because most of us fail to understand how to implement biblical principles without concrete examples. They properly distinguish between biblical principles and a wide array of possible ways to implement these principles.

We should desire to bring every thought captive in obedience to Christ. This book includes wise counsel from eighteen godly women who will help you do this, both in light of Scripture and from the wisdom that comes only through the experience of godly living under great trials.

—Ryan M. McGraw



Guy Prentiss Waters. *How Jesus Runs the Church*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2011. 178 pp.

Church government is a divisive topic. For this reason, it is rare to find recent works that treat the government, or polity, of the Christian church. However, teaching an ecclesiology (doctrine of the church) without a polity is like building a machine that cannot operate. It may look and sound impressive in theory, but it cannot do anything in practice. We must discern either what government Christ has appointed in His Word, or how to govern the church on our own.

Waters teaches us that we must trust in the Lord with all our hearts rather than lean on our own understanding. The premise of the book is that the Word of God is necessary and sufficient for teaching Christians what the church is and how it should be governed. Waters's work is winsome, exegetically sound, historically informed, and eminently practical. It shares the concision and precision that we have come to expect from this author. He is unashamedly but humbly Presbyterian; he believes that he learned his Presbyterianism at the feet of Jesus Christ and he shows us how to follow in Christ's footsteps through the Word of God.

The book begins with the doctrine of the church and ends with her government. However, following other great models (for example, James Bannerman), he seamlessly weaves these subjects together as he unfolds the text of the New Testament. He includes substantial expositions of key passages, such as Matthew 16 (the classic keys of the kingdom passage) and the Jerusalem Council passage of Acts 15. He also addresses important contemporary issues, such as women in office. Waters includes substantial illustrations from his own denomination, the Presbyterian Church in America. This makes this volume particularly valuable to those in that denomination, but these illustrations will help any reader by giving concrete substance to what otherwise would be a theoretical skeleton.

If we do not search the Scriptures to learn how Jesus runs the church and what form of government He gave her, we are in danger of being subjected to the tyranny of men. The form of church government affects the wellbeing of the church. Do we not want Christ's church to be well and not just to be? The fact that the government of the church is secondary does not mean that it is peripheral.

A word of caution: do not read this book simply to validate Presbyterianism, and do not avoid reading it if you are not Presbyterian. Read it if you love the Christ of the church and the church of Christ. Let Waters lead you through the Bible's teaching on the church and its government and, with him, seek to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

—Ryan M. McGraw



Christopher J. H. Wright. *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2010. 304 pp.

The Mission of God's People is a sequel to Wright's magnum opus, *The Mission of God* (2006). While the earlier volume presents a missional hermeneutic for the entire Bible, this concerns the relevance of mission for the church. It asks the question, "Who are we and what are we here for?" (17). Rather than provide pragmatic missional models

and techniques, Wright seeks to harness a biblical theology of mission to answer this question. This is a helpful and welcome approach.

The book's basic structure is threefold. The first section, "Queuing the Questions," challenges and stretches traditional missiological thinking by questioning whether "mission" requires a more comprehensive definition than mere cross-cultural, evangelistic outreach. The second section, "Arriving at Answers," forms the vast bulk of the book and analyzes Scripture's teaching on who God's people are and what that entails for them. A working hypothesis for these chapters is expressed in Wright's pithy refrain, "It is not so much that God has a mission for his church as that God has a church for his mission" (148). The church's identity is therefore inextricably connected with mission. The chapters in this section explore this working hypothesis by discussing people who know the story to which they belong, care for creation, bless the nations, walk in God's way, live redemptively, represent God, attract others to God, know the one living God and Savior, bear witness to this God, proclaim Christ's gospel, send and are sent, live and work in the public square, and praise and pray. Certainly, what becomes clear is that "the mission of God's people is vast and various" (47). The final section, "Reflecting on Relevance," concludes the book by way of summary. The salient themes are brought into focus as Wright discusses the way forward.

The great strength of Wright's biblical theological approach is that it allows for a comprehensive view of the church of God since Abraham (43). This in turn helps the church understand where she fits in the big picture. This big picture gives great impetus in and for mission as it highlights the covenantal character of God who has determined to bless the nations through His people (87, 88). This theocentric emphasis is a necessary and helpful one, particularly in this egotistic and statistically driven age. When the church understands who she is in relation to God, then she is better prepared to herald this God to people who need to understand the same. In addition, success will not be measured so much by the quantity or even the quality of converts, but by faithfulness to God and His revealed will. And yet, at the same time, with God's covenant promise and commitment to bless, there ought indeed to be an "irrepressible optimism" for God's blessing to accompany all missionary endeavor (44).

While Wright's emphasis on the inception of mission in the Old Testament is commendable, it is regrettable that he does not give fuller

consideration to New Testament texts. In fact, he labors to downplay the Great Commission as something outside the consciousness of the early church—an untenable conclusion (36). In an otherwise valiant attempt to correct a depreciation and misunderstanding of mission in the Old Testament, Wright has overcorrected. It would be better simply to note the inherent agreement and continuity of the Abrahamic promises in the Great Commission, which would bolster rather than detract from the former.

Another benefit of Wright's biblical theological approach is his sustained emphasis on the need for personal holiness. He writes, "The ethical quality of life of the people of God is the vital link between their calling and their mission" (94), and "[t]here is no biblical mission without biblical holiness" (126). This gets to the very epicenter of Wright's thesis and is a most important and salutary principle. Equally helpful is the stress Wright lays on the priority of grace to mission; as he explains, "obedience to the covenant was not a condition of salvation, but a condition of their mission" (126). The implications of these conclusions are more than conceptual. Rather, they force those called to mission to consider their own identity and relationship with Christ in God. If indeed God's church is called to represent and attract others to Him by walking in His way, then ordinarily the level of personal holiness will be commensurate with the achievement of the missionary endeavor.

But this raises the question as to the subjects of mission. All agree that it is the duty of every Christian to walk in God's way and so represent and attract others to Him. Does this therefore mean that all Christians are called to be missionaries? Is this not liable to the charge that if mission is everything then it is nothing? Wright's retort that "if everything is mission . . . then everything is mission" is begging the question and hardly absolves the charge (26). It is clear, especially with chapters such as, "People who Live and Work in the Public Square," that Wright does have all Christians in view. Certainly, all would agree that there is a missional aspect relevant to all Christians, but more specific and focused delimitation throughout the book would be helpful in understanding the character of those called in a special way to the mission field.

Consideration of the need for personal holiness also leads to the question of the message that is proclaimed. Certainly only those who experientially know the priority and absolute necessity of grace in

their own lives are fit to adequately and honestly proclaim this good news to others. Much missionary activity has thus been marred by the propagation of an easy believism that knows nothing of the radical change requisite in true conversion. Wright captures this well when he comments, “There is no gospel where there is no change” (196).

Nevertheless, it is precisely in regard to the message of mission that Wright’s book reflects some serious concerns. His exegesis of Colossians 1:15–22 leads him to conclude that the shed blood of Christ “is the means of reconciliation of creation to God, not only of sinners” (59). Wright contends that the priority here falls on creation (it being spoken of first), while the individual, not mentioned until verse 21, appears as a secondary consideration. As Wright somewhat flippantly states, “Oh yes, even you too...you get to be part of this!” (60).

But Wright’s exegesis ignores the fact that the redemption of the individual is in fact spoken of earlier (prior to the reconciliation of creation) in verse 14: “in whom *we* have redemption through his blood.” The “and you” phrase of verse 21 does not support Wright’s conclusion that the individual is a secondary consideration, but rather simply notes that the gospel has also come to Colossae, as well as to the rest of the world.

Wright also misses the point, from the more immediate context, that Christ is said to be the head of His body, namely, the church (Col. 1:18). As such, it is clear that Christ stands in a special relation to His church, something that He does not sustain with the rest of creation. It is beyond the scope of this review to give a fuller examination of this complex passage, but it is sufficient to note that anything that disturbs or challenges the inviolable and unique relation of Christ to His church must be rejected.

The implications of Wright’s exegesis also impact the recipients of the message. He claims that we are “agents of good news to creation, as well as to people” (61). What Wright means by this is most notably evident in the chapter, “People who are Redeemed for Redemptive Living,” where political, economic, and social concerns occupy the same status as the redemption of the individual (100–101). This in turn leads Wright to conclude that preaching does not have primacy or priority over social or compassionate service for the needy (214).

It is certainly true that in many Reformed and Evangelical circles there has been a neglect for the care of creation and for other forms of social, economic, and political matters. This is to be lamented and

rectified. As stewards of God's creation, and as imitators of the one who "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38), Christians ought to be the most zealous in caring both for creation and the needs of the oppressed. Thus far, the rebuke and exhortation are welcome. However, the glaring absence in Wright's book is in the qualitative distinction between temporal and eternal suffering. In a voluminous work on mission it is regrettable that there is not more emphasis given to the nature and desert of sin. This lack of emphasis is coordinate with Wright's depreciation of the biblical priority and primacy of preaching which convicts of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8–11). Wright does not exclude the proclamation of the gospel, but the contention of this reviewer is that he seriously dilutes it by placing it on par with deeds ministry. The scriptural connection is inviolable: "faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

Wright's claim therefore that the practical difference between evangelistic proclamation and other missionary work "is hardly, if ever, a real one" (276) is seriously flawed and presents the greatest and most fundamental deficiency in his theology. If the ordinary way of a sinner being saved is by the Spirit blessing the preaching of the Word (Isa. 55:3; Rom. 10:17), then therein lies the greatest conceivable distinction between evangelistic proclamation and other missionary work. This, of course, does not ignore the latter, but simply prioritizes the former.

In summary, Wright's biblical theological approach in *The Mission of God's People* provides a helpful contribution and reorientation to the missiological discussion. The emphasis on *who* and *what* the missionary should be as a Christian, particularly in regard to holy living, provides a welcome change from the endless books attempting to find the ideal missiological technique. Those who desire to understand missiology within the framework of Scripture will find this a helpful resource. Yet, due to the many similar and related themes Wright traces, his work suffers from verbosity and repetition, making it largely inaccessible to the average layman. Despite its helpful contributions, the reader should be aware of the subtle but erroneous and dangerous equating of the gospel message with deeds ministry. This greatly impoverishes this otherwise helpful work and causes reticence in its recommendation to a wider audience.

—Ian Macleod

Contributors



Peter Aiken is an M.Div. graduate from Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary. He lives in Prince Edward Island, Canada, and serves as an elder in the Free Church of Scotland.

Michael Barrett is the Academic Dean and Old Testament professor at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Joel R. Beeke is president and professor of Systematic Theology and Homiletics at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, and a pastor of the Heritage Netherlands Reformed Congregation of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Todd D. Baucum is a Th.M. student at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary. He is a part-time professor at Birmingham Theological Seminary and pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Enterprise, Alabama.

Michael Borg is a recent M.Div. graduate from PRTS and serves as pastor of Providence Presbyterian Church, Bradenton, Florida.

Caleb Cangelosi is a Th.M. student at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary and associate pastor of Pear Orchard Presbyterian Church in Ridgeland, Mississippi.

Simon J. Green is an international M.Div. student from Bury St. Edmunds, England, at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary.

Joseph C. Harrod is Director of Institutional Assessment at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky,

where he earned his Ph.D. in Biblical Spirituality. His dissertation considered the relationship between theology and spirituality in the works of Samuel Davies.

Matthew D. Haste is a Ph.D. candidate in Biblical Spirituality and adjunct instructor at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky.

Ryan P. Hoselton is a Ph.D. student at Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg and a Junior Fellow of the Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies.

HyunKwan Kim is a Th.M. student of Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Ian C. Macleod is a Th.M. student at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary and is currently serving an internship with the Free Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Arthur Miskin is a missionary minister of the Heritage Reformed Congregations of North America serving in South Africa. He is a theological instructor at the Mukhanyo Theological College in KwaNdebele, a minister in an English Reformed church plant in Pretoria, and with his wife, Sonja, is involved in ministry to terminal HIV/AIDS patients.

David P. Murray is professor of Old Testament and Practical Theology at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, and a pastor of the Free Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Brian G. Najapfour is a Th.M. graduate of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary and a pastor at Dutton United Reformed Church in Caledonia, Michigan.

Paul Smalley serves as a Teaching Assistant for Dr. Joel Beeke at the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, and as a non-vocational pastor at Grace Immanuel Reformed Baptist Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He received his Th.M. from PRTS in May 2012.

Allen Stanton holds the Th.M. degree from Reformed Theological Seminary and is pastor of Waynesboro Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Waynesboro, Mississippi.

Geoff Thomas has served as minister of Alfred Place Baptist Church in Aberystwyth, Wales, since 1965, and is visiting professor of Historical Theology at PRTS.

Jan van Vliet served as professor of Theology for many years at Prairie Bible College in Three Hills, Alberta, and since 2011 has been professor of Economics at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa.

Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary



THE MISSION OF PURITAN REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary is an educational institution whose mission is to prepare students to serve Christ and His church through biblical, experiential, and practical ministry. The seminary's training objectives are to glorify God, to promote and defend the gospel of Jesus Christ, to promote the supremacy of the Holy Scriptures, and to be true to the historic Reformed creeds. In dependence on the Holy Spirit, we believe that our objectives are well served by providing theological instruction and training to facilitate the development of knowledge and skills in our students as well as personal piety and Christian character that is essential for faithful Christian ministry.

The seminary is committed to the perspective that a balanced training for Christian ministry includes a sound theological education and the nurturing of healthy, personal piety. The theological development of a student at PRTS includes instruction in the full range of biblical, theological, historical, and mission studies. Please ask for our catalog and DVD.

The seminary also strives to provide its students with a social environment that nurtures godliness. Instruction is complemented by formal and informal occasions for personal interaction with academically qualified and spiritually minded theological professors or instructors as well as with godly fellow students. This creates a seminary atmosphere that facilitates personal piety in the context of responsible scholarship.

2965 Leonard Street N.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49525
Phone: 616-977-0889; Fax: 616-285-3246 • E-mail: info@puritanseminary.org

Please consider partnering with us in carrying out our mission of offering the following degrees: MAR (Master of Arts, 2 years), MDiv (Master of Divinity, 4 years), and ThM (Master of Theology, 2 years). Above all, please continue to pray for us that our institution may remain faithful to biblical, Reformed truth.

YES, I WOULD LIKE TO DONATE!

- I would like to financially support PRTS by giving \$ _____, designated for:
 - Building Expansion Fund Operation Fund Scholarship Fund
 - PRTS Foundation Puritan Resource Center
- I am enclosing \$20 for a 2014 subscription to Puritan Reformed Journal.
- I would like to enroll in the monthly donation program.
 - I will send a check for _____ each month.
 - Please charge my Debit/Charge card \$ _____ per month.

PAYMENT METHOD

- Check/cash enclosed
- Charge my Debit/Charge card: Card # _____
Exp. Date ____ / ____ Security Code _____
- Please send me the PRTS catalog and DVD.

~~~~~  
Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

*American donors and donors from countries other than Canada,  
please send your gifts and this form to:*  
Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary  
2965 Leonard Street N.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49525

*Canadian Donors please send your gifts and this form to:*  
Burgessville Heritage Reformed Church, Attention: PRTS  
685 Main Street, P.O. Box 105, Burgessville, Ontario N0J 1C0  
*Donors may also give on-line through [www.CanadaHelps.org](http://www.CanadaHelps.org). Make donations to the  
Heritage Netherlands Reformed Congregation, PRTS operating fund.*

Thank you for supporting Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary. Were it not for the prayers and financial gifts of friends like you, much of what takes place on a daily basis at the seminary would need to be reduced or eliminated.

For more information regarding the seminary, visits, or ministries affiliated with the seminary, please contact our Executive Director of Operations, Mr. Henk Kleyn, at 616-977-0599 ext. 120, or send an email to [henk.klyen@puritanseminary.org](mailto:henk.klyen@puritanseminary.org).

